



**Virginia
Master
Naturalist**
Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

THE VINE



FALL, 2013

Volume 4 Number 3

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DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR 2013!

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Southwestern Piedmont Master

**Naturalists C/O VMNH
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Martinsville, VA 24112
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Dr. Dennis Casey, Chapter Advisor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall and Winter are approaching fast. As a fellow nature lover, during the winter I miss going outside and viewing nature. The Chapter has three projects that allow members to view and enjoy nature even from their window during the cold months and still provide valuable volunteer hours to needed agencies. Wildlife Mapping is a project by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. It is an outreach program that allows Master Naturalists an opportunity to collect wildlife information and perform field studies that will contribute to Virginia's biological databases. To become a Wildlife Mapper, members must attend an Advanced Training class. Please contact me if you would like to learn more about Wildlife Mapping.

(continued on next page)

SPECIAL FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE!

- [2013 Photography Contest](#)
- [What Kind of Worm?](#)
- [Blue Bird Box Monitoring at Chatmoss C.C.](#)

Download a Volunteer Project Proposal Form from our Chapter's VMN [Volunteer Management System](https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm): <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

The sequence to access the form is-General Information:Newsletter/Documents:Blank Forms:Project Proposal Form. Click to open.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

Another project is Project FeederWatch. As a volunteer you are helping scientists by counting birds from November through early April from the comfort of your window. It is available from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for a small fee. Another cold winter project is the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). It has people all over the world counting birds for four days. It is a great project and so much fun. The GBBC runs from February 14th to February 17th. This best part about these two projects is you are enjoying the beauty of the birds, while feeding them during the cold months when food is more difficult for them to find.

All of these projects are approved as volunteer hours for Chapter members.

Please check out their websites to learn more. Happy birding and wildlife watching!

http://store.birds.cornell.edu/Project_FeederWatch_s/42.htm

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlifemapping/>

Teresa Prillaman

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

Image from Project
FeederWatch web page.



2013 Photography Contest

Submitted by Dottie Haley

Entries for the annual chapter photo contest were accepted from July 27 to September 15. Voting was completed during the week of September 16. We had a total of 7 members contribute photographs in at least one of the three categories - Fauna, Flora and Other. Sixteen members participated in voting for the winning entries.



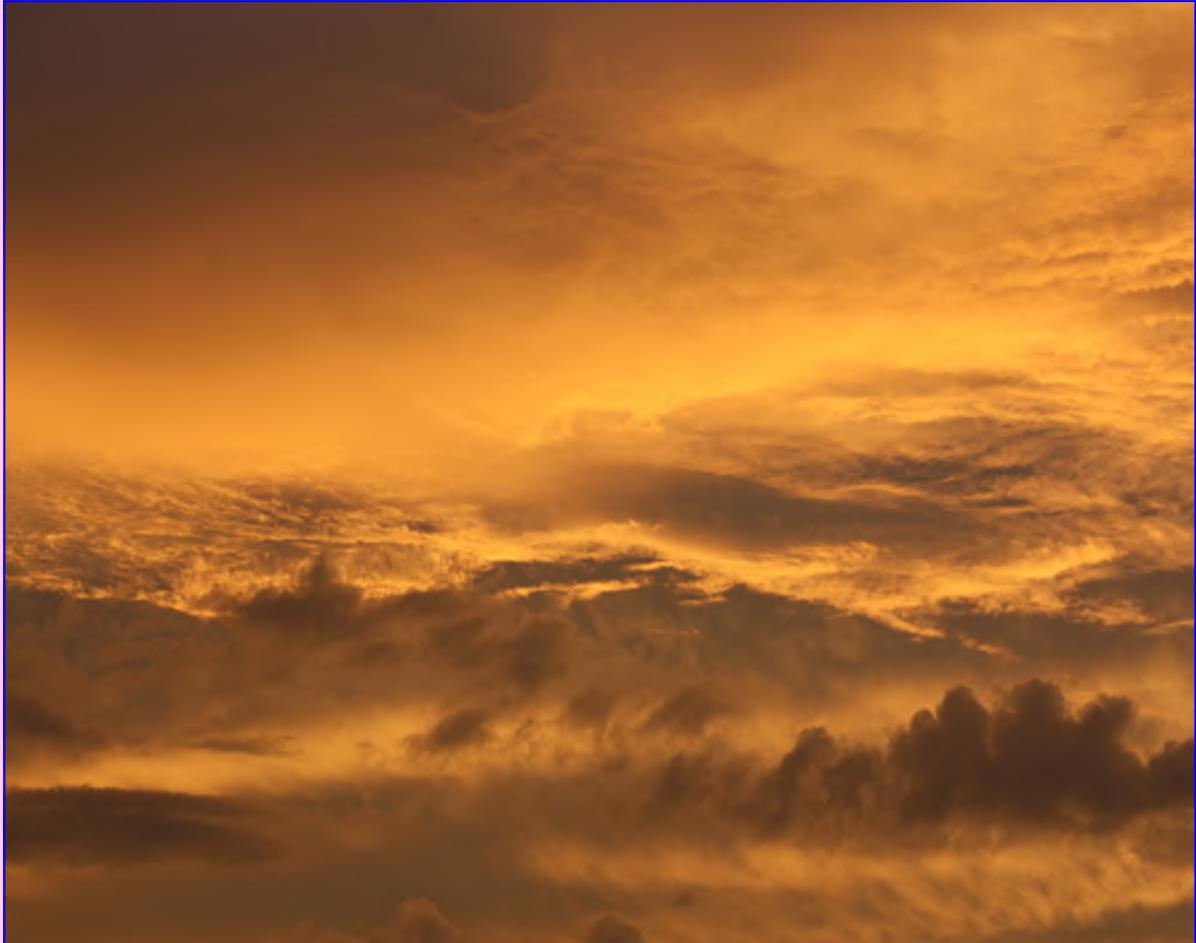
Above, winning photo in Fauna category was Lynn Pritchett's grasshopper.

2013 Photography Contest (continued)



Above, from the 11 entries in the Flora category, the first place winner was Kathy Fell's dogwood bloom.

2013 Photography Contest (continued)



Above, from the 9 entries in the Other category, the first place winner was Mary Foster's clouds

First place winners from each category are making preparations to enter their photos into the state competition to be held at the annual state conference on October 18.

Be sure to start saving your photos for entry in next year's contest.

Dottie Haley

VMNH JUNIOR NATURALIST SUMMER CAMP ADVENTURE

July 15-19, 2013

Submitted by Christy Deatherage

The Education and Public Programs Department at VMNH offered a "Junior Naturalist Camp" in July. This is the third year the camp has been offered. It is modeled after the Basic Training Course, and campers ages 9-11 spent a week investigating important topics in nature and the environment. Chapter members have been invited each year to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with the campers. This year, four Master Naturalists from the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter directly supported the camp. Teresa Prillaman joined the campers on "Plants and Trees Day" and helped lead an interpretive hike through J. Frank Wilson Memorial Park. Campers stopped along the trail to learn basic tree identification skills, and marvel at other interesting things such as millipedes along the way. Tree journals were created with bark and leaf rubbings and sketches of their favorite trees. Dottie Haley presented on "Insects Day". Campers enjoyed an interactive slide show, crafts, and even sampled honey from Dottie's families bee hives. Dottie later led the campers on an insect hunt in the park. Lynn Pritchett lent her expertise throughout the week, assisting with day to day tasks, and even joined the campers in the Smith River collecting macroinvertebrates! In addition, need-based scholarships were awarded to eight campers thanks to a generous donation from a chapter member on behalf of the chapter. Thanks to everyone that helped make this camp a memorable learning experience!

Christy Deatherage

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



Summer
Adventure
Camps

NATIONAL MOTH WEEK FIELD ACTIVITY

July 24, 2013

Submitted by Lynn Pritchett

This summer, the Southwestern Piedmont VMN Chapter sponsored an evening event to celebrate 'National Moth Week'. The public was invited to attend 'Moth Night' after dusk on Wednesday, July 24th and participate in various fun and educational activities at the Smith River Sports Complex. Children were encouraged to attend.



To increase the likelihood of moth-spottings, the Chapter made arrangements for the bright lights around the field to burn late into the evening to attract moths. To lure in a greater diversity of moths and other night-flying insects, Dr. Joe Keiper set up a sheet illuminated with a generator-powered black light near the Smith River. Butterfly nets and coloring pages were offered to children and other visitors.

Above, photo of Dr. Keiper at illuminated sheet, courtesy of Mary Foster.

A slideshow presentation of local moths and their caterpillar larvae was presented by Lynn Pritchett, CVMN. Many Chapter members attended, and got the benefit of advanced training credit. Attendees also met Phil McDonald, another moth enthusiast. Driving up with his wife from of High Point, North Carolina, McDonald brought live moths and caterpillars, set out displays of framed specimens and remained available to answer questions.



Above, photo of Lynn Pritchett, courtesy of Mary Foster.

The Martinsville Bulletin printed an article written by Ben Williams and photos taken by Bulletin photographer Mike Wray. The article can be read online at <http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/article.cfm?ID=38469&back=archives>

National Moth Week began last year as a global project to encourage the public to observe and document moths, and is celebrated during the last full week of July. The event allows people of all ages to become "citizen scientists" and contribute scientific data about moths they observe in their own communities. For details about contributing data, visit <http://nationalmothweek.org/how-to-submit-data/>.

What Kind of Worm?

Submitted by Dottie Haley

The Naturalist in me was very excited to learn that one of the trees at my place of work was hosting a large crop of caterpillars. Their presence was evident each time I used the sidewalk to cross from one side of the street to the other. The sidewalk is light colored so the dark caterpillar droppings abundantly scattered across the walk were hard to miss. Occasionally, I would catch a glimpse of one of the caterpillars that had fallen from the tree. They were very attractive caterpillars so I could only imagine that whatever it morphed into was equally beautiful and impressive. I had to find out what it was.

I made a mental note of what the caterpillar looked like and did some research on the internet but didn't find anything that matched what I remembered it to look like. Maybe if I could identify the tree, it would provide a clue as to what the caterpillar was. I tried to find it in my [Native Trees of Virginia](#) book but was unsuccessful. As I was leaving work, I took one of the large, heart shaped leaves from the tree. I was planning to go by Kathy Fell's house after work and was hoping she would offer her Master Gardener expertise to help me determine the identity of the tree. Using her resource books, we narrowed it down to two possibilities - the Northern Catalpa or the Paulownia. It was a start.

The next morning, I arrived at work equipped with my camera and was excited to see several of the large caterpillars lying on the sidewalk as I drove in. I began taking pictures and quickly noticed that not all of the caterpillars were exactly the same. The markings varied from caterpillar to caterpillar. As I was headed into the building one of my co-workers asked what I was doing. I explained my quest to identify the caterpillars and they informed me that they were catalpa worms. Their Grandpa used to have a catalpa tree in his yard and they had often used these caterpillars as fishing bait. That name certainly agreed with the identification of the tree. Did I have my answer?



Photos submitted by Dottie Haley

What Kind of Worm? (continued)

As soon as I got home that day, I Googled "catalpa worm". There it was - mystery solved. The caterpillar is the larval stage of the catalpa sphinx moth. The female lays several hundred eggs on the underside of the leaves of the catalpa tree in March/April. After a five to seven day incubation, the larvae hatch and typically grow to a length of up to 3 inches. They possess a single long spike on the end of the abdomen, a characteristic of larvae of the sphinx and hummingbird moth families. The caterpillars burrow into the ground to pupate and the final product is the catalpa sphinx moth. The entire process takes about six weeks with two to three cycles per year being common. I must admit, the adult is not as fancy and elaborate as I had envisioned but it is pretty none the less.



Adult Catalpa Sphinx Moth

Photo from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ceratomia_catalpae_sjh.JPG

Although not very appealing to birds, as my friend had noted, the larvae are highly desired as fishing bait. Quoting from http://forestry.about.com/od/alternativeforest/ss/catalpa_7.htm, the catalpa worm "is revered as the best fish bait to be found naturally." I came across websites that gave instructions for preserving them for later use and found a posting inquiring how to attract the "worms" to an existing catalpa tree "because catfish love them". Ebay had seeds for the catalpa tree listed as "Catalpa Worm Tree Seed". What sets these caterpillars apart? They apparently have very tough skin which makes them durable as bait and they also ooze a sweet substance that is attractive to fish. Who knew?

What Kind of Worm? (continued)

I continued to be fascinated with the worms over the next few weeks. I would always look for them as I approached the sidewalk and often saw the remains of catalpas that had fallen victim to the parasitic braconid wasp's infestation. The female wasps lay their eggs just under the skin of the caterpillar. When the eggs hatch, they feed on the insides of the caterpillar. Once mature, the larvae chew their way out through the skin and spin tiny oval cocoons. By the time the wasps emerge from their cocoons, the caterpillar is compromised and weakened and will soon die.



Photo of Catalpa Worm Infested with Braconid Wasp

Photo from <http://bugguide.net/node/view/216054>

The complexity and harmony of the world we live in never ceases to amaze me. I guess that's why I became a Master Naturalist. John Muir, credited with being one of the first conservationists, would spend time each day teaching his two daughters the names of plants and flowers on their farm. When they asked why, his response was "how would you feel if people didn't call you by your name?" I agree with that philosophy and always enjoy learning the name of something that I didn't know before.

Dottie Haley

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist, Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

SMITH RIVER CLEANUP

August 3, 2013

(From Martinsville Bulletin and DRBA Reports)

Area residents gathered on Saturday for the second Smith River Cleanup. The cleanup was a partnership between DRBA, Gateway Streetscapes, Henry County and Bridgestone. A cookout at Fieldale Pavilion followed the cleanup. Several Master Naturalist Southwestern Piedmont Chapter volunteers participated in the cleanup, working from boats, removing hundreds of pounds of metals, car batteries and construction materials from shallow areas along the river bank.

The Martinsville Bulletin reported on August 5, 2013:

More than 200 volunteers removed garbage and other discarded items from a 30-mile stretch of the river, its banks and nearby roads. Items ranged from plastic bottles and other household materials to bulky items such as a couch, a water heater, more than 300 tires and even some hobby horses, according to DRBA Program Manager Brian Williams. ...

Williams surmised the river overall is as clean "as it's ever been," especially now that some industries that once dumped chemicals into it no longer are doing so.

In the future, "it can be as clean as any river in the country," he said, but first, "we need societal norms (on littering) to change."

All volunteers were asked to bring their own boat or waders to join the clean up crews. Some of the volunteers used kayaks and canoes to reach garbage in the river. They could either pick their own section of river, or be assigned a site to work by appearing at the staging area in Fieldale Park.

After the event, participants were invited to Fieldale Park for a cook out and door prize drawings



Left, cleanup volunteers nearly swamp their boat removing tires from the Smith River.

(Photo from the VMN Volunteer Management System Photo Gallery)

WILDLIFE MAPPING

September 7, 2013

Submitted by John Prillaman

Who enjoys watching, taking walks, and enjoying what nature has to offer? Who would like to get volunteer hours for doing the things they enjoy? It is as simple as taking a tally of all the wildlife we encounter in the places we enjoy visiting, while walking or just sitting, just by looking around. What do we call such an easy way to help track the wildlife populations in various areas? Wildlife Mapping.

There was a great turnout for the "Wildlife Mapping" class held by the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists at VMNH on September 7th. We identified the various local species we could record, the areas and frequency of sighting them, the importance of wildlife mapping, and how to do it.

After the certification class, we took a walk through the Frank Wilson Park behind the museum and began our journey. We encountered various species of butterflies, squirrels, birds, spiders, and frogs. Everyone enjoyed walking and socializing along the park's trail while logging the various species, yet we were fully aware of the important work we were accomplishing for Wildlife Mapping.

Many of our Chapter's Master Naturalists have voiced that it is difficult to accumulate the minimum number of annual volunteer hours for re-certification. With Wildlife Mapping, it is no longer the case. It's as simple as choosing an area, perhaps around your home or favorite park, and logging the species observed. You can do it alone, with a friend, or with a group; it is really up to you. This is definitely a great way to help DGIF log the species into their data base, while relieving stress and relaxing with a stroll through the woods. I look forward to seeing you on the trails.

John Prillaman, Master Naturalist
Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

Photo submitted by John Prillaman.

The Wildlife doesn't have to crawl on you to be counted!



"Wildlife Mapping" is a citizen science program developed by the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), one of our Chapter's state sponsors.

The project is an opportunity for citizens to share their wildlife observations with resource managers in Virginia. It is an important tool to help state and local resource managers keep track of common species. It complements scientific surveys, monitoring, and research efforts in the Commonwealth by providing distributional data on a variety of species. Volunteers that are not certified may earn credit but must accompany a certified Wildlife Mapper in the field and must submit all observations to the chapter's Wildlife Mapping Project Chairs.

Refer to the President's Message in this issue of the Vine for more information on Wildlife Mapping and the DGIF website. Also see the Chapter's listing on the Volunteer Management System; click on "Projects", then on "Service CitSci: Wildlife Mapping" for more details.

INTERCOASTAL CLEANUP IN J. FRANK WILSON PARK

September 14, 2013

Submitted by Glenda Hairston

Master naturalists Denny Casey, Janine Howard, Dennis Reeves, and Linda Drage along with Bassett High School Interact Club members, Rotary Club members and a museum youth volunteer participated in the annual International Coastal Cleanup in J. Frank Wilson Park on September 14th. The International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest effort to clean and protect waterways and the ocean. Volunteers recorded the types of trash collected and the data was submitted to support litter prevention education programs.

Glenda Hairston

Certified Master Naturalist, Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



Pictured above, Chapter Adviser Denny Casey, Master Naturalists Janine Howard, Dennis Reeves and Linda Drage, plus friends. Not pictured: Glenda Hairston, site captain for ICC event. Photo submitted by Glenda Hairston.

REPTILE DAY FESTIVAL

September 21, 2013

Source: Martinsville Bulletin and VMNH News Articles

Reptile Day at VMNH offered a unique opportunity for visitors to see more than 200 live reptiles and amphibians, including snakes, lizards and turtles. Most of the snakes on display were nonpoisonous, but a few poisonous ones common to Virginia, including a copperhead and rattlesnake, were available for inspection, held in safe enclosures.

Many of the children and adults at the festival showed little to no fear of the snakes, many of whom, under the supervision of their handlers, held nonpoisonous snakes and wrapped larger ones around their arms and bodies.

Demonstrations by presenters during the day explained the critical role of reptiles in the environment and, most often, a harmless role in peoples' day-to-day lives. Several photos appear below, submitted by Southwestern Piedmont Chapter member Christine Boran.

See "Snakes Alive" Martinsville Bulletin article at <http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/article.cfm?ID=39132> .



Mark Kilby of the Luray Zoo makes his reptile presentations to a full room of attendees; display table.

Photos submitted by Christine Boran



BATS!

September 26, 2013

Submitted by Lynn Regan

On Thursday September 26, Bonnie Miles, a fellow Master Naturalist from the Lynchburg area and an impassioned member of Bat Conservation International visited us at the Museum for a talk on Bats.

We learned about the species here in Virginia. Of the 17 species we have here, 7 are on the Federal endangered list. With over 1300 species in the world, bats make up 1/5th of all mammal species. They are closely related to primates and humans; that was a surprise to me. Myths were dispelled and facts were gleaned.

Much of the discussion centered around the plight of bats from the massive breakout of White nose disease, a fungus. It has killed 6 to 7 million already. Once a cave is infected, the mortality rate is 99-100%! For more information, visit BCI's website at:

www.batcon.org

Bonnie emphasized that we are not to be afraid of bats, but be afraid for their declining numbers since bats play a great part in keeping down the insect population.

Over 20 people attended the presentation, including many Master Naturalists in our Chapter. Bonnie's passionate interest for these creatures is evident by her actions in raising (part of that meant feeding every two hours, 24/7!) three orphaned brown bats and releasing them back to their world. Kudos to Bonnie for this special gift to life!

Lynn Regan

Certified Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

Below, Bonnie Miles conducts Q&A during her presentation.

Photos submitted by Lynn Regan

Below, Bonnie's opening slide sure did get our attention. It's a Pemba Flying Bat from the Pemba Island off Tanzania, Africa.



SOS TRAINING AND CHAPTER SOCIAL

September 28, 2013

Submitted by Linda Drage

SOS Water Quality Training field trip was held on Saturday, September 28 at Kathy Fell's house. Wayne Kilpatrick did another fine job of telling everyone about the Virginia Save Our Streams (SOS) monitoring water quality by counting critters that live in the stream which helps to determine the quality of the water. We were looking for Macroinvertebrates that live on the bottom. We checked for presence, absence, and abundance of certain organisms in the stream (what critters are making the stream their home). Everyone got a chance to get in the water and either hold the net while the other rubbed pebbles and sand to loosen up the critters so they would go into the net. Afterwards, the nets are spread out on a table, the macroinvertebrates are sorted, removed and counted, and a formula is employed to the count to determine how clean the stream is.

Afterwards we had a cookout at Kathy's home.

Linda Drage

Certified Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



Clockwise, Wayne Kirkpatrick explains the procedure, the nets are put into the stream, carefully removed, and contents identified and counted.

Photos submitted by Linda Drage

Blue Bird Box Monitoring at Chatmoss Country Club

Submitted by Dottie Haley

It's early August and I just finished my second season of Bluebird box monitoring at Chatmoss. Even though I had some challenges early in the season, it ended up being a very good year. The boxes that existed at Chatmoss when I started monitoring the trail last year were old and lacked some of the recommended guarding. Because the boxes opened from the front, they could not be retro-fitted with Noel Guards which are designed to prevent predation by some larger bird species. Even though most of the boxes were fitted with snake guards, they used three inch conduit instead of the newly recommended six inch stovepipe guards. I lost several eggs and babies to predators last year so my main goal with the box upgrades was to improve the fledge rate by reducing predation. I accomplished that goal. Even though the total number that fledged from the trail was a little less, the fledge rate was greatly increased - 76% in 2012 and 95% in 2013.



Left, old nest box. Right, new nest box. Photos by Dottie Haley.

Blue Bird Box Monitoring (continued)

There are a total of 13 nest boxes on Chatmoss. I submitted a proposal and received a grant from the Virginia Bluebird Society for placing new boxes on half of the trail. These boxes were made in July and installed on the trail in early August 2012. When I picked the boxes and fence posts up from Vickie Fuquay in Danville, she instructed me on how the guards and box should be mounted on the fence posts that were provided. In order to complete the upgrade on the other half of the trail, I contacted the Boy Scout District Executive and asked if the Boy Scouts could be of assistance. Within a couple of days, I had been contacted by the leader of a local troop who told me that they could donate materials and build the additional six boxes that I needed. The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists had agreed to fund the materials for the Noel and snake guards and the fence posts for mounting these boxes. My husband purchased the materials and assembled the guards. We installed them on the other half of the trail in early January 2013. I was all set for the season - or so I thought.

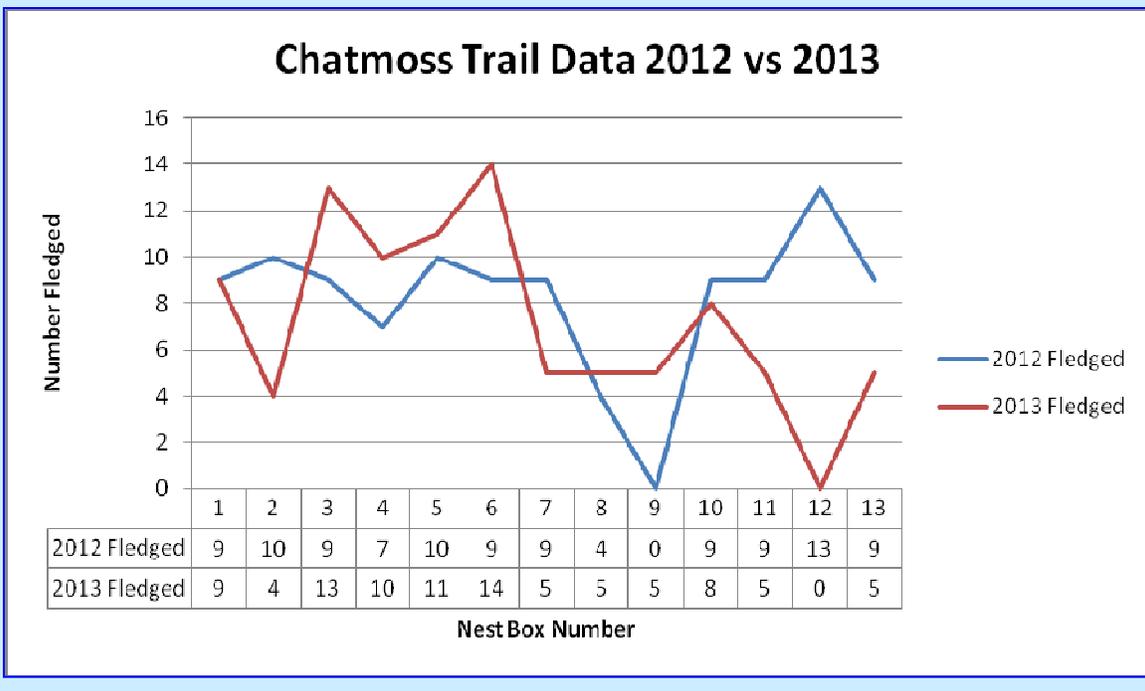
Based on my results from 2012, I started monitoring the boxes on March 10. The first eggs had been laid on March 21, 2012. The birds knew we had a late spring this year so I didn't see the first egg until April 2, 2013. By mid April, I had nests and/or eggs in all of the six boxes that had been built by the Boy Scouts. I only had a nest and eggs in one of the seven grant boxes that had been installed on the other half of the trail. I was very upset that my efforts to help the birds appeared to be hindering them instead. When all else fails, call Vickie. I told her what was happening and commented that the grant boxes were higher than the other boxes. It was actually hard for me to monitor them because they were up too high. She figured out that the fence posts that had been supplied with the grant boxes were six foot fence posts instead of five foot fence posts.

Blue Bird Box Monitoring (continued)

When she instructed me on how to mount the guards and house on the posts, they were the positions that should have been used on the five foot fence posts. The result was a box that was 1 foot higher off of the ground than it should have been. My first thought - why does a bird care how high off the ground the nest box is? Who knows, but they obviously do. In order to remedy the situation, Vickie recommended that I lower the boxes by one foot on the posts. I did this in late April and within a month, I had nests and eggs in five of the six boxes that had previously been unused. I'm hoping for a record year next year.

If you would be interested in monitoring a trail on public land or in your own back yard, please contact me. I mounted two boxes in my yard this year and had six chickadees fledge from one box and five bluebirds from the other. It is a good feeling to know that by providing and monitoring these nest boxes, you have increased the chances of successful fledging for the offspring of these cavity nesters.

Dottie Haley, Certified Master Naturalist
Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



VOLUNTEER HOURS

**2013 CHAPTER GOAL:
1000 VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Volunteer hours reported as of
September 30, 2013:

Categories -

- Administration - 130.50
- Advanced Training - 137.25
- Citizen Science - 460.50
- Education - 238.55
- Stewardship - 90.00



Reported Total- 1056.80 hours or 106% of Chapter Goal.

Quick Reminder of UPCOMING EVENTS

**October 2—Caves and Karst
Workshop, Danville Science Center.**

**October 18-20—VMN State
Conference, Glen Allen VA.**

**November 9 -VA Bluebird Society
Fall Conference, Charlottesville VA.**

November 21—"Bears", VMNH.

**December 3— Basic Training Class
Presentations, VMNH.**

December 12—"Bees", VMNH.



2013 BOARD MEMBERS

From left, Lynn Pritchett, Denny Casey,
Dottie Haley, Lynn Regan, Christy
Deatherage, Teresa Prillaman and Tiffany

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Website:

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