

VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT for Oct. 2013 to Oct. 2014

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.

LIVE PRESENTATIONS AND EXHIBITIONS

Education of Master Naturalists:

VHS members frequently serve as herpetology instructors and advisors for Virginia Master Naturalist programs and events around the state. New master naturalist candidates in the 29 VMN chapters participate in a lengthy series of training sessions, typically including about three-hours of herpetology instruction. On Feb. 20, 2014, Susan Watson taught a class on Virginia's Reptiles to the Riverine Chapter of VA Master Naturalists, as part of new recruits' basic training. Tim Christensen presented "Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia" to the new cohort class of the Tidewater Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists on March 31, 2014, for 23 people. Rachel Goodman was set to do a class for the Allegheny Highlands chapter, but the course was cancelled. Mike Clifford taught a session for the Pocahontas Chapter in the Chesterfield area on April 15th. Paul Sattler taught a class on amphibians for 20 trainees in the Central Virginia Chapter on October 1st, 2014. As part of the 2013 VMN state conference, Susan Watson and Mike Clifford led a herp field trip on October 20th at Pocahontas State Park.

- A hands-on "Snakes Alive" show for a hundred kids and parents was presented by Mike Clifford at the Jan. 26, 2014 Virginia 4-H Natural Resources Weekend. Herp programs featuring native species are a very popular at this statewide event, held every January at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Appomattox.
- February 8 and March 1, 2014, Susan Watson co-led (with Anne Wright of VCU) training sessions for groups of VA Master Naturalists from many Chapters, who were starting on projects to identify and monitor vernal pools. Susan led the discussions on identification of VA's anurans during these trainings, held at the VDGIF Rice Center/Region 1 Office, in Charles City County.
- On Mar. 26, 2014, Susan Watson co-taught snake classes, with VDGIF staff and snakes, to groups of middle school students at Thomas Hunter Middle School, in Mathews County, VA.
- Bonnie Keller reports that Virginia Reptile Rescue did two programs in July for Kid's Club in Nokesville and one for Chesterfield Academy Daycare. Also one is scheduled on 10/11/14 for Fauquier County Parks and Rec. Bonnie also serves

as advisor for the Lanier Middle School Reptile Club, which meets twice a month, Oct-May.

- Tim Christensen delivered a presentation on snakes for 82 adults and children at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church Vacation Bible School in Yorktown on July 30, 2014. The presentation discussed snake ecology and identification in the local area.
- On Sept. 7, 2014, Susan Watson co-taught (with J.D. Kleopfer, state herpetologist) a short class on Virginia's snakes and the state endangered canebrake rattlesnake to a neighborhood group in Suffolk, VA. This was done in response to an incident a few days earlier where a rattlesnake needed to be removed from under a resident's deck in the neighborhood. This event was very well received. Residents left with a better understanding about these species, and were provided several handouts pertaining to snakes and other Virginia herpetofauna, including snake guides and VHS brochures.
- Susan Watson and Tim Christensen taught a course entitled "Reptiles and Amphibians of Southeast Virginia" for the Christopher Wren Association at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg through three 2-hour periods October 21, October 27 and November 3, 2014. 31 students attended.
- Tim Christensen taught the course "Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia" for the new Historic Rivers Chapter cohort of the Virginia Master Naturalist program on October 28, 2014. 24 students attended.

WEB-BASED PUBLIC EDUCATION

The VHS website and the Facebook page continue to serve as the leading public information sources concerning the state's native reptiles and amphibians. Last April, a web site record was set at with 4.99 million hits. The VHS Facebook page has also a popular (2400 "likes"). Our herp identification and information service for the general public is heavily utilized. Visitors to the VHS website are directed to submit their questions and photos to: animal-identification@virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com. From the numerous thank-you replies that we receive, the service seems to be truly appreciated. Plus, we frequently benefit from some interesting and usable photos, along with the occasional new county distribution record. We have processed approximately 620 ID and information requests so far during 2014.

The latest addition to the VHS website's Education Department is the new section on *Herp Diseases and Disinfection Protocols*. Other sections include education committee reports, educational materials, Virginia herp laws, "Kids & Herpetology", GPS information, VHS brochures, Virginia maps, and book recommendations.

HERP PHOTOS PROVIDED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

- 09/11/14 - The VHS supplied photos to The Nature Conservancy "Year of the Salamander" website and FaceBook page.
- 08/27/14 - Supplied Greg Zell with herp photos to train naturalists.
- 08/15/14 - Supplied Petersburg National Battlefield an Amphiuma photo.

- 06/15/14 - Supplied the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with a Red-backed Salamander photo.
- 07/08/14 - Supplied Rex Springston with Cottonmouth/ Northern Watersnake comparison photo for newspaper article.
- 06/12/14 - Supplied Goochland County with several herp images for park signs.
- 05/07/14 - Supplied Horsepen Run Nature Preserve with photos.
- 05/01/14 - Supplied Hiram College Biology Department with photos.
- 04/30/14 - Supplied Bullfrog photos to the Association of Wetland Stewards for Clayoquot and Barkley Sounds.
- 04/08/14 - Supplied Cumberland River Compact/The Nature Conservancy of TN with a Hellbender photo.
- 04/04/14 - Supplied the State University of New York - College of Environmental Science and Forestry with photos.
- 03/16/14 - Supplied Friends of Tom's Creek with Spadefoot photo.
- 03/04/14- Supplied Blue & Gray Magazine (Vol.XXX#5) - "Snakebites to soldiers during the Civil War" w/ snake photos.
- 02/21/14 - Supplied Dutch website with Northern Red-bellied Cooter with photo.
- 02/20/14 - Supplied the Philippines with turtle photos for an educational booklet (hopefully not a cookbook!).
- 12/30/13 - Supplied photos for a "Wildlife First Response" class.
- Ongoing - The VHS supplies the Virginia State Park Facebook page with photos for their trivia /ID posts.