

The Vine



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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President's Message

Spring is always a time of new beginnings and looking forward to getting outside. This time of year I get out my garden books, walk the garden pathways and make a list of the changes to be made this year. This is also when I think about ways to get outside to volunteer for the Master Naturalists.

As you know, there are multiple sponsoring organizations for the Virginia Master Naturalist program. Every year, we ask the same question: Do our sponsors have any projects where they need our help? This year, the answer is a resounding yes! I'd like your input on a recent request from DGIF.

DGIF is asking us to adopt a Birding and Wildlife Trail. There are 65 trail loops across the state with 637 viewing sites. The Turkeycock Loop has 11 viewing areas across Franklin and Henry counties, including the Virginia Museum of Natural History and several parks in the area.

We need about 10 volunteers to adopt the Turkeycock Trail. Chapter volunteers would make quarterly visits to the 11 viewing sites to report on the site condition and to document any wildlife encountered. Visit this link to view the "Adopt a Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail" Webinar:

<http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/continuing-education.html>

This link describes the Turkeycock Trail:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/loop.asp?trail=2&loop=MTC>

Please let me know if you are interested. I'd love to do this service for one of our sponsors.

Kathy Fell
President

Annual Banquet

The Annual Banquet was held December 17th, 2015 at the Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH). Festivities started out by connecting with Michelle Prysby, Director of the VMN program, via Skype where we learned more about Master Naturalist opportunities available across the state. This was followed by a quick update by Christine Boran and Linda Drage on the Bluebird Box Trail with remarks from Teresa Prillaman after. New Master Naturalist members were recognized from the Basic Training classes of the past year and the current year, with new members pictured to the right. Certificates were handed out followed by recognition of this years certified master naturalists. After the recognitions and all of the speakers, the food was served! The annual banquet serves as a great meeting place for current chapter

members to socialize while catching up on current news. A new board was inducted as well as new committee members. A warm thank you was given to old board members for their contributions and dedicated service for the



The newest class of graduates (Fall 2014 & Spring 2015) L to R Sydney Brown, Catherine Sligh, Sheila Dye, Katie Hastings, Eric Tichay



Recertified Master Naturalists (2015) : L to R Linda Drage, Christine Boran, Janine Howard, Lynn Pritchett, Paul May, Jessica Driver

past year. Upcoming events were discussed and it seems like another great year is in the making. Good work all and looking forward to the year ahead!

-Submitted by Sydney Brown

Board Snapshots

As we welcome a new year, we also welcome a new board! As an introduction I have some snapshots of current board and committee members. Below I have their names and titles followed by the last book they have read with their favorite outdoor activity below:

BOARD

Kathy Fell – President:

- *One Second After* by William R. Forstchen
- Gardening

Ashby Pritchett – Vice President & Programs Committee Chair

- *Sarum* by Edward Rutherfurd
- Hiking with his wife, Lynn

Lynn Pritchett – Historian

- *Grandad's Prayers of the Earth* by Douglas Wood



Current Board Members (L to R): Katie Hastings, Janine Howard, Andy Lash, Sydney Brown, Noel Boaz, Lynn Pritchett, Kathy Fell, Eric Tichay, and Ashby Pritchett
Not Pictured: Denny Casey and Catherine Sligh

- Nature photography

Denny Casey – Treasurer

- *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914* by David McCullough
- Biking

Janine Howard – Secretary

- *Thin places* by Jon Huchkins with Robert Yackley
- Water activities (kayaking, canoeing, etc.)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Eric Tichay – Basic Training

- *Adirondack Fly Fishing* by Francis Betters
- Fly Fishing

Noel Boaz – Advanced Training

- *A New History of Life: The Radical New Discoveries about the Origin and Evolution of Life on Earth* by Peter Ward and Joe Kirschvink
- Running

Sydney Brown – Newsletter Editor

- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri
- Hiking

Andy Lash – Membership Committee

- *A Tree Grown in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith
- Working on his land

Katie Hastings – Outreach Committee

- *Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin
- Falconry

Catherine Sligh – Host Committee

- *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- Hiking

Bluebird Box Building

On May 21, 2015 Reynolds Homestead hosted a class for building Bluebird Boxes. The class covered how to monitor and take general care of the Bluebirds in their new homes, as well as ways of protecting the Bluebirds from predators and caring for the nest. Twelve College of Older Adult (COA) members signed up for the class. Attendees were informed that we have other protected song birds that will share the nest with different species. Whereas other birds, for instance the House Sparrows, will take over the nest. They will rebuild the nest, killing the parents and young by throwing out the eggs.

Credits go out to:

Dr David Jones & Brain Williams (DRBA) who donated the Bluebird Boxes. Wayne Kirkpatrick who donated fence post. Will Koger who donated nails and many hours preparing the poles and boxes. Dottie Haley, Henry County Bluebird Society Coordinator who gave some PowerPoint slides to use.

Lynn Regan and Susan Martin who helped with the folks put their boxes together. Interested in Virginia Bluebirds? Please visit the following link: <http://www.virginiabluebirds.org> or contact the local chapter Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalist.



Carolina Chickadee co-nests with bluebirds

-Submitted by Linda Drage

VMNH 2nd Thursday Science Talks

The talks focus on the varied aspects of scientific research that are important to the field of Natural History. I have attended several of the talks and they have caused me to contemplate the importance of the natural world. Events such as the “Big Bang”, the very origin of matter, the formation of planet

Earth, and its simplest life forms brings up the very important question, “where do we come from?” Humans have witnessed only the smallest fraction of our history, so the discoveries of scientists are filling in the mysteries of our past, providing the evidence to explain who we are and from where we

came. All of the sciences are linked to answer these very important questions. For me, we share life with all living organisms. We share chemistry and atomic structure with all things, even those not living, and we share the forces of the natural world. I think, with what

we know of the atom and the universe, everything is alive with energy and constantly changing either toward complexity or simplicity.

This is what I feel when I hear the Astrophysicist explain the stars, the Geologist explain the mountains, the Paleontologist explain the earliest life forms, and the Archeologist talk about our ancestors. These are just a few of the, “special investigators”, into the world around us, that spark my imagination and curiosity for the natural world.

As a species, we need to gain more of this knowledge. It is this knowledge that binds us together, in a world that has been fractured by so much false information.

Interested in attending? Please visit the VMNH Site for more information:
<http://www.vmnh.net/events/calendar>

-Submitted by Paul May



Dr. Kal Ivanov speaks at the Jan. 14th 2016 2nd Thurs. Science Talk

Virginia Bluebird State Conference



Bob Schamerhorn at the podium

Three of us from the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter attended the Virginia Bluebird Society's (VBS) Fall Conference on November 14, 2015, in Charlottesville, VA. Dottie Haley, Linda Drage, and myself -- along with the other conference attendees from around Virginia -- enjoyed three speakers' fascinating and educational presentations. All presentations gave us a new perspective on birds and their interesting behaviors.

Mr. Bob Schamerhorn conducted a delightful multi-media presentation titled, “*Attracting Birds with Water*”. Bob studied art and design at Virginia Tech and his award-winning photographs have appeared in numerous publications. His presentation helped us understand how every wild animal needs food, shelter, and water. Seventy bird species were captured on video and photographs bathing and drinking at his home-based easy maintenance

which attracts birds and other wildlife throughout the year.

Before the lunch break, Dr. Caren Cooper, Assistant Director of the Biodiversity Research Lab at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, gave us an enlightening lecture titled, *Bluebird Happiness and Turning House Sparrows into Canaries: Enter the Amazing World of Citizen Science*. She discussed stewardship of wild birds and their use as environmental sentinels. She also educated us on a Citizen Science program called *Project Sparrow Swap*, which is an intricate study from volunteers collecting the non-native, invasive species House Sparrow's unhatched eggs. Bluebirders that monitor nesting boxes can collect these eggs easily. The House Sparrow (Scientific: *Passer domesticus*) species is not protected by federal laws and bluebird monitors remove house sparrow nests and eggs to keep them from reproducing in manmade bird housing, such as bluebird nestboxes. This citizen science program has been partnered with the Virginia Master Naturalist program. For more info on Project Sparrow Swap project, you can read more on Dr. Cooper's blog:

Dr. Caren Cooper



<http://www.carencooper.com/citizen-science-projects.html>

Christine surveyed the trail with Linda and made numerous suggestions for upgrading the older boxes along the trail. In order to secure funding for the upgrades, Linda teamed up with her county coordinator, Dottie Haley and drafted a letter for each homeowner who had a box on the Martinsville trail. Most of the boxes on the trail were old and did not have the guarding now recommended by VBS. The letter described the high mortality rate and asked if anyone would be interested in making a donation to secure a new box complete with all of the VBS recommended guarding. Linda's letter writing campaign was a huge success. She collected a total of \$480.00 from various homeowners and was able to purchase 16 complete new boxes from workshop nestbox builder Clark Walter and replaced some of the older boxes on the Martinsville trail. Linda is very enthusiastic about all of her volunteer undertakings, including her box monitoring. Each week during the season, I would get an email with a photo attached of one of Linda's boxes." **Well deserved – congratulations to Linda Drage** for the award of VBS' Bluebirder of the Year!

The afternoon speaker was **Mr. William Young**, writer and world-traveler. He is the author of the book, *The Fascination of Birds: From the Albatross to the Yellowthroat*, (Dover Birds). He shared some of his fascinating videos and photos of bird behaviors from around the world and compared them to a broad range of relative topics using the author's extensive field experience with reflections drawn from biology, including literature, science, art, history, music, politics, economics, religion, linguistics, geography, sports, and comedy.



Linda Drage accepting the Bluebirder of the Year Award from VBS' Anne Little.

It was a great conference of bluebirders and bird fanciers from all over the state. There was a charitable raffle and door prizes, great fellowship with other birders, and a general learning experience about birds. On behalf of the VBS as State Coordinator, I want to take this space to say thanks and show my appreciation to Dottie Haley and Linda Drage on their bluebirding service work and volunteer hours for our Chapter taking care of the cavity-nesting birds along the Martinsville Bluebird Trail and throughout Henry County!

-Submitted by Christine Boran

Upcoming Events

As the year progresses, lots of exciting opportunities for advanced learning, volunteer hours, and more pop up. Below is a list of some major upcoming events to look out for.

APRIL

- Thurs. April 14th *Forest School Program*
Philpott Lake – Interpretive Center
8 am – 12 pm
- Thurs. April 14th 2nd *Thursday Science Talk*
Virginia Museum of Natural History
6 pm – 7 pm

- Fri. April 22nd *Earth Day Student Day*
Virginia Museum of Natural History
9 am – 2pm

- Sat. April 23rd *Earth Day*
J. Frank Wilson Park
10 am – 3 pm

- Sat. April 30th *Pollinator Habitat Workday at the Paw Path*
Smith River Sports Complex
9am – 11:30 am

MAY

- Thurs. May 12th 2nd *Thursday Science Talk*
Virginia Museum of Natural History
6 pm – 7 pm

- Sat. May 14th *Global Big Day (Bird Count)*
Everywhere
Anytime

Please don't forget to check out the calendar on the volunteer management system for the most up to date information:

https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/Univ_ersail_ogin.cfm

Bug Challenge

In celebration of the new newsletter layout, a new challenge is being presented. Pictured below is the photo of a bug. Each new newsletter will showcase a native Virginia Insect picture.

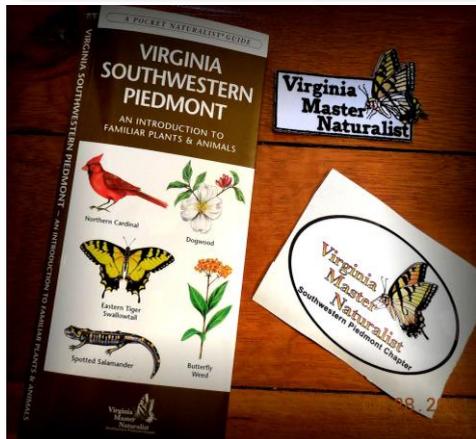
Those interested in identifying the creature will need to email their guesses down to species name. In the subject line please put Bug Challenge. Make sure to include your name and your guess.

The first one to respond with the correct answer will be contacted and will receive a VMN patch mailed to them . Please send all responses by June 13th, 2016.

Please send all guesses to the following email address:
SWPMNN@gmail.com



SWPMN Store Offerings



If you are not aware, the Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalist Chapter has their very own merchandise! Available for purchase is the following:

- Embroidered Patches: \$2.00
- Color Oval Decals: \$1.00 or 3 for \$2.00
- Virginia Southwestern Piedmont Pocket Naturalist Guide (Laminate Folding): \$4.00
- Southwestern Piedmont Virginia Master Naturalist Water Bottle (not pictured): \$10.00

Please submit all inquiries and orders to:
ChristineBoran@gmail.com



Board Members:

Kathy Fell
Ashby Pritchett
Lynn Pritchett
Janine Howard
Denny Casey

Committee Chairs:

Eric Tichay
Noel Boaz
Katie Hastings
Andy Lash
Sydney Brown

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



<https://www.facebook.com/SouthwesternPiedmontMasterNaturalists/Directories>

SUBMISSIONS:

Want to submit to The Vine? Please send all inquiries to SWPMNN@gmail.com. Any submissions will be answered promptly. Thank you for your contributions!

Virginia Master Naturalist Sponsoring Agencies:

