

Virginia Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



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IN THIS ISSUE

- [Canoe/Kayaking the Smith River](#)
- [Junior Naturalist Camp](#)
- [PHCC Trail Walk](#)
- [VMNH Behind-the-Scenes Tour](#)
- [Wilson Park Cleanup](#)
- [VMN State Conference](#)
- [Mushroom that Tastes Like Chicken](#)
- [Volunteer Management System](#)
- [Volunteer Hours & Events Calendar](#)

The 2011 Training Class rescheduled. The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter will offer its next training class in the Spring of 2012.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Now that summer is over and the weather is getting cooler, it is a great time to get outside to work on volunteer projects. Back in January, everyone made a pledge for 2011 volunteer hours. How many of you have met or exceed your pledge and recorded the hours? At the State Conference, awards are given out for naturalist exceeding 250 hours of service. Several naturalists have logged over 1,000 hours so far! We will continue to publish organized opportunities for service hours. Please also consider service projects you can do on your own such as Wilson Park Clean up, Invasive removal, or acorn collection.

Kathy Fell

Kathy's newest turtle. Annual growth rings on every scute of its shell indicate it is approximately 4 years old.



DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR THE PREVIOUS THREE QUARTERS!

The article "How to Use the VMN Volunteer Management System is reproduced in this Edition.

Canoe/Kayaking the Smith River

Family, friends, and a few chapter members of the Southwestern Piedmont Virginia Master Naturalist Chapter July 9th on our 2nd annual paddle down the Smith River. Thanks, Eric Juday, for outfitting us and taking our group shot before we headed downstream.

Beginning at the Smith River Sports Complex and ending at the Mitchell Bridge, we started before the scheduled upstream water releases. The first rapids were a bit shallow and we bumped along many rocks to get through. Fortunately the river depth improved as we continued south.

About 2 hours into the paddle we went over Eggleston Falls, a class 2 rapid. The calm water before the falls helped us find a good route to paddle before committing to the drop.

Below Eggleston Falls, we stopped for lunch, got out of our kayaks and explored the shoreline. Returning to the river, we negotiated twists and turns, sandbars and more rapids to the Mitchell Bridge.

This 6-mile, five hour trip passes through some of the most scenic sections of the Smith River, and we hope to do this again next year with a larger group.



Left to right: Butch Freeland, Lynn and Ashby Pritchett, Mandy Pritchett, Terry Freeland, Dr. Joe Keiper, and Teresa Prillaman. (Photo by Eric Juday)

Junior Naturalist Camp

Submitted by Christy Deatherage

This summer, the Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalist Chapter assisted VMNH Education staff with the first ever Junior Naturalist Camp. In light of the state-wide initiative to expand the Master Naturalist program to a younger audience, VMNH coordinated a week long training program for a new local Junior Naturalist chapter. Children ages 6 – 12 learned about the natural world through fun, hands-on activities in the museum, Frank Wilson Park, and the Smith River. Chapter members Evalyn Chapman and Dottie Haley were guest instructors during the camp. Evalyn presented a program “Treemendous Plants”; focusing on structure, function, classification in the Frank Wilson Park trails, and the importance of trees. Dottie focused on “Amazing Insects” for the campers, that included a slide show, classification activity, bug hunt in the park, and a craft. Lynn Pritchett provided support for staff several days of the camp, assisting with a variety of activities. The camp was held July 18th – 22nd with 15 children ages six to ten participating. All campers received the first portion of their Junior Naturalist certification. The camp was funded by the Bank of America Foundation providing free registration for the children.

Right, Lynn Pritchett, sharing finds from Scavenger Hunt game, based on Joseph Cornell's *Sharing Nature with Children*.



Above, Dottie Haley and camper observe a captured insect on bug hunt.

Right, Evalyn Chapman explains that plants are grouped according to leaf shapes.



PHCC Trail Walk—August 25, 2011

On a hot, overcast evening, eleven Chapter members and two guests had just enough time to walk a new trail at the Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC), before a drenching summer storm cancelled our after-sunset stargazing event at the City Reservoir. Although the evening temperature was still well in the 90-degree range, our group walked the entire trail. As we waited for sunset, the sky filled with clouds and, as sunset drew near, a large thunderstorm scattered us to our cars.

The PHCC Trail Loop is approximately 3/4 of a mile long, situated along a small peninsula that overlooks the Martinsville City Reservoir. The trail begins with crushed rock and changes to a natural surface with slopes and rises with the steepest part being the final leg back to trailhead. The trail winds through a wooded area, where walkers can glimpse the adjacent reservoir at every turn.



Left, our trail-walking group. Lynn Pritchett is behind the camera.

(Photo submitted by Mavis Rice)

Below and to right, photos from Rivers & Trails <http://rivers-trails.blogspot.com/2011/04/thanks-to-unique-partnership-between.html> , showing view of City Reservoir and Sign Guide on trail.



VMNH Behind-the-Scenes Tour - September 22, 2011

Denny Casey conducted a behind-the-scenes tour of the Virginia Museum of Natural History for nine chapter members. A scheduled stargazing event on the roof of the museum was cancelled due to extreme cloud cover.

Our tour started in the Lower Level of the museum, in the Suzanne M. Lacy Education Center. The Center contains a Teacher Resource Center, with free resource materials and reference materials; display cases of vertebrates, shells and mollusks; kits and storage containers for outreach; three classrooms, each having an advanced audiovisual system.

We were then directed to the areas outside the Education Center, containing the loading dock; freight elevator to the exhibit floor; exhibit storage and repair rooms; exhibit staging area; a CO2 chamber used to disinfest of pests all books, papers, records and specimens brought into the Museum; a freezer maintain a constant minus 20 degree Fahrenheit temperature, a “dirty lab” used for washing samples brought in for museum collections; and a Registrar’s office, which records items coming in and going out of the Museum.



From the Lower Level, we walked up the stairwell to the Third Level, which contains the HVAC equipment and provides access to the rooftop. Denny explained the function of the WeatherBug monitoring device installed in the roof.



Then we walked down to the Second Level, where we looked in several rooms of carefully-catalogued museum collections of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insecta, arachnida, crustaceans, mollusks, bryozoans, and in another room, paleo invertebrates.

We then walked down to the Main level, and moved through the Museum’s Research Library and Vertebrate Paleontology Lab, into the Great Hall.

This Museum is truly a world-class institution! The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter is very fortunate to have the Virginia Museum of Natural History as its main sponsoring agency.

*Above right, Chapter members inspect the exhibit storage and repair room on the Lower Level.
Above left, Denny discusses museum collection shelving located on the Second Level.*

(Photos submitted by Christy Deatherage)

Wilson Park Cleanup - Helping to Start a Sea of Change

Submitted by Lynn Pritchett

Each year on the third Saturday in September, hundreds of thousands of volunteers comb lakes, rivers, and beaches around the world for litter. They are at the heart of the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup. Last year, nearly half-a-million people from 108 countries and locations and 45 US states removed 7.4 million pounds of trash from our waterways.

As part of the Ocean Conservancy's 26th Annual International Coastal Cleanup, site captain Robin Jensen organized participants for picking up trash and recording what was found. Trash bags, tally sheets, gloves, first aid kit, trees and shrubs, drinking water and snacks were provided at this carefully planned event. Monitoring amounts and types of trash will contribute to research used to promote future conservation of our streams, rivers, and oceans.

On September 17th, from 10am - 12pm, several members of our Virginia Master Naturalists Chapter joined these efforts, with a focus to keep the water clean in Wilson Park's stream. Chapter volunteers helping were Glenda Hairston, Tamara Poles, Christy Deatherage, Denny Casey, Lynn and Ashby Pritchett, Rachael Wingfield, and Dennis Reeves.

Other area organizations involved in the service event were: Martinsville Rotary and Uptown Rotary clubs, Bassett High School Interact Club, Friends of Wilson Park, and Youth Volunteers from Virginia Museum of Natural History. Volunteers planted dogwood and barberry bushes, spread mulch, and picked up trash as part of the ICC (International Coastal Clean-up) program. The plants were funded from the "Keep Virginia Beautiful Program".



KEEP VIRGINIA BEAUTIFUL

To engage and unite Virginians to improve our natural and scenic environment

Image from <http://www.keepvirginiabeautiful.org/>

Over two hundred seventy pounds of trash and debris were collected and removed from J. Frank Wilson Park during this park cleanup and greening led by the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Partners for this project included Keep Virginia Beautiful, the Southwestern Piedmont chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, the Uptown and Martinsville Rotary Clubs, Friends of Wilson Park, and the Interact Club at Bassett High School.

Mark Rainey created a Cache-In Trash-Out (CITO) [event](#) on www.geocaching.com, which attracted a few out-of-state geocachers into the area to collect garbage. Additionally, volunteers planted 5 dogwood trees and 8 barberry shrubs on the hill by the skate park to help prevent erosion. In total, 48 volunteers participated in the event.

The creek begins in the park, and runs beneath the streets of Stratford Court, Jefferson Circle, Spruce and Finley Streets, then Mulberry and Rives Road, and ends up feeding into the Smith River along Smith Lake Road. As part of the Dan River Basin, and eventually feeds into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean from the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. Helping to keep the creek waters clean helps to keep the Atlantic Ocean waters clean.

*See event photos and Ocean Conservancy's flyer
"10 Things You Can Do for Trash Free Seas" on following pages.*

Wilson Park Cleanup - Helping to Start a Sea of Change (continued)



Above, Bassett High School Interact Club, sponsored by the Martinsville UpTown Rotary Club, Friends of Wilson Park, Youth Volunteers from Virginia Museum of Natural History, and Southwest Piedmont Master Naturalists. Below, Denny Casey with Interact Club volunteer and Mark Rainey in background, and Denny digging a hole. Photos courtesy of Rotary Club of Martinsville.



Park cleanups have become an annual event, thanks to partnering agencies. For more information about the International Coastal Cleanup or to find other cleanups, go to: <http://www.signuptocleanup.org/>

Below, image courtesy of Ocean Conservancy.

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR TRASH FREE SEAS

- CAN IT**
USE A TRASH CAN WITH LID
- TAP IT**
DRINK TAP WATER IN A REUSABLE BOTTLE
- STOW IT**
BE A GREEN BOATER WITH OCEAN CONSERVANCY'S GOOD MATE PROGRAM
- BUTT IN**
WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR ASKING FOR POLICIES THAT ADDRESS OCEAN TRASH
- BUTT OUT**
USE AN ASHTRAY SO CIGARETTE BUTTS DON'T REACH WATERWAYS AND THE OCEAN
- REFUSE IT**
BUY LESS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MANUFACTURED ITEMS WINDING UP AS TRASH IN THE OCEAN
- REUSE IT**
TAKE ALONG YOUR REUSABLE COFFEE MUG, PICNIC SUPPLIES, OR SHOPPING BAG
- REINVENT IT**
SEND LETTERS OR EMAILS TO COMPANIES ASKING THEM TO REDUCE PACKAGING AND CREATE NEW OCEAN-FRIENDLY MATERIALS
- RECYCLE IT**
GO THE EXTRA MILE TO SORT AND SEPARATE ITEMS THAT CAN BE RECYCLED
- REMOVE IT**
CLEAN UP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP
WWW.COASTALCLEANUP.ORG

Ocean Conservancy®
Start a Sea Change

Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference - September 23-25, 2011

Submitted by Kathy Fell

The 2011 conference was hosted by the Rivanna Chapter, whose home base is the Rivanna watershed in Albemarle and parts of Greene and Fluvanna counties.

I had a wonderful time at this year's Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) state-wide conference in Palmyra VA at Camp Friendship. The conference was well attended by Naturalists from all over the state. Some one had the great idea to set out a map with stick pins to make the point. I stuck a pin in Bassett. There was a scavenger hunt to get signatures from people who knew or did certain things. One item was find a person who did volunteer work at the Virginia Museum of Natural History. I signed a lot of papers! It was a good way to meet new people.

The Friday optional sessions were both in Shenandoah National Park. I opted for a hike along the Appalachian Trail between Jarman's Gap and Sawmill Ridge. We noted the differences in the forest species due to aspect (which direction the slope faces) and the underlying geology. It was a soggy hike, punctuated with frequent stops to admire a wide variety of mushrooms. The most amazing was a two foot wide mushroom.* Friday evening after dinner, I set up our chapter display for the sharing and social time. I had lots of nice comments on the new display.

Saturday, I was up at the crack of dawn for a 7AM Birding walk. We learned a little about identifying birds from their song and spotted many with our binoculars. There were seven concurrent sessions on Saturday morning. I chose to learn about the design, construction and maintenance of trails. I figure this might come in handy for improvements to Wilson Park. Our class included a hike along some of the trails at the camp to note the good and bad aspects of their design and maintenance. Other sessions included the history of Virginia forests, interpretive skills, aquatic insects, understanding stream processes, wildlife mapping, and opportunities for service projects in VA State Forests.

Saturday afternoon there were seven concurrent field trips. I went to the Ivy Creek Natural Area in Charlottesville, where we learned about forest succession. After hiking in the woods for about 30 minutes, the instructor announced, "Now, we will go into the woods". We were a little perplexed. Then he took off at a right angle to the trail and started up the hill. We did not see an established trail again for a long time! Other field trips included Forest Management, the forests of Montpelier, Stream monitoring, Pond ecology, Vascular plant survey and a canoe trip to explore the Rivanna River.

Saturday evening we were treated to a very interesting presentation on Thomas Jefferson as a Naturalist, followed by a campfire with fiddle music and silly skits.

Sunday there were six concurrent sessions to choose from. I selected a workshop on evaluating a site for habitat improvement. We had a lecture, then divided into teams. Each team was assigned a different area around the camp. We took and analyzed a soil sample, then walked around and determined the aspect, slope and existing conditions on our site. Back in the classroom, we developed a plan to improve water run-off, formalize foot paths into trails, add new native plants and wildlife habitat, and provide areas for education and enjoyment. Other topics included Designing an Interpretive Trail, Botany and Plant Key training, Land Navigation, Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience, and Animal Tracking.

I only wish I could have been several places at once to take in more of the excellent program.

Final Note:

Our Chapter has been selected to host the 2012 Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference!

** See the photo of Kathy's mushroom on the next page. It has subsequently been identified by David W. Fischer as **Laetiporus cincinnatus**, an edible "chicken mushroom". An article on this mushroom appears on the following page.*



Left, Kathy's Spartan lodgings. Below, a group of conference attendees go birding.



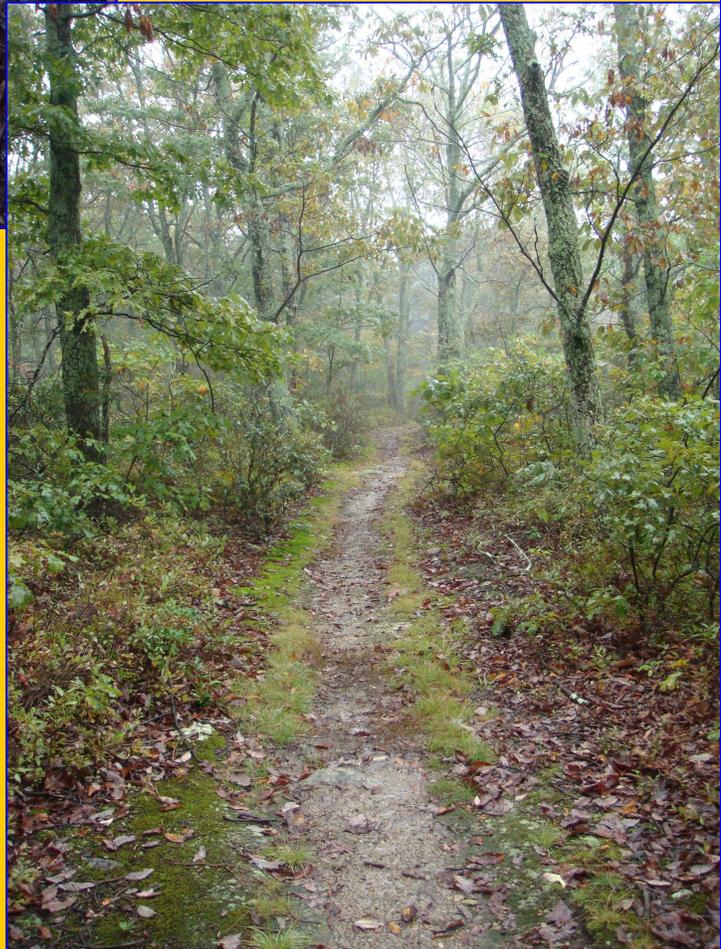
Left, *Laetiporus cincinnatus*, a two-foot wide rosette mushroom the color of an orange creamsicle.

Right, the Appalachian trail, heading south.

Photos by Kathy Fell

To see the 2011 Conference Agenda and Programs, go to:

<http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/tab2.aspx?EventID=978684>



A Mushroom that Tastes Like Chicken- **Laetiporus cincinnatus**

Submitted by Lynn Pritchett



Kathy Fell took this beautiful photo during this year's 3rd Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training. This mushroom was found on a moist forest floor during a September walk along the Appalachian Trail of the Shenandoah National Forest.

Thanks to mycologist David W. Fischer for identifying it as **Laetiporus cincinnatus**. The author of "Edible Wild Mushrooms of North America" and creator of the informative website americanmushrooms.com, Fischer adds details about this and warnings for other sulphur shelf mushrooms. This particular edible fungus is a white-pored sulphur shelf mushroom, which he distinguishes from other sulphur shelf mushrooms that are yellow-pored.

Fischer's webpage relating to the sulphur shelf, or "chicken mushroom" gives specific warnings to be cautious. Distinct species of this genus that grow on certain kinds of trees are toxic.

He warns, "SULPHUR SHELF MUSHROOMS GROWING ON ANY CONIFER TREE (PINE, HEMLOCK, SPRUCE, FIR, LARCH/TAMARACK, ETC.), EUCALYPTUS, OR LOCUST TREES SHOULD NOT BE EATEN! Also, as with a number of wild mushrooms and many other foods (e.g. shellfish, peanuts, and milk products), some individuals have allergic reactions to this particular species."

However, *Laetiporus cincinnatus* seems to grow exclusively from the dead roots of large oak trees, rather than on stumps or logs. "It almost invariably forms rosettes that are attached to a central stalk like structure, and its undersurface is nearly white, without the yellowish coloration typical of *L. sulphureus*," he stated.

There's a lot more information about the Sulphur Shelf or Chicken Mushroom and other choice edible wild mushrooms in Fischer's best-selling book, *Edible Wild Mushrooms of North America*. Because it provides abundant descriptive details and appropriate warnings, this excellent guide is a practical and useful reference to own. His book enables beginners to identify more than 100 of the best, most common, safest, and most delicious species of edible wild mushrooms. Designed with amateur mushroom hunters in mind, the novice can learn to safely find, gather, store, and prepare North American mushrooms for the table. Includes over 70 savory recipes and superb color photographs.

The content of this article was verified by David W. Fischer, whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

HOW TO USE THE “MASTER NATURALIST VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM”

Michelle Prysby, Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator, has created the “Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System”, the new state-managed web site for Master Naturalists.

Chapter members will be able to manage their own contact information, view our chapter events calendar and log volunteer hours.

The following link will take you to the Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System. You will be asked to set your password prior to entering the system.

<https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

If you are a new user, click on “**New User?**”. You will see the message:

If you are a new user, or if you have forgotten your password, use this form to access the portal. After entering your e-mail address the system will send you an e-mail with access into the portal. When you access the portal you will be able to view and/or change your password.

Click on “**Receive e-mail to access portal**”.

Go to your e-mail site and follow instructions to set your personal password. You should now be able to access the main Volunteer web page.

The Volunteer Management System will greet you with your name. *Use your browser’s Back Button to move between web pages.*

In the **Your Information** section:

In **Editing Profile** you can share your Member information or choose to hide this information from other Master Naturalists. You may upload an identifying photo of yourself. You may subscribe to discussions.

In **Add New Hours** you can log your volunteer hours, thus accounting for all categories of service and hours of Advanced Training.

In **View Your Hours** you may view a tally of all credit hours.

In the **Administration** section:

You can **Add Calendar Event**, access **Newsletter/Documents** and **Photo Albums**.

In the **Event Calendars** section you can access the Chapter’s general event calendar.

In the **General Information** section:

You can obtain **Member Roster** contact information and interests for those members who have chosen to share such information with the Chapter. Select **Projects** and click the project name to volunteer for it or to see any upcoming events connected to it. **Newsletter/Documents** and **Photo Albums** will take you to archived records of this type.

When finished click on **Logout** at the top of the web page. What a great web site!

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteer hours reported as of September 30, 2011:

2011 CHAPTER GOAL:

2011 VOLUNTEER HOURS

Categories -

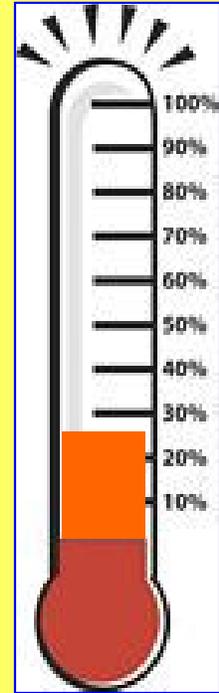
- Administration
- Advanced Training
- Citizen Science
- Education
- Stewardship

Reported Total– 510.25 hours or 25% of our Chapter Goal.

Thank you, volunteers!

Report all volunteer hours to:

Christy Deatherage, turkeyball@comcast.net, (276)627-6276, or submit hours to the VMN Volunteer Management System at <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>



CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2011

To see the full Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Calendar of Events, go to <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/southwesternpiedmont.html#news> And click on “Calendar of Events”.

SPECIAL NOTICES

Thursday, November 10, 2011 Chapter Meeting - Blue Ridge Ski & Outing Club Outdoor Expo 2011 at the National Guard Armory 7:00-9:00PM.
Good time to network!

Thursday December 15, 2011 - Chapter Meeting at VMNH 6:00-8:00PM - Holiday Potluck Dinner & Business Meeting for Election of 2012 Officers.
Come share a meal with fellow members and support the Chapter!

Thursday January 19, 2012 - Chapter Banquet and Awards Meeting at VMNH 6:00PM - 8:00PM.
Join us as we kick off a new year of community-based service and education!