

## **VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT for October 2009-2010**

Compiled by Mike Clifford (mjc4h@vt.edu), Education Committee Chairman. VHS members are encouraged to submit a brief report their herp educational activities (local, regional, or state) to the VHS Education Committee. We compile an annual report that includes your educational efforts on the behalf of the Virginia Herpetological Society. Those interested in serving on the Education Committee are invited to contact the chairman.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

- Tim Christensen taught a 3-hour "Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia" class for Cohort IV of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists on January 5, 2010 in Williamsburg. 16 participants attended.
- Tim Christensen and Steve Living (VDGIF) gave a presentation on "Snakes - What Do We Know About Them?" to Deer Park Elementary School 4-H students (Newport News, VA) on February 8, 2010. Approximately 20 students and parents attended.
- An hour-long "Snakes Alive!" show was given to 200 4-H members and volunteer leaders at Holiday Lake 4-H Center on June 23, 2010. The presentation focused on the identification and natural history of common snakes native to Virginia. Mike Clifford conducted the session.
- Tim Christensen presented "Conservation of Reptiles and Amphibians" on Aug 1, 2010 to a group of approximately 20 children (elementary thru high school) and adults (parents). They are a conservation group called "Children About Restoration (C.A.R.)" which is part of the "Children of the American Revolution Society". Location was Yorktown, VA.
- On Sept. 4, 2010 in Charles City, Susan Watson and Tim Christensen conducted a workshop to train 14 VA Master Naturalists to deliver the "Conservation of Reptiles and Amphibians in Virginia" presentation to selected audiences. Topics included "Herpetology at a Glance" (overview of herptofauna in VA), "Myths and Misconceptions" (about herptofauna), "Why Reptiles and Amphibians are Important" and a walk-thru review of the presentation they would use. Workshop ran from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Plans are for another on Nov 6th and possibly again in early January, plus 1-2 more next year.
- Larry Mendoza awed a large Virginia Dominion Power audience at their early morning safety meeting in the northern Virginia region on September 22nd. The program focused on the native venomous and non-venomous snakes that the employees might encounter in their daily work.
- A "Snakes Alive!" exhibit and presentation was offered at the Amelia Family 4-H Festival on September 25 at the Amelia County Fairgrounds. Mike Clifford and Barry Fox conducted the session which focused on native snakes of Virginia.

### **WEB-BASED PUBLIC EDUCATION**

The VHS website has become the leading public information source concerning the state's native reptiles and amphibians. The addition of features such as the "identification guides" and the "look-alike guides" to the photos, range maps, & links for all Virginia species, has generated wide-spread utilization and inquiry by the public.

- A new herp identification service for the general public has been established. Visitors to the VHS website are directed to submit their questions and photos to: [animal-identification@virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com](mailto:animal-identification@virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com). The requests will be processed by Kory Steele, and/or Mike Clifford. As of 10/10/10, sixty-three herp ID requests have been handled via email so far this year. Details were presented in the August, 2010 VHS Newsletter (p.4). ID requests can also be posted on the VHS yahoo group message board.
- Numerous requests for snake control information were received during the year from distraught homeowners. Advice and helpful publications were provided as appropriate, via email. Topics include control strategies, snake-proof fencing, repellants, toxicants, and other questions of interest. Mike Clifford has copies of the documents available.

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