

Virginia Master Naturalist

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter



THE VINE

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

[https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/
UniversalLogin.cfm](https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm)

2013 OFFICERS

President– Teresa Prillaman
Vice President– Lynn Regan
Secretary– Tiffany Haworth
Treasurer– Denny Casey
Past President– Dottie Haley

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Membership– Christy Deatherage
Newsletter/Web Page– Ashby Pritchett
Outreach/Publicity/Historian– Lynn Pritchett
Program Committee– Lynn Regan
Basic Training–Tiffany Haworth
Advanced Training– Noel Boaz
Volunteer Service– Kathy Fell
Host, tba

Southwestern Piedmont Master
Naturalists C/O VMNH
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Dr. Dennis Casey, Chapter Advisor
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is an exciting time of year when winter is over and the new life of spring is approaching. The robins are out in numbers now and the trees are starting to bud. It will not be long before the leaves will be full and the weather will be perfect to get outside and enjoy nature.

I hope everyone will be able to join the Chapter in some exciting volunteer projects this year. What better way to enjoy nature than working with fellow members to make the community a better place to enjoy?

This year lets get together and make our goal of 1000 volunteer hours. There are many projects that have been approved for volunteer hours. The project list is available on the Volunteer Management System website.

If there is a project that you think would be a great addition to the wonderful projects already approved, please submit a project request form to **Kathy Fell** at (kathyfell@yahoo.com). I hope that everyone will join me to welcome spring and all of the adventures that are just around the corner.

Teresa Prillaman

Download a Volunteer Project Proposal Form from our Chapter's VMN Volunteer Management System: [https://
virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm?logout=1](https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm?logout=1)

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

ANNUAL RECOGNITION DINNER
Basic Training Graduates Celebrated & Chapter Members Certified.
Article and Photos Submitted by Lynn Pritchett

The Southwestern Piedmont Virginia Master Naturalists Chapter welcomed fifteen new graduates of the Basic Training Class as new chapter members at the annual chapter meeting on January 24, 2013 held at the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Training requires 40 hours of time in classroom and field trips. <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/training.html>

Bottom row, left to right: Tiffany Haworth, Veena Syed, Samanthe Tiver, and Elizabeth Stanley. Back row, left to right: Noel Boaz, J.B. (Joseph) Emmert, Kim Hopkins, Brian Phillips, Jessica Phillips, and John Prillaman. Not pictured: Jessica Driver, Robert Haynes, Janine Howard, Andrew Lash, and Elizabeth Pritchett.



Newly certified (*) as Virginia Master Naturalists, or recertified (**) are pictured below. Certification requirements include both 40 hours of volunteer time and 8 hours of advanced training per year.

Front row, left to right: Mary Foster*, Teresa Prillaman*, Lizz Stanley*, Evalyn Chapman**. Back row, left to right: Lynn Regan*, Lynn Pritchett**, Jesse Powell**, Ashby Pritchett*, Kathy Fell**. Not pictured: Dottie Haley**



ANNUAL RECOGNITION DINNER (Continued)

The President's Award for Exceptional Service was presented to Kathy Fell for outstanding work as Chairman of the Training Committee and as Chairman of the VMN State Conference Committee, and to Christy Deatherage for the multiple tasks she performs and responsibilities she assumes to assure that all parts of the Chapter are working together.

Two special awards were given to two Chapter members for total volunteer service hours. Kathy Fell was credited with 250 individual volunteer hours and Mary Foster was credited with performing 500 service hours.

The Election of new Officers for 2013 was conducted during the meeting. The slate of candidates was approved and the following persons were elected:

Teresa Prillaman, President
Lynn Regan, Vice-President
Tiffany Haworth, Secretary
Denny Casey, Treasurer (elected by write-in vote)



Above, Teresa Prillaman, Denny Casey, Tiffany Haworth & Lynn Regan. (Photo by Ashby Pritchett)

After dinner, presentation of awards and election, display tables were set up to invite all Chapter members to sign up for work on one or more of six major committees:

- (1) Host Committee
- (2) Membership Committee
- (3) Volunteer Service Projects Committee
- (4) Basic Training Committee
- (5) Program/Advanced Training Committee
- (6) Publicity/Outreach/Historian

INTRODUCTION TO CAVES AND KARST

Project Underground Workshop February 23, 2013

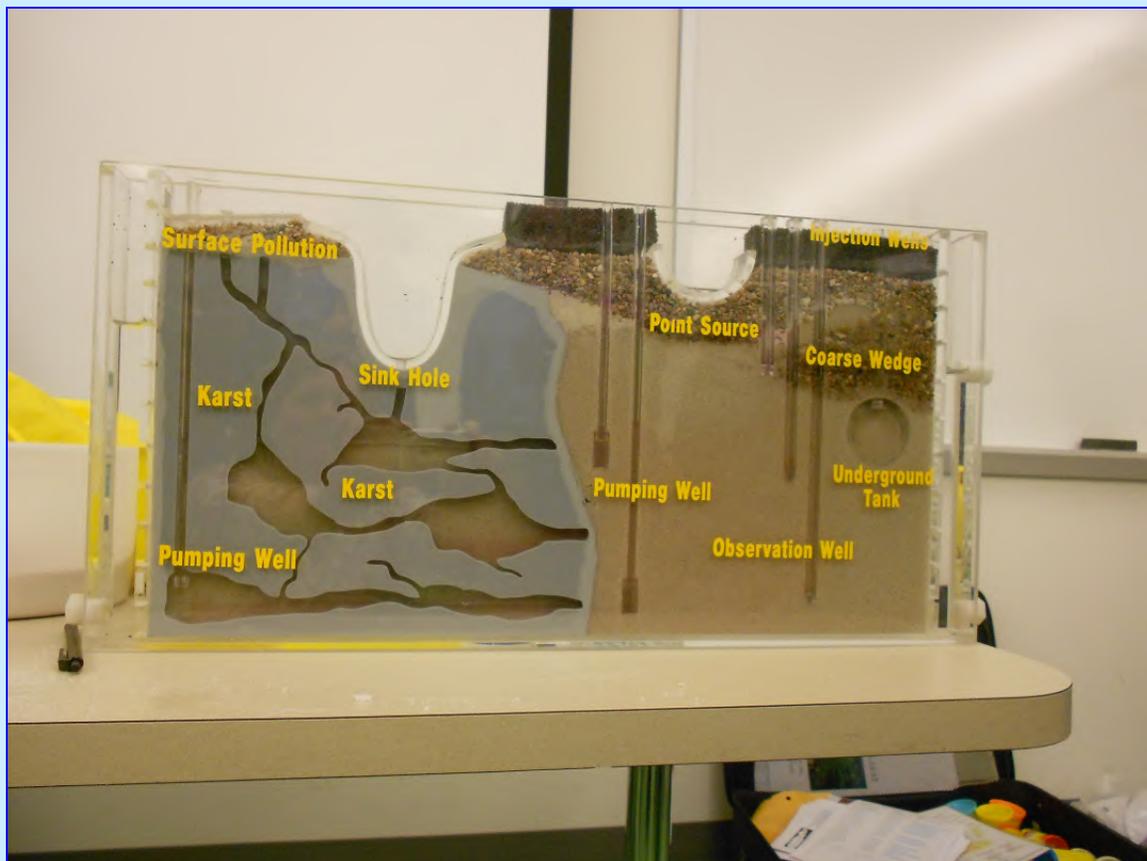
The Virginia Museum of Natural History hosted an all-day Project Underground Workshop and evening lecture on caves and karst environments. Carol Zokaides, environmental education coordinator for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and national coordinator of Project Underground, presented the workshop and evening lecture.

Karst is defined as a landscape with topographic depressions such as sinkholes, springs, sinking streams and caves, caused by underground dissolution of limestone bedrock.

Ms. Zokaides explained that the hollow nature of karst terrain has high pollution potential. Streams and surface runoff entering sinkholes or caves bypass natural filtration through the soil and provide direct conduits for contamination in karst terrain. Groundwater can rapidly travel through these underground networks—up to several miles a day—and contaminants can be distributed to wells and springs in the vicinity.

Karst protection requires an understanding of the local watershed and the desire to protect and preserve natural areas from residential and commercial development within the karst watershed.

The training qualified for up to six (6) hours of Master Naturalist Advanced Training. For more information on Project Underground, visit <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/underground.shtml> .



**PROJECT UNDERGROUND PHOTOS
(Taken by Brian Williams during Workshop)**



Above, the workshop class participated in several group exercises during the day. Below, Carol Zokaides demonstrates how pollutants travel through a karst environment.



FEEDING YOUR BACKYARD BIRDS

Submitted by Dottie Haley

Due to my involvement with bluebird box monitoring last year, I felt the need to extend my stewardship for the birds throughout the entire year, not just during nesting season. Although the bluebirds are able to use the nest boxes as protection from the elements during the winter months, what a challenge it must be for them to find food. I have had seed feeders outside my kitchen window for as long as I can remember and enjoy watching the flurry of activity as the different birds feed, but I knew I had never seen a bluebird at my seed feeder. I went to Vickie Fuquay's website for advice: <http://vabluebirdconnection.com/>

Vickie is the vice-president of the Virginia Bluebird Society and has created a website for local bluebird enthusiasts. I found recommendations for different ways of attracting and feeding bluebirds - different types of seeds, mealworms and also suet. I decided to try the suet feeder and am so glad I did. Suet is high in fat which helps the birds stay warm in the winter and helps the fledglings grow strong in the summer. A homemade suet recipe can be found on Vickie's website <http://vabluebirdconnection.com/feedingbluebirds.html> or the suet blocks and feeders can be purchased at Home Depot. The berry flavored suet seems to be the favorite in my backyard.

Although I haven't seen a bluebird feeding from the suet feeder yet, the new feeder has attracted many other new species to my backyard. I have used my field guide several times over the last few months to identify these new birds, which I know must have always been here, but just not interested in what my seed feeder had to offer. Common visitors to my seed feeder include, cardinal, chickadee, dark-eyed junco, white-breasted nuthatch, mourning dove, blue jay, tufted titmouse, house finch and an occasional red bellied woodpecker. The new species that have been attracted by the suet feeder include: Carolina wren, brown headed nuthatch, eastern phoebe, bluebirds, downy woodpecker and hairy woodpecker.

Knowing I have a new found interest in birds, my daughter equipped me with another bird feeding alternative as a Christmas gift - a peanut wreath feeder. The wreath holds whole peanuts in the shell. It is intended to be geared more towards the larger birds, such as blue jays, who are strong enough to pull the whole peanut out from between the wires of the wreath and carry it away. It has been amazing to watch the little birds as they also work to get these peanut treats.

FEEDING YOUR BACKYARD BIRDS (continued)



Photo from <http://shop.wbu.com/p/wbu-peanut-wreath-bird-feeder-green>

I put my new feeder up on Christmas day. Within the first week, I had witnessed several visits by tufted titmouse which is a fairly small bird. Although they are not able to pull the nuts from between the wires on the wreath, they persistently peck at the shell until they crack it and get to the peanut inside. These little birds appear to be the most versatile when it comes to their eating habits. They are frequent visitors to all three feeder types that I now have.



Photo of tufted titmouse from http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tufted_Titmouse/id

Although the larger birds like the blue jay did eventually find the wreath feeder, it is still most frequently visited by the smaller birds like the titmouse and nuthatch. If you have never tried these alternatives for feeding our feathered friends, I encourage you to give them a try - just be sure to keep your field guide close by.

DINO DAY Offers Master Naturalist A Very Special Volunteer Opportunity

Submitted by Kathy Fell

What did you do for volunteer service this month? I spent Dino Day, inside the Paleontology lab, working on a 65 Million year old Triceratops specimen.

Preparations began many weeks ago. A group from the museum went to Winchester, VA to bring back a truck load of specimens from the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum. The largest was this Triceratops head. It took a team of people to get it into the building, up the elevator and into the lab. I think I heard an estimate of 500 to 600 pounds of bone, dirt and plaster.

It took a week just to cut through the plaster jacket. The final cut was made on Dino Day and the top of the jacket was removed in multiple pieces. We then began the task of removing the dirt, mostly using paint brushes. Larger piece of dirt are inspected for fossilized plant material before being discarded. By the end of the day, we had exposed two of the horns and part of the frill. It will take many more weeks of work to fully expose the bones, then reassemble the head into its proper shape.

See the Martinsville Bulletin's article at

<http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/article.cfm?ID=36199&back=archives>



Above, clockwise, moving in the jacket, removing the jacket, progress at the end of the day.

(Photos submitted by Kathy Fell)

TALKING TREES

A report from the Loudon County Gardening Symposium

Submitted by Kathy Fell

On April 6th and 7th, I attended the Loudon County Master Gardener Symposium in Leesburg Virginia. This is the third year I have made the 5 hour trip north to attend the two day conference and spend two evenings with my brother's family in Silver Spring.

Of all the Master Gardener conferences I've attended around the state, this one is always the best. Many of the topics are also of interest to Master Naturalists.

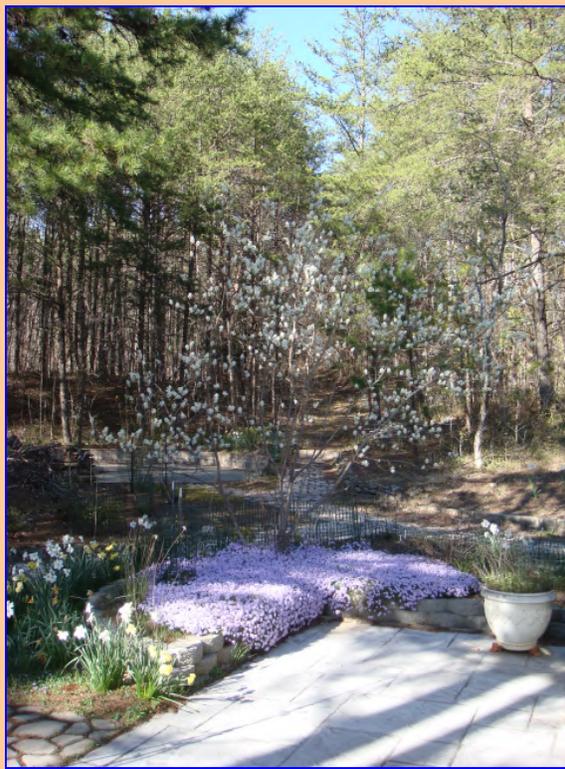
This year, the first speaker was Joe Murray. Joe is an arborist and a biology professor at Blue Ridge Community College. He gave a fascinating talk about trees.

Did you know that trees can communicate? Trees naturally live in a community and communicate both under ground and through the air. Fungi in the soil provide a connective network between the root systems of neighboring trees, allowing them to share information underground. Also, above ground, trees can communicate with chemical messages, similar to pheromones. I found articles on line about each of these methods of communication. (See the resources below). When one tree is "attacked", say by an insect or caterpillar, it will send a message across the community network. Both the attacked and non-attacked trees will release noxious compounds, called phenolics, into their leaves to deter insects. Imagine the loneliness of a yard tree!

Joe talked about the import balance between a tree's root system and the above ground parts of a tree. "Feeding" a tree causes the roots to stop growing and allows the above ground part of the tree to grow faster than natural, making the tree more susceptible to insects and disease. He cautioned against using landscape fabric or shredded bark under trees, as these can create a moisture barrier, preventing water from getting to the tree roots. He showed some very sad pictures of tree roots all tangled up in landscape fabric, unable to properly absorb water and nutrients. The best thing to put under a tree is shredded leaves and wood chips. These decompose fairly quickly, providing nutrients for the roots as well as keeping them cool. Joe also spoke about "right tree, right place". When you plant a tree, be sure there is adequate room for it to grow. He cited some studies that showed trees can decrease crime. Patients in hospital rooms that look out on trees and natural settings have been shown to be "calmer" and heal faster.

TALKING TREES (continued)

A later speaker was Michael Judd, founder of Ecologia. He suggested that yard trees should always be planted with companions: a plant that is a nitrogen fixer (See link 3), a plant that is an insectary (attracts insects, e.g. yarrow), a plant that attracts pollinators for the tree (such as Echinacea), and a plant that is a “mulch plant” (one that grows quickly, such as comfrey, so the foliage can be cut and left to provide fresh mulch for the tree.



Left, a photo of the “happy trees”, submitted by Kathy Fell, in her back yard.

Some of the other sessions I attended at the conference covered:

- How to establish a native meadow and the ecosystem supported by a meadow

- The interdependence between plants and insects and how to attract insects to your yard

- Basic Wildlife Animal control

- Native Ferns for the garden

The native plant vendors at the conference were also a great hit. I came home with several herbs and native plants to tuck into my Bassett garden! I'll be looking forward to the trip north again next spring. If anyone is interested in coming along, just let me know!

Resources:

<http://www.wakingtimes.com/2012/05/02/how-trees-communicate-video/>

<http://www2.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF7/762.html>

<http://www.massnature.com/Plants/Nfixers/nfixers.htm>

<http://botanical.com/botanical/mqmh/c/comfre92.html>

<http://www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org/Symposium%202013/symposiumhomepage.htm>

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteer hours reported as of
March 31, 2013:

Categories -

- Administration - 60.50
- Advanced Training - 97.25
- Citizen Science - 80.75
- Education - 79.50
- Stewardship - 58.50

Reported Total— 376.5 hours or 37% 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> , or by Smartphone using
the above QR code.

**2013 CHAPTER GOAL:
1000 VOLUNTEER HOURS**



NOTICES

- **April 4, 2013—
Australopithecines &
Human Health @ VMNH
6:00PM (Advanced Training)**
- **April 18, 2013— Chapter
Meeting@ VMNH 6:00PM**
- **May 16, 2013— Chapter
Meeting@ VMNH 6:00PM**
- **June 15, 2013— Bioblitz @
TBA**
- **June 20, 2013— Chapter
Meeting @VMNH 6:00PM**



2013 BOARD MEMBERS

From left, Lynn Pritchett, Denny Casey,
Dottie Haley, Lynn Regan, Christy
Deatherage, Teresa Prillaman and Tiffany
Haworth. Photo by Ashby Pritchett

Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Website:

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

Click on “Calendar of Events” to see what we are doing!