



The Vine

The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists

Quarterly Newsletter—Fall/Winter 2017 Edition

President's Message

Winter is here and the bird feeders are up. I put out my bird feeders from December 1st to April 1st, per DGIF recommendation (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/living-with-black-bears/>), to discourage the bears. The first year I saw a bear in the yard, it had pulled down a tube feeder and was licking the last of the sunflower seed from inside the tube. Now they just terrorize my fruit trees. Their favorite snack has been the tiny fruits of the invasive Callary Pear (<http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=10957>).

I got quite a show one day, watching a bear climb the tree in search of pears, break a branch

and slide off to land on his head. I had several of these trees removed this fall. It has been quite a battle to control all their annoying, thorny seedlings. I did not see any bears this year, but it could just be that they came by when I was not looking out the window.

Our annual banquet was well attended and everyone had a great time. The pot luck was a hit with numerous delicious dishes. All agreed the pot luck was much tastier than the prior catered dinners. Thank you to the 28 members who logged a total of 1872 hours across 27 different service projects. I am amazed at the breadth of interests across the chapter! Congratulations to

the 19 members who achieved certification: Noel Boaz, Sydney Brown, Christine Boran, Gael Chaney, Evalyn Chapman, Jessica Driver, Kathy Fell, Mary Foster, Dottie Hailey, Katie Hastings, Janine Howard, Ellen Jesse, Andy Lash, Brian Phillips, Jessica Phillips, Lynn Pritchett, Ashby Pritchett, Lizz Stanley and Eric Tichay.

I am looking forward to another great year in 2017!

By Kathy Fell
SWPVMN President

Annual Banquet

January 19th was the date for the Southwestern Piedmont's annual banquet. In attendance were chapter members as well as guests. Kathy Fell, President, was able to highlight the magnificent work that our chapter has been doing with key projects. One such project is the Bluebird Box Trail that several chapter members have been contributing to. 1,872 hours were given across the course of a year.

Besides recognizing chapter members for the amazing year they had, Kathy also highlighted upcoming projects such as the

turtle tank project at the museum and the project of the year: The Physic Garden. Please check the calendars here...as well as the volunteer management system on ways to get involved.

After recognition a potluck was held and some delicious food was had. Below is just one of the highlighted recipes from the event.

After the banquet members were able to choose and sign up for committees to serve on. If you do not have a committee to serve on and are interested, please contact

Kathy Fell!

Please do not forget to pay your dues and check out some of the great photos of food, mainly, and people that attended the banquet!

Don't forget to log your hours!

By Sydney Brown - VMN



From L to R:

The start of the feast at the banquet
Noel Boaz talks about the volunteer service committee
Everybody watches as Kathy Fell gives her year update
The amazing spread at the banquet

All photos by Sydney Brown

SMOKY TURKEY-AND-SWEET POTATO CHILI

1 1/4 pounds ground turkey
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 cup Mexican beer
1 cup dried pinto beans
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
1 tablespoon kosher salt
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 medium-size green bell peppers, coarsely chopped
1 (8-oz.) package dried lima beans
1 large onion, coarsely chopped
5 cups unsalted chicken cooking stock
2 1/2 cups 1/2-inch peeled sweet potato cubes
Garnishes: green onions, cilantro, sweet mini pepper slices

1.

Season turkey with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Sauté turkey in hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 4 minutes or until browned. Transfer mixture to a 6-qt. slow cooker.

Add tomato paste to skillet, and cook, stirring often, 30 seconds. Add beer, and bring to a boil, stirring to loosen browned bits from bottom of skillet. Boil 2 to 3 minutes or until reduced by half; stir into turkey mixture. Add beans and next 8 ingredients; stir in stock. Cover and cook on HIGH 7 hours. Stir in sweet potatoes; cover and cook on HIGH 1 hour or until potatoes are tender.

Paw Path Pollinator Garden

On Oct first, about 20 people from the Martinsville Garden Club, Garden Study Club, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists spent the morning at the Smith River Sports complex, planting the Paw Path Pollinator Gardens. C.D. Prillaman, a local landscaper, volunteered to bring a power auger, which made quick work of the over 300 holes required. Native wildflowers, native trees and native shrubs were planted in the four new beds, flanking the entrance and exit to the Paw Path and in the woods along the dog walking trail. Gateway Streetscape, from Martinsville, volunteered to water the plants and arrived in a large water truck. The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) installed a new split rail fence at the entrance, The DGIF Habitat Partners sign was installed at the entrance. Members from the two garden clubs are developing a long term maintenance procedure and will identify local organizations to keep the gardens looking nice.

The concept for the Paw Path Pollinator Gardens started back in January of 2016, with Judy Ware, Conservation Chair for the Martinsville Garden Club. Judy recruited Kathy Fell, from the SW piedmont chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, to lead the garden design team. Several

members from Martinsville Garden Club and Garden Study Club met with Kathy to learn how to design a pollinator garden. The team decided on about 50 different species of native wildflowers, native trees and native shrubs, of various heights, to provide a garden with continuous bloom from spring through fall.

On April 30th, over 40 volunteers from the Martinsville Garden Club, Garden Study Club, Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and two local Girl Scout troops spent the morning preparing the beds. Kathy provided a demonstration on how to use newspapers and mulch to kill the existing grass and recycle the nutri-



ents into the soil. Two mountains of mulch and a truck load of recycled newspapers were quickly laid in place. The team did an excellent job. There were almost no weeds in the beds when we returned in October to plant the gardens.

We are working with a local Eagle Scout candidate and his troop to build some interpretive signs for the gardens. Students from Magna Vista High School built a number of “insect hotels”, designed to attract native pollinators. We best projects in the gardens.



By Kathy Fell—VMN

Middle Column:

Laying newspaper and mulch in April.

Right Column:

Planting

All photos by Kathy Fell

Ants of Virginia Project

Ants in Virginia

Ants are pretty much everywhere on Earth, absent only in the coldest and most-isolated terrestrial environments. Yet with 14,000 species known to scientists, the number of *undiscovered* ants is huge: Perhaps only about half of the species on our planet have been named. But what's the story of ants in Virginia?



Land of riches: Virginia is actually one of the most biodiversity-rich areas in the United States, thanks to its geographic location, the variety of its topography and the breadth of its ecoregions. Still, only a few groups of invertebrates, including ants, have been surveyed.

Common and rare: At present, 148 ant species are known to inhabit the woodlands, meadows, wetlands, beaches and urban areas of Virginia. Some of them, such as the familiar black carpenter ant (*Camponotus pennsylvanicus*), are common throughout Virginia. Others are restricted to specific habitats – *Nylanderia arenivaga* is found in the sand dunes of the Eastern Shore. Yet others (such as the small and secretive *Strumigenys memori-*

alis) are extremely rare not only in Virginia but across North America.

A big project: The Ants of Virginia Project was initiated at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in late 2014. Myrmecology is the study of ants, and the project's goal is to bridge the gap between our current knowledge of Virginia's species and the true diversity of state's myrmecofauna, where discoveries await.

Beyond the list: Detecting species is one thing, but knowing them is an entirely different challenge. Even if we identified all ant species in Virginia, we still would know very little about their biology, behavior and natural history. We usually know these for just a handful of species – the ones that concern our health, economy or homes.



Not just pests: Ants usually are viewed as pests, and yes, a few species are known to cause damage to crops, structures and even human health. But ants are more than a nuisance – they play essential roles in ecosystems. They are crucial to

the breakdown of organic matter, nutrient cycling, soil turnover and seed dispersal. Ants also are among the leading predators of invertebrates, and they form symbiotic relationships with plants, arthropods, fungi and microorganisms. And many species display astonishing specializations, such as cultivation of fungi and cooperative hunting in packs.



By Dr. Kal Ivanov—*VMNH* & Lewis Brissman

Left Column:

The only Virginia specimen of the rare *Strumigenys memorialis* was collected in a swamp forest in Chesapeake. Until now this ant was only known from a single locality in Kentucky.

Middle Column

Camponotus castaneus colony from Fairy Stone State Park, Patrick County.

Right Column

Forelius pruinosus workers at nest entrance.

Upcoming Events

March 2017

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 BTWNM Grass | 17 | 18 Kite Festival |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 Water Qual. | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

April 2017

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 Basic Training | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Museum Talk | 14 | 15 National Park |
| 16 Weekend | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 Student Day | 22 Earth Day |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

June 2017

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------|------------------|-----|
| | | | | 1 Basic Training | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 Museum Talk | 9 Geology | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |