

**Virginia  
Master  
Naturalist**  
Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

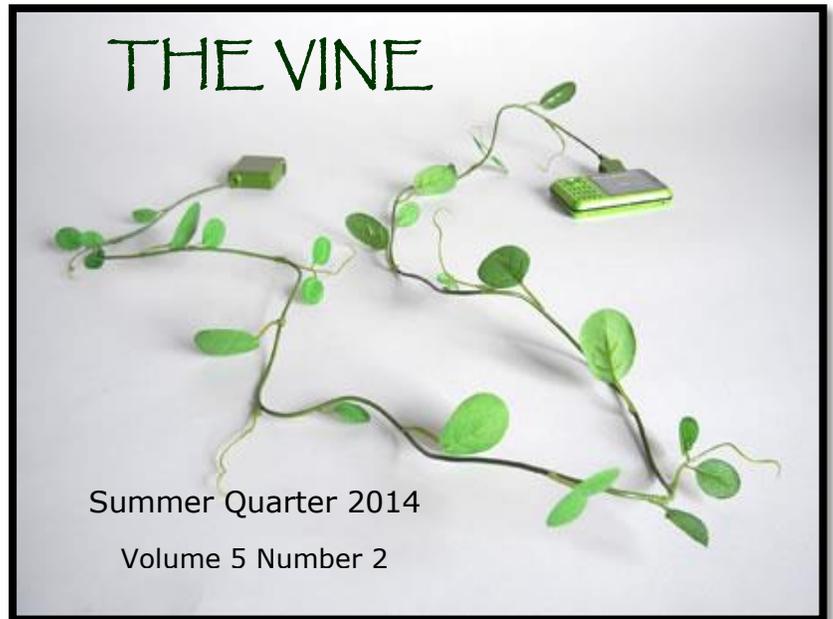


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**Southwestern Piedmont  
Master Naturalists**

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**Chapter Webpage**

<http://www.vmnh.net/virginia-master-naturalist-program>

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## President's Message

We're off with a great start for the first half of the year with many activities and accomplishments. Summer and autumn bring lots of opportunities for members to work together with nature. Please check the calendar often and join us for some nature, fun and a little hard work. The committee members worked hard updating projects, adding new projects and finding interesting educational opportunities for members.

I have been enjoying working in the yard and counting wildlife for the VDGIF Wildlife Mapping in the warmer weather. Except there is one deer that has decided that she lives at my house. She sleeps in my yard and has tasted most of my plants and flowers. I have to admit I really don't mind because I enjoy watching her each evening. As a Master Naturalist, you have an opportunity to assist scientists and researchers with valuable information by sending in your wildlife or insect sightings with many of the projects approved by the Chapter. While you are hiking, kayaking or enjoying the park take the opportunity to make a difference.

The Virginia State Master Naturalist has a new website for members. <http://www.virginiamaster-naturalist.org/>. The website allows an option under communications to receive information about upcoming statewide events and trainings along with other communication. If you have not visited the new site, take a few minutes and sign up to receive just the information you want tailored to your interests.

I hope to see everyone soon at upcoming projects, Smith River Fest and Lynn' annual moth project.

Best regards,  
Teresa Prillaman



# Monarch Butterflies

Report Submitted by Kathy Fell



Recently, I attended a Master Gardener conference in Leesburg, Virginia. The opening talk was about the Monarch butterflies. In 1996, over 1 Billion Monarch butterflies overwintered in Mexico. In 2013, the over-wintering population had plummeted to around 3.3 million. There is serious concern over the continuous decline of this special butterfly.

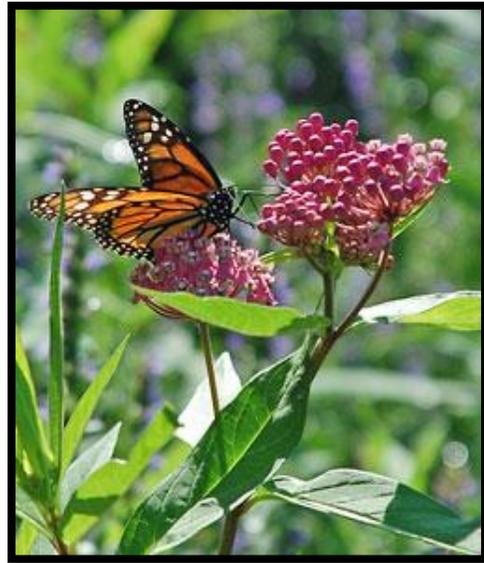
The typical monarch lifecycle is 6 to 8 weeks. It takes about 4 days for an egg to hatch. The Caterpillar feasts on milkweed for about 2 weeks and transforms inside the chrysalis for about 10 days. The butterfly emerges and lasts from 2 to 6 weeks, surviving off nectar plants. The first, second and third generations of butterflies move slowly north as the milkweed grows. The 4<sup>th</sup> generation of butterfly lives for 9 months. This fall generation migrates south to Mexico, over winters there, and returns the following spring to mate and lay eggs as the milkweed emerges.

There are three species of milkweed that support the monarch caterpillar: *Asclepius syriaca* (Common milkweed), *Asclepius incarnata* (Swamp milkweed) and *Asclepius tuberosa* (Butterfly weed). Milkweed seed has a very low germination rate. Milkweed propagates primarily by rhizome growth. It can take up to 100 years for a large milkweed stand to be established.

Many practices are threatening the availability of milkweed plants along the monarch migration routes. Genetically modified crops that are immune to commercial herbicides allow for massive monoculture farming, where tenacious weeds used to grow with crops and in windrows. Mowing along highways, continued growth of cities and urban lawns are also removing the required host plants. Monarchs faced with a loss of host plants will not be able to propagate.

(Continued on next page)

(Monarch Butterflies continued)



There are several things we can do to help.

- 1) Plant milkweed and nectar plants. There are several mass plantings planned in parks in Loudon County to establish new mixed stands of milkweed and nectar plants to support the monarch. There is a program to register monarch way stations for anyone who is interested: <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>  
This site also has lists of both host plants and nectar plants: <http://www.monarchwatch.org/garden/index.htm>
- 2) Delay road side mowing in the spring until after the first generation of monarchs have matured. Delay fall mowing, to leave the critical fall nectar plants in place, until after the migration has passed south for the season.
- 3) Monitor the monarch. Here is one migration map: [http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch\\_spring2014.html](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/monarch_spring2014.html)
- 4) Spread the word.



## Spring at Last!

For those of us earning citizen science volunteer hours through wildlife counting, April was an exciting month. I have been participating in Wildlife Mapping since September of last year and I am able to earn volunteer hours right from my kitchen window. Although most of my counts are different bird species, I have also seen the occasional raccoon and possum visiting my yard in search of food - my cat's food or birdseed from one of my many feeders.

As the winter migrants return to the area, it is exciting to see them again. For some, I haven't seen them since this same time last year. Although not all species of birds feed from bird feeders, these returning species will often visit feeders when they first return to the area. The insect population isn't back in full swing so it is often hard for them to find enough insects to eat. Much to my delight, I have been watching two of these species at my feeder for the past three weeks - Indigo Bunting and Rose Breasted Grosbeak. Although I saw these birds last year, it was only for a very brief time when they first returned to the area. This year, they have been visiting my feeder for almost three weeks now.

Indigo buntings appear as a bright blue bird but they actually are not blue at all. As with Blue Jays, the structure of their feathers diffract light in a way that makes the bird appear blue when they are actually black. That seems pretty high tech for such a little bird and they are always a treat to see.



[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/indigo\\_bunting/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/indigo_bunting/id)

The other species that I rarely see is the Rose Breasted Grosbeak. The beautifully colored male is impossible to miss but the much plainer female easily blends in with the many other types of brown birds. It is amazing how two birds of the same species can look so little alike.

(Continued on next page)

(Spring at Last! continued)



Male



Female

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/rose-breasted\\_grosbeak/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/rose-breasted_grosbeak/id)

Yesterday, I saw for the first time ever a Scarlet Tanager. Absolutely gorgeous!



[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/scarlet\\_tanager/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/scarlet_tanager/id)

The data reported by citizen scientists isn't just useful to the scientists and researchers studying the behavior patterns of wildlife. I have learned a tremendous amount about my local wildlife population just by participating. I am sure that most of the new species I have seen lately have always been around but if you aren't actively looking, it is easy to miss them. If you haven't participated in wildlife mapping yet, give it a try. It's a great way to earn hours right in your own backyard.

Dottie Haley

Certified Master Naturalist

**NATIONAL**  
**Moth Week**  
Global Citizen Science



July 19-27 2014

Everyone can participate



Mark your calendars for July 23<sup>rd</sup> and come out after dinner to the Smith River Sports Complex for an evening of discovering moths with the Southwest Piedmont Virginia Master Naturalists! Public outdoor activities begin at 8pm!

\*Bring your chairs to watch the fun and join in! From 8 to 11pm, come and witness the huge variety of local moths. The high-intensity lights of the sports complex are irresistible to moths! When they drop to the ground, disoriented, they are easy to capture with butterfly nets. ☺

\*Dr. Joe Keiper, with the Virginia Museum of Natural History, will also be there as a guest presenter. He'll shine black lights on white sheets at the canoe launch near the riverside to lure even more moths to capture and photograph.

\*Phil McDonald brings living captive-bred caterpillars and moths from Winston-Salem.

\*View display cases of local moths and butterflies. Many of these will be for sale!

\*All moth enthusiasts are encouraged to attract moths by setting up their own site out in the nearby fields by lighting up white sheets with battery-powered lights or lanterns.

\*Suggestions: If you have a field guide for moths, bring it along! Bottled water, fresh batteries, your camera, light sources (flashlight, camp lantern, LED lights), white sheets, a light jacket? Use insect repellent against ticks, chiggers and mosquitoes. The moths will not harm you! ☺



## The “Pokewood Tree”

For many years I worked in laboratories, institutions notoriously located in basements with no windows. Even though plant lights are available for such places, work rules did not allow plants due to sterility considerations. So needless to say, when I became a technical service representative for a small environmental company, I was overjoyed that my office possessed a huge picture window. I became caretaker for the office ficus tree, a rather large specimen, and soon added a number of my own plants until my office became the official company jungle, threatening to crowd me out of the room.

In spite of all the plants at the window, I still managed a good view of the outdoors (which, of course, I never noticed while working...). Directly outside was a wonderful little dogwood tree. Being a small company, we didn't employ a full time gardener, so operations personnel doubled as groundskeepers. Needless to say, only the basics got done. So it was good tidings for the lowly little pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) growing beside the trunk of the dogwood tree. Being the scientist (and wildflower aficionado) that I am, I chose to observe rather than eradicate the poor “weed”.

And a lovely pokeweed it became. It grew a large trunk-like green and magenta colored stalk; it branched and entwined itself into the dogwood tree reaching out to the very tips of the dogwood twigs as if aspiring to be a tree itself. But autumn came; the pokeweed withered leaving readily visible only the dark purple berries drooping in clusters from the branches of the dogwood tree. Meanwhile the dogwood leaves dropped leaving the bright red dogwood berries showing on the branches. The amazing, astonishing “new species”, the “Pokewood Tree” of red and purple berries stood just outside my window!

The pokeweed can be a nuisance to many a farm, lawn or garden. For instance, the American Horticultural Society tried to create a 12-acre wildflower meadow only to be embarrassed by a massive field of pokeweed growing from seed that had lain dormant for many years while the area was maintained as a lawn. Although parts of this plant are highly toxic to livestock and humans and it is considered a major pest by farmers, it is actually a very interesting plant. It is a truly indigenous American plant that ranges from Maine to Florida and westward to the Great Plains. American Indians ate the very young shoots of the plant in spring, dug and dried the roots for medicine, and used the purplish-red berry juice to color clothing and other articles. The name poke comes from the Indian name for the plant, “pocan” that is supposedly derived from an Indian word meaning blood and referring to the color of the berry juice. Some other names for the plant can give ideas of how it has been viewed and used: Virginia poke, American nightshade, cancer jalap, inkberry, pigeon berry, pokeroot, pokeberry, red ink plant, chui xu shang lu (Chinese medicine), and poke sallet (or poke salad)

Submitted by Ellen Jessee, Master Naturalist



## *Invasive Plant Removal Days in the Future Physick Garden*

*Written by Lynn Pritchett, CVMN*

[Alycia Crall](#), our Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator, shared information throughout the Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) network regarding a regional effort to remove invasive plants in Virginia and other states on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014. This annual event, which originated in Virginia and is coordinated by the [Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council](#), now exists in seven states.



Dr. Noel Boaz offered to be in charge of coordinating an effort for our chapter's involvement during [Invasive Plant Removal Day](#). On that day, chapter members were invited to show up at what is to become a public garden behind the Integrative Centers for Science and Medicine (ICSM) building on Fayette Street between 8 am and 5 pm to help remove invasive plants and acquire volunteer hours.

There are two lots behind the building which have been deeded to ICSM for the College of Henricopolis School of Medicine. This space has been dedicated to become a medicinal plant Physick Garden. In addition to contributing to the green space around the future medical school, thus contributing to its LEED environmental building certification, the garden will be used in the medical school curriculum as students study Pharmacology and Biochemistry.

Dr. Boaz has expressed an interest to inventory all of the existing plants on these lots, to make note of native plants and to remove harmful and invasive plants. Many other chapter members, including Liz Stanley, have been involved with this garden project since 2013. Liz, the Executive Director of the Gateway Streetscape Foundation, provided an advanced training class in November on this site to help volunteers learn to identify invasive plants. Noel Boaz and Ellen Jessee labeled trees in the Physick Garden during another one of these days, as shown in Linda Drage's photo below. I believe Ellen might have made this tag for the Virginia Pine.



My husband and I came along to offer assistance to this project during Invasive Plant Removal Day. Dr. Noel Boaz was contemplating a tree's identity using a reference guide, and was pleased to see more help show up. Not long afterwards, Linda Drage stopped in for a brief visit to encourage all of us.

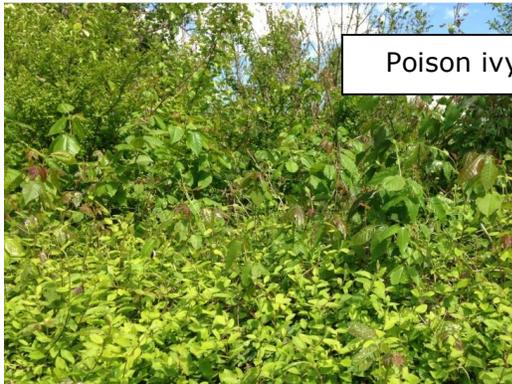
In perhaps the warmest hours of the afternoon, Ashby, my husband, set out to remove large masses of saplings, shrubs, and vines. His main tools were tree loppers and a couple of chainsaws. We raked aside what could have been more than a couple of pickup truckloads of vegetation, some of which Noel had cut down earlier in the day. Pictured below is an example of the mass of vegetation we were tackling. My husband's frame was dwarfed by a thicket of grape and honeysuckle vines and wild rose clumps towering overhead around a poplar tree.



Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)



The tangle of vines and poison ivy carpeted the ground and mangled saplings of various types in the undergrowth. More mature trees, predominantly paper mulberry, poplar, Siberian elm, and maple, provided a shaded canopy. The air was cooler there, and we enjoyed the warmth of the sunshine as well. I stayed away from the poison ivy, as I am allergic to it!



Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)



There are a few poplar trees on the lot, and they had distinctive heart-shaped leaves. I think this [reference](#) might help us to determine more specifically which one of the species it might be. I am leaning toward tagging it as the Heart-Leaved Balsam Poplar (*Populus candicans*). Below are images of a [poplar leaf illustration](#) from the reference, and a photo I took of a poplar leaf from the site back in November. This plant is very likely to have healing qualities, as it is known as the [Balm of Gilead](#).





*Wild grapevine*



*Paper mulberry trees marked with surveyor tape*



*English Ivy climbing trunks*

I used the orange surveying tape Noel provided for me to mark all types of invasive plants found on the lot that was closer to the building. I also photographed representatives of each of several species of indigenous and invasive plants. I used Will Cook's web page, [Carolina Nature](#), as a reference for my identification of plants discovered on the lots. Below is a list of links found on which is his inventory of life in North Carolina. The final pages of my article contain some of my labeled photos from the site to document and reference most of these plants.

**Invasive aliens:**

- [Chinese privet \(\*Ligustrum sinense\*\)](#)
- [Japanese Privet \(\*Ligustrum japonicum\*\)](#)
- [Paper Mulberry \(\*Broussonetia papyrifera\*\)](#)
- [White Mulberry \(\*Morus alba\*\)](#)
- [English Ivy \(\*Hedera helix\*\)](#)
- [Japanese Honeysuckle \(\*Lonicera japonica\*\)](#)
- [Wineberry \(\*Rubus phoenicolasius\*\)](#)

**Indigenous plants:**

- [Black Walnut \(\*Juglans nigra\*\)](#)
- [Willow Oak \(\*Quercus phellos\*\)](#)
- [Scarlet Oak \(\*Quercus coccinea\*\)](#)
- [Virginia Creeper \(\*Pparthenocissus quinquefolia\*\)](#)
- [Eastern Poison Ivy \(\*Toxicodendron radicans\*\)](#)
- [Sawtooth Blackberry \(\*Rubus argutus\*\)](#)
- [Eastern Redcedar \(\*Juniperus virginian\*\)](#)



*Chinese privet*



*Japanese privet*



*Paper Mulberry is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers are produced on separate trees. These long clusters of flower are from a male tree. The leaves, above the flowers in the photo, are a bit fuzzy with a silvery look to them.*

Will Cook's webpage for the Paper Mulberry includes the two photos below. I've included them to show the difference between the male and female flowers, and the fruit that develops from the female flowers. The leaves have a lot of variety too!



*Bizarre ball-shaped flower clusters on female trees*



*Red ball-shaped aggregate fruits develop from female flowers*



The White Mulberry was introduced from Eurasia. Leaves are highly variable, like the Paper Mulberry and Sassafras. The aggregate fruits turn from green to white to red to black as they ripen, and end up looking much like blackberries.



Japanese Honeysuckle has tender green growth emerging from the nodes and end of the vine which twist and wrap around nearby objects and plants. Early leaves may have an oak-like appearance, but most leaves are oval with smooth edges. As it gets older, tender stems thicken into a strong woody vine that does not break easily. Most plants cannot compete with the strangling grasp of honeysuckle. It can quickly smother a shrub and it can cover low-growing plants as well. This fast-the tree to climbing vine can wrap itself around trees with its own stems and leaves, blocking light and soaking up enough water to leave die.



*Another plant imported from eastern Asia, Wineberry was introduced to the U.S. in 1890 as breeding for new raspberry cultivars. Like most of the invasive plants featured in this article, wineberry can form extensive, dense thickets that displace native vegetation and restrict light to lower growing vegetation.*



*'Bradford Pear' is the cultivar name for the Callery Pear. It was brought in from China to be used as an ornamental tree because of the profuse cloud of white blossoms which cover the tree in early spring before the leaves emerge. The glossy leaves are green during summer, and then turn yellow, red, and finally chocolate brown.*

The following plants are native to our area...



*Some type of bramble...most likely to be a [blackberry](#) bush in bloom.*



[Virginia Pine \(Pinus virginiana\)](#)



**Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)**



**Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)**

*Photo from November 2013*

***More Photos of Indigenous Plants from November 2013***



This native black walnut sapling would be easy to mistake for a Tree of Heaven. However, it lacks the stink of that invasive

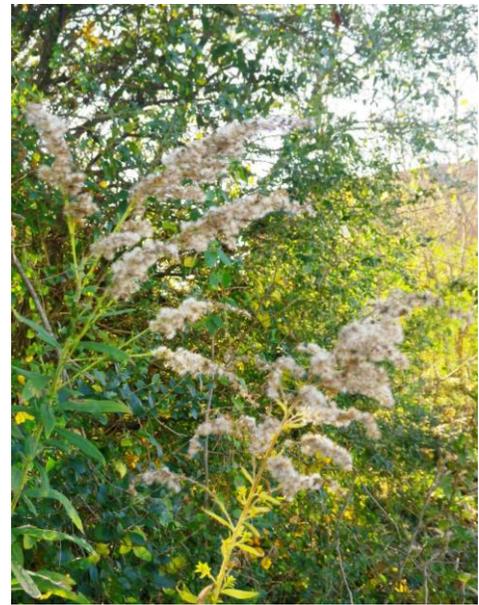


A very large poplar tree on the lot has heart-shaped leaves. I believe it is *Populus candicans*, which is also known as [Balm of Gilead](#).

*A couple more invasive species*



*Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida)*



*Goldenrod*



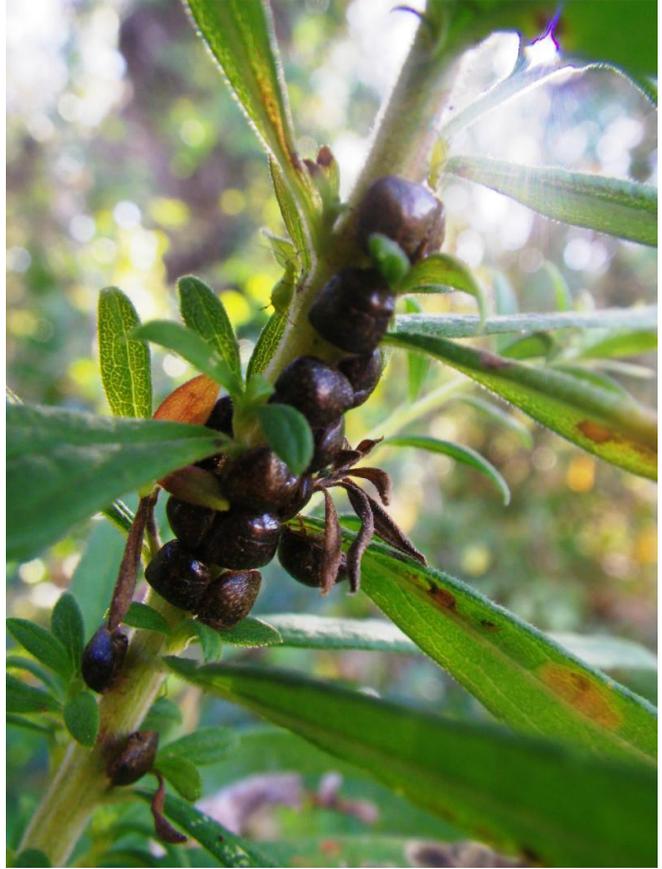
*Black Locust (Robinia pseudoacacia) leaves and trunk*



## *A couple more invasive species*



*English ivy (Hedera helix)*



*An invasive insect...Kudzu bugs on goldenrod!!*

Although this article focuses mainly on invasive and undesirable plants, the unfortunate reality is that invasive plants aren't the only threat to this land. There are obvious invasive insects to consider, such as the brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) and the more recent kudzu bug (*Megacopta cribraria*). As more time is spent on the property, it is very likely other discoveries will be worth consideration. There is evidence of burrowing and I am curious as to what lives down these holes. Rather than resorting to a mass removal of all plants and animals in this area, we are investing the time and effort to check for, and protect, all unusual and endangered native species worth saving before managing these invasive weeds and pests.

The Virginia Master Naturalist Program provides training and guidance for volunteers to consider with the removal of invasive plants and animals. Having many volunteers committed to the goal of creating a healthier community helps us not to lose sight of the big picture and other details that will have impact upon this land. Controlling invasive plants can be challenging, and prioritizing the needs of the local ecosystem is good stewardship of land. I have found myself having a greater respect for all life with this training.

Hats off to Dr. Noel Boaz and Liz Stanley, and all the other volunteers for their efforts in this endeavor! The success of a healthy garden for medicinal plants will be much more likely with the vision, leadership and training they have provided.



In April, Virginia Master Naturalist [Bob Tuggle](#) led a guided walk to help our chapter members discover and learn more about the wildflowers along the Fieldale Textile Trail and the Fieldale River Trail. Spring ephemerals included anemones, bloodroot, Virginia spring beauty, twinleaf, Virginia bluebells, larkspur, trout lilies, and trillium. Also [noted along the trail](#) were many other wildflowers and ferns, a tiger beetle, moths, a native brown trout dangling off a fisherman's line, pawpaw blooms, pinxter azalea blooms, and scenic photo opportunities. Lots of enthusiasm now exists to create advanced training for future events and other resources for our local trails and wildflowers. Thanks Bob.

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteer hours reported as of  
June 25, 2014:

**2014 CHAPTER GOAL:  
1000 VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Categories -

- Administration - 125.1
- Advanced Training - 106.10
- Citizen Science - 351.9
- Education - 133.25
- Stewardship - 17



**Reported Total– 732.27 hours or 73% of Chapter Goal.**

Thank you, volunteers!

Jessica Scott Phillips, Chair of Membership Committee

### FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

### See Chapter Calendar

**DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR  
VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR THE  
SPRING QUARTER 2014!**

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

### **Have a new Volunteer Project in Mind?**

Download a Volunteer Project Proposal Form from our Chapter's VMN

**Volunteer Management System:**

<https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/users/documents/20Forms151.doc>

### **Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Website:**

<http://www.vmn.net/virginia-master-naturalist-program> .

Click on "Calendar of Events" to see what other things we are doing!

