

# The Vine



## The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists

### Quarterly Newsletter—Spring 2018 Edition

#### President's Message

Spring has sprung, despite the late snows. I'm keeping a log this year of what is blooming each week in the garden. It makes a good excuse for me to get outside and walk around every week to look for interesting things. Today, I discovered what I believe to be a large colony of *Colletesina equalis* along the driveway. There are lots and lots of tiny holes in the sandy spots on both sides of the driveway. Many holes have little bee faces (or abdomens) peeking out! You can read more about these native pollinators here: <http://www.discoverlife.org/20/q?search=Colletes+inaequalis>

Walking past the bird houses, I discovered a completed bluebird nest in one box and a chickadee nest in progress in another box. I won't be too much longer before there will be some tiny eggs to check on.

For those of you also who like to take a hike and look around, there are a number of service projects that could use your skills. I record what I find in my nest boxes for both the Bluebird monitoring project and for Project Nest Watch. For the GIF Birding and Wildlife Trail assessment, we

would love for people to visit the sites along the trail and record any birds (<https://ebird.org/home>) or other wildlife observations (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>). There are also sites where you can record your first sightings of hummingbirds (<http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>) and Monarch Butterflies (<https://monarchlab.org/?/mlmp>)! Who knows about phrenology? Here is another opportunity to record observations (<https://budburst.org/>). There are 16 web sites listed in our projects for monitoring insects.

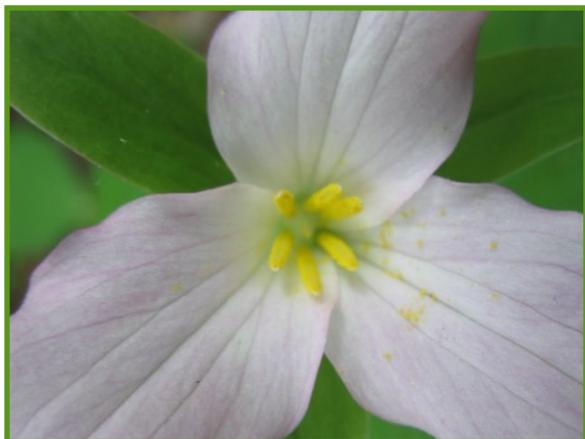
Where ever you go to enjoy nature in Virginia, be sure to take some pictures for the annual photo contest! If you discover something really interesting, take a picture and write a short article for our next newsletter.

I hope to see many of you in the woods on Fork Mountain this month for the Bio Blitz!

Kathy Fell  
SWPVMN Chapter President



VMN logo obtained from <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/>.  
Right, photo of a *Colletesina equalis*, entering her nest, submitted by Kathy Fell.



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### Dr. Elizabeth Moore— Chapter Advisor

#### Doctor Moore, what would you like tell the Chapter membership about yourself?

Doctor Moore: I can't remember a time when I wasn't fascinated by "other;" other people, other times, other places, other cultures. I blame my parents – my father was a history teacher and my mother, an elementary school teacher, was always exploring new music, new foods, and new places.

I am from upstate New York on the northeastern corner where New York, Vermont, and Canada meet on Lake Champlain and every place looked exotic and exciting when compared to our home – a log cabin in the middle of the woods with the closest village a 30 minute bike ride away when it wasn't too cold or snowy to be outside.

We spent a lot of time outside. We heated and cooked with wood so cutting, chopping, carrying, and stacking wood was constant work on school breaks. My mother had us collecting all kinds of plants – mushrooms to hang by the fire to dry for the winter, dandelions to cook or to turn into wine, young ferns and cat-tails for dinner, and every kind of

wild berry and fruit for jams and jellies.

And then there was the snow – lots of snow for shoveling and for play. We had huskies and a dog sled and it was a thrill when we would get to take them out for a ride. In the summer my brother and I would play in the woods. One of our favorite games was "we are lost in the woods, now what do we do?" We would make a shelter from tree branches and make a camp fire, really just an excuse to play with fire and burn small twigs. It is a wonder we never started a forest fire. We did almost burn the house down one time toasting marshmallows over my Easy-Bake oven but we were usually pretty careful outside.

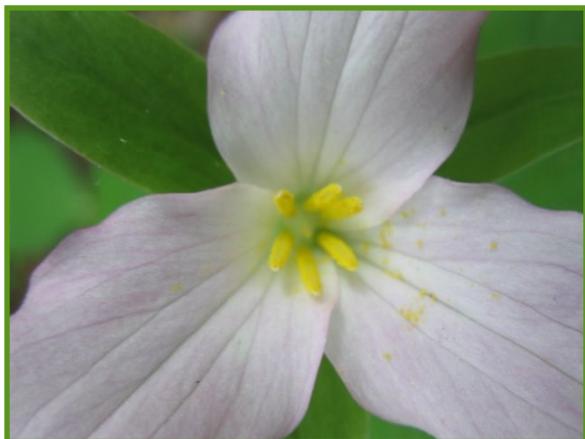
When I was growing up, my mother had a subscription to the Time-Life book series "Foods of the World." It was so exciting every time a new volume would come in the mail. We would read about other cultures, where they lived, their history, and their food. She would try out recipes, finding creative ways to substitute food you could buy, grow, or gather in the wilds of the Adirondacks for exotic ingredients.

When I got to college I discovered the anthropology department and learned that the interest she fostered through that book series could actually turn into a career. I was thrilled to find a field where not only could I study things I found fascinating, but a field where research could be used to help us better understand who we are, why we do the things we do, and use that knowledge to create a better world.



(Continued on next page.)

Above, "Doctor Moore in Lab" from Elizabeth Moore.  
Above, Trillium @ R.P. Gravely Nature Preserve from Lynn Pritchett.



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**Dr. Elizabeth Moore—  
Chapter Advisor**



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After college (SUNY-Potsdam), I moved to D.C. to attend graduate school at The American University.

An internship in zooarchaeology at the Smithsonian resulted in my choice of a field of study as well as a

job and a lifelong interest in how people use food (particularly food from animals) not just to feed themselves, but to define their cultures, to be a part of their rituals, and to create social bonds.

I have the great fortune to conduct research and curate collections for

the future at VMNH and consider myself lucky to be able to do something I find so enjoyable and meaningful.

(Continued on next page)

Above, photo submitted by Dr. Moore with the research crew at a project in Israel years ago early in her career when she was studying animal bones from a large site that ranged in age from the late Stone Age to the modern era. Above, Trillium @ R.P. Gravely Nature Preserve from Lynn Pritchett.



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### Dr. Elizabeth Moore— Chapter Advisor

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**As a local representative of one of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program's sponsoring agencies, how can our Chapter support the work and mission of VMNH?**

Doctor Moore: The Master Naturalists support VMNH in many ways. One of the obvious ones is through volunteerism.

Volunteers play an important role in the museum. There is always more work to be done than the staff can do and volunteers make significant contributions to our research, our ability to care for our collections, and our impact on the public.

Another way to support our mission is simply by being ambassadors for the museum whether in the community or elsewhere. Raising awareness of VMNH and the work we do here is important and all help with that is greatly appreciated.

**Have you identified additional opportunities for natural resource volunteerism in the community that our Chapter membership is not yet involved in?**

Doctor Moore: One opportunity that I would like to pursue further is working in partnership with the Archeological Society of Virginia (ASV).

The ASV is a statewide organization (we have a chapter here at the museum) with over 500 members. The interests of the members of the ASV overlap greatly with the Master Naturalists.

Some of our chapter members participated last year in one volunteer weekend with the ASV at Kittiewan and I would like to see us develop more of those opportunities.

Kittiewan, the home of the ASV, is a property of over 700 acres in Charles City County that has woodlands, farmland, waterways, historic structures, a museum, and a wide variety of plant and wild life and there are lots of opportunities there for volunteer projects and educational programming.

**Doctor Elizabeth Moore**  
***SWPVMN Chapter Advisor***

Above, Trillium @ R.P. Gravely Nature Preserve from Lynn Pritchett.



Ivan Hiatt with Beth and Paul Pautler (from VMN Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes Chapter), rehousing artifacts.

## Volunteer Opportunities on Archeology Help Days at VMNH.

What is going on in Archaeology at the Museum that requires volunteers every week?

Last year, Dr. Moore received a call from a university in D.C. They had over 200 boxes of Native American artifacts, in boxes, in the basement of a condemned building. Dr. Moore rented a truck and fetched the boxes. We have been working hard, ever since to complete the tasks required to integrate these artifacts into the museum's collection.

Step 1 was to stack the boxes in the anaerobic chamber, then remove all the oxygen. After several weeks in the chamber, any critter who thought to take up residence in any of the boxes was no longer a threat to the collections.

Step 2 was to "rehouse" the artifacts. This took about a year. We just finished on April 5th! Each day, we would open a box and investigate the contents. Some boxes contained soil samples or charcoal for carbon dating. Many were full of dirty rocks that needed to be washed. We found a stone axe head, a mortar stone, several pestle stones, and some stone pendants with holes drilled to hang them on a leather cord. Some boxes contained pieces of animal bones, some con-

tained broken bits of pottery. One box was full of projectile points. One box contained 800 paper bags, each with one small piece of rock inside that was left over from making a projectile point, or was used as a hand scraper. Many of the artifacts we rehouse were very sharp!

We found artifacts excavated as far back as 1972. The artifacts were stored in paper bags, cigar boxes, cigarette boxes, film canisters, milk jugs, baby food jars, and all sorts of other strange containers. Each container had provenience data somewhere, which specified who, when and where the contents were found. We carefully cut out or re-wrote this data and put it in an archival bag with the artifact. As each box was completed, we stowed it in the collections room and started on another. This past week, we pulled out all the processed boxes and reorganized them by archaeological site, in preparation for the next step.

Next, we will identify each artifact, assign a VMNH Collection number and move the artifact to a drawer in the collections area. Data about each artifact will be entered into the museum's collections data base.

Once the data is loaded, we will print VMNH Collections labels. Then, one VMNH collection label will be placed inside each archival bag with the artifact.

It has been fascinating to see all the different artifacts and to think about life in Virginia between 15,000 years ago and the arrival of the first Europeans. Imagine, if you needed a sharp knife or a spear, you would need to know how to make one from a rock. I am looking forward to learning more about the significance of all these artifacts as we learn to identify them.

Kathy Fell



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### Archeology Help Days at VMNH—More Photos



Kathy Fell, Alicia Lantz and Ivan Hiett re-organizing boxes by Archaeological site in the collections room.



This is what a properly documented tray of artifacts will look like, when we are done.





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### Paleo Help Days -opportunity to help in Paleontology both behind the scenes in the museum and in the field.

In the Paleontology collections area, we are adding labels to rare, 200 million to 250 million years fossilized insects excavated from the Solite Quarry. There is also a large collection of shale from the Solite Quarry that needs to be split and checked for fossils. I'm not sure when this will bubble to the top of the priority list, but it will take many hours of careful looking to complete the task.

We are also helping to unpack and shelve a number of boxes of dinosaur parts and pieces donated to the museum. We have unpacked things of

various sizes, from little glass vials containing tiny bits of ancient fish to a triceratops beak and several large horns.

We are also helping with excavation at Carmel Church, Virginia. This site, just north of Richmond, used to be at the bottom of a shallow sea. Since 1990, VMNH has been excavating bones and shark teeth from the side of a 15 foot slope that spans multiple geologic formations dating from 5 million to 60 million years ago. The site has yielded evidence of multiple species of whale, dolphin, shark, ray, fish, bird and even some

land animals (camel, t peccary and horse) that somehow fell into the ocean. The first of a new species, named *Eobalaenopteraharrisoni*, an extinct, baleen whale, was found there. Dr. Hastings is leading the current excavation efforts, which include the excavation of a 14 million year old whale. In addition there are several older pits that are also yielding various bones and shark teeth. We last visited the site in March of this year. The next visit is planned for May 15-18. Let us know if you are interested in attending!

Kathy Fell



Left, excavating 14 million year old whale bones at Carmel Church, March 2018. Right, 200 million year old insect fossils from Solite Quarry, awaiting new labels in the Paleontology Collection.





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## Awards Banquet Celebrates Chapter Accomplishment



The Southwest Piedmont Chapter Awards Banquet was held on March 6, 2018 at VMNH. President Kathy Fell presented a 2017 Annual Report Snapshot of chapter activity, and issued certificates to graduates of the 2017 Basic Training Course, certificates to initially certified Master Naturalists and an oyster pin to re-certifying Master Naturalists. (Continued on next page.)



Photos of Awards Banquet attendees from Lynn Pritchett: (1) Janine Howard, Lynn Pritchett & Noel Boaz.. (2) Mark Walker, Janice Walker & Patricia Bentley. (3) Katie Hastings, Kathy Fell, Joe Jessee & Ellen Jessee. (4) Linda Drage, Christine Boran, Susan Martin, Danny Martin & Ashby Pritchett. (5) Patty May, Paul May, Ayron Walker (Janice Walker's daughter) & Lee Jarrett. In far back on photo (1) and (5), Eric Tichay.



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### Awards Banquet Celebrates Chapter Accomplishment

(continued from previous page)

**Graduates of 2017 Basic Training Course and first-time Master Naturalist certification:**

Ivan Hiett and Ken Miller

**Recertifying Certified Master Naturalists:**

Noel Boaz, Christine Boran, Evalyn Chapman, Jessica Driver, Kathy Fell, Mary Foster, Dottie Haley, Janine Howard, Ellen Jessee, Paul May, Ashby Pritchett, Lynn Pritchett, Lizz Stanley, Eric Tichay.

**2017 Milestone Awards:**

**250 Volunteer Hours:** Evalyn Chapman, Paul May, Eric Tichay.

**500 Volunteer Hours:** Jessica Driver, Dottie Haley, Lynn Pritchett.

**2500 Hours:** Kathy Fell.



**2017 Basic Training Graduates:**

Patricia Bentley  
Sharon Bushnell  
Terri Cooke  
Ivan Hiett  
Lee Jarrett  
Ken Miller  
Tiffany Morton  
Janice Walker  
Carey Westermann  
Marlene Woods

Photo of Trillium at R.P. Gravelly Nature Preserve submitted by Lynn Pritchett.

Above, photo submitted by Lynn Pritchett: From left to right, (top) Marlene Woods, Ivan Hiett, Ken Miller, Lee Jarrett, (bottom) Patricia Bentley, Janice Walker.



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### Its Morel Season---but let's keep that between us

Springtime in Virginia; Warm 70-degree days, blooming trees abound, wait is that a snow-storm?

The Commonwealth blesses us with its abundance of natural resources from trout and spring turkeys to one of my favorite hunting seasons....Morels.

Yes one 'hunts' for Morels. They are not picked nor gathered. Morel hunters guard their 'Spots' just like the trout angler guards his honey hole.

Morel mushrooms have a short season here in Virginia and that makes them coveted even more. Morels are highly valued in the mushroom community for their meaty texture and awesome flavor.

A simple sauté in butter lightly seasoned with salt and pepper will create the flavor explosion of this prized find.

Hunting morels takes patience and good bit of time in the field at

first. Timing is important, as the spot walked over yesterday may sprout morels for the picking tomorrow. A good spring rain is often the cue that brings morel hunters to the field.

Inexperienced hunters should take to the field with a more experienced hunter since morels have many not so healthy for you look-a-likes.

So where do you look? Forest edges populated with Poplars, Ash or Oak are excellent candidates as are old apple orchards.

Early in the season morels will usually first appear on south facing slopes at the forest edges and then as the season progresses, you'll begin to find them on north facing slopes and deeper into the forest.

Harvesting morels is easy. True morels have hollow stems so I find that a sharp knife cut close to the ground yields the best results.

When harvesting morels its best not to be too greedy and leave a few to spawn next year's crop.

Smartphones make it easy to pin the GPS coordinates of a spot that yielded morels. Be sure to mark your spots along with the dates and time so you can revisit that spot and hunt again for years to come.

Morel hunters can be a greedy lot, so its best to keep your morel locations a secret (except for me of course)!

Here is a link to a decent article on identifying morels and locations for hunting.  
<https://www.fieldandstream.com/articles/hunting/2013/04/finding-cooking-morel-mushrooms#page-14>

Submitted by Ken Miller

**Ken Miller is a 2017 graduate of the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Basic Training Course and certified Master Naturalist.**

Photo of Trillium at R.P. Gravely Nature Preserve submitted by Lynn Pritchett.



## The Vine

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### Meet our Newest Master Naturalists

#### Ivan Hiett touts benefits of the VMN Basic Training Program

After retirement I wanted to stay active and continue contributing to my community and society. Since I've been an avid environmentalist since childhood, becoming a VMN volunteer was a natural choice. Participating in VMN fulfilled my desires and much more.

Classroom lectures, field trips, continuing education classes and community service projects expanded my knowledge and appreciation for the diversity of natural resources in the area.

Field trips were fun, informative, adventurous and well organized. I found the activities and projects professionally planned, educational and therapeutic.

I look forward to further mastering and contributing my skills and talents with the Southwest Chapter as a Master Naturalist during my involvement in group and individual projects.

Ivan Hiett

***Ivan Hiett is a 2017 graduate of the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Basic Training Course and a Certified Master Naturalist.***



Photo of Trillium at R.P. Gravely Nature Preserve submitted by Lynn Pritchett.  
Photo of Ivan Hiett, working in VMNH Lab, submitted by Kathy Fell.

# Upcoming Events

# Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

**April 2018—Go to Volunteer Management System (VMS) for more complete listing of events!**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Archaeology Help Day	4 Paleo Help Day	5 Why is Entomology Important?	6	7 DRBA River Float
8 Birding & Wildlife Trail	9	10 Archaeology Help Day	11 Paleo Help Day	12 VMNH 2nd Thurs Science Talk	13	14 Fork Mountain Bioblitz
15 Birding & Wildlife Trail	16	17 Archaeology Help Day	18 Paleo Help Day	19 Intrigue of Ants	20	21
22 Birding & Wildlife Trail	23	24 Archaeology Help Day	25 Paleo Help Day Foren. Entomology	26	27	28 Tick Borne Diseases in Virginia
29	30 Webinar-Poisonous Plants					

**May 2018—VMS calendar at <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Archaeology Help	2 Paleo Help Day	3	4	5 Global Big Day-
6 Birding & Wildlife Trail	7	8 Archaeology Help Day	9	10 VMNH 2nd Thurs Science Talk	11	12 Archaeology Help Day
13 Birding & Wildlife Trail	14	15 Archaeology Help Day	16 Paleo Dig @ Carmel Church	17 Paleo Dig @ Carmel Church	18 Paleo Dig @ Carmel Church	19
20 Birding & Wildlife Trail	21	22 Archaeology Help Day	23 Paleo Help Day	24	25	26 Bats-Myths, Monitoring & Mgt
27	28	29 Archaeology Help Day	30	31		

**June 2018—Look for updated Listing of Events on VMS General Event Calendar!**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6 Project Wild Workshop	7 Project Wild Workshop	8	9 Chestnut Tree—Past & Future
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Refer to General Events Calendar on the Volunteer Management System for more information and updates. The Volunteer Management System link is <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm> . Login is required to access site content.