

Virginia Herpetological Society
Minutes of Fall Meeting
Virginia Commonwealth University
Trani Life Science Building
Richmond, VA
October 4 , 2008

The Fall Meeting was called to order by President Susan Watson at 4:30pm. There was no old business, so new business was covered. The VHS status as a non-profit organization is currently a work in progress. Susan has been completing forms and making many phone calls to obtain this designation. She will keep everyone abreast of our status. As the VHS president, she has been invited to attend "Conserving Virginia's Fish and Wildlife for the Future: Preparing for Climate Change Workshop" on October 30, 2008, at Airfield 4-H Center in Wakefield, VA (Sussex Co.). The workshop will cover climate change issues of concern, identify potential unacceptable outcomes, identify observed and predicted impacts, and what actions/strategies need to be developed and implemented to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts. She will be attending part 2 of this workshop sometime in March 2009. The meeting was then turned over to our committee chairs for reports.

Treasurer and Cafe Press: Pattie Crane reports that she is still in the process of obtaining Paypal access for our members as an easy method of payment for memberships. Due to updated "terms of service", the process of establishing an account has been quite time consuming, but she is still working on it. She hopes to have this up and running over the next couple months. The balance on hand is about the same as our last meeting, \$5,588.86. As before, our largest disbursements have gone towards the VHS Grants. The VHS Store, also known as Cafe Press, is doing well. There is need for new material, illustrations being the most desirable print.

Newsletter editor and Yahoo Groups: Kory Steele reports a delay in this year's newsletters due to problems with current addresses and emails. The issue should be resolved in time for the next newsletter. His employer has continued to provide free printing privileges and this is much appreciated. Scott Duncan, has offered assistance with the newsletter in providing editing and material to publish. A possible co-editor position could arise due to his help. Revision of the format of the newsletter is in the works. Although no complaints have been received from members regarding the current format, a change may spice things up a bit. Yahoo Groups is still a great means of keeping VHS members and non-members in touch. Although it's not in preferred forum-form, it still provides the 118 members with the choice of receiving individual emails, a daily digest, or nothing at all. It allows everyone to keep up-to-date on herps in the news and local herp surveys.

Catesbeiana editor: Paul Sattler reported that 160 copies were printed and 148 were mailed for a total of \$427.64. He currently has one field note and one artwork, so more material is needed. The journal is usually sent out one month prior to a meeting, so material should be sent in two months prior for review and then submission into the journal.

Education Committee: Mike Clifford reported participation in the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp on behalf of the VHS. This is an academic program that educates 6th – 8th grade students in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. His presentation focused on the diversity of Virginia's amphibians and reptiles, with special emphasis on the unique mix of species that inhabit the southwestern portion of our state. It also covered the identification and lifestyles of notable species, including the three venomous snakes of concern that inhabit Virginia. He

would like to remind everyone to submit reports to him which show their educational efforts on behalf of the VHS. He strives to provide an annual report showing all efforts of education. If interested in doing more and serving on this committee, members should contact Mike, mjc4h@vt.edu -or- froholler@hughes.net.

Conservation Committee: Tim Christensen reports the following tasks and statuses:

1.) "Conservation of Reptiles and Amphibians in Virginia" presentation.

(a) The final draft of the initial version has been completed. Feedback was received from VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). This presentation was given to two master naturalist (VMN) chapters (Historic Rivers on February 7, 2008 and Tidewater on March 20, 2008) as a preview to solicit initial input. Both chapters concur that it would be useful and that members would be interested in participating. Additionally, it was presented to 2 members of the Loudoun County Amphibian Monitoring Program (LAMP) on March 29, 2008. Reception by LAMP participants was equally positive. Members of the Banshee Reeks Chapter of the VMN/LAMP, along with VHS members, conducted a thorough and professional critique/evaluation of the presentation on August 23, 2008. Feedback was received on September 13 and has been integrated into the final draft.

(b) Initially targeted audiences for this version include master naturalist chapters and school teachers. Other possible forums include cooperative extensions, Reptile Weekend at the VLM, VDGIF Outdoor Education Program, corporate landowners, homeowner associations, and neighborhoods. Specially tailored programs could be developed for students, 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts.

(c) The goal is to design a "Train the Trainer" program whereby interested VHS members could train interested VMN Chapters on conducting the presentation. The program could include use of copywritten materials, designation of instructors, preparation of trainer information packets, documenting the presentation (audience, date, location) and reporting feedback, evaluating opportunities for expansion, developing information packets and periodically reviewing and updating the presentation and other materials. Much of this work is still under development.

2.) Promoting and participating in the Wildlife Mapping Program.

Participation helps to improve data on herpetofauna in biological databases. A link to this VDGIF program has been included on the VHS website. Wildlife Mapping workshops were given by Tim Christensen to VHS members, master naturalists (Tidewater and Historic Rivers Chapters) and LAMP participants at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Leesburg on March 29, 2008. A workshop has been scheduled at the Rice Center as part of the 2008 fall meeting. More VHS members are encouraged to participate.

3.) Partnering with other non-profit natural resources focused groups.

The Committee proposed partnering with other non-profit natural resources focused groups. Initial coordination was made with the Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society (VTWS). An exchange of website links between VHS and VTWS was completed. The VTWS at one time was planning a "Virginia Fish and Wildlife Summit" conference in 2009 with the primary goal to centralize fish and wildlife professionals in Virginia in order to improve coordination, information sharing, and professional development. This could be a good opportunity to develop conservation efforts. They indicated they would welcome VHS's participation in the conference. No other details have been provided, but Tim is serving as a VHS point of contact as plans progress.

4.) Threats to Herpetofauna Poster.

The Committee proposed designing charts/posters that illustrate threats to herpetofauna. The suggestion is to have separate materials, making anurans/amphibians as one group and turtles and snakes/reptiles as another group. This could potentially be made available for sale through the VHS Store and provided to schools, etc. Proceeds could go towards specific conservation-related projects. No further action has taken place since its proposal.

5.) Federal Duck Stamp Promotion.

Thanks to a great idea by Joy Ware, VHS is promoting the purchase of Federal Duck Stamps. Joy displayed a Duck Stamp poster (borrowed from the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge) during Reptile

Weekend at the Virginia Living Museum in February 2008. She recommended more effort by VHS in promoting Duck Stamp purchases to help support the Refuge System. Ninety eight cents of every dollar generated by the sale of Federal Duck Stamps goes toward purchase or lease of wetlands within the National Wildlife Refuge System. This supports efforts towards habitat for herpetofauna. Information about Federal Duck Stamps (along with an excellent graphic by John White) was incorporated into the VHS website. This information was also included in the August 2008 VHS Newsletters (Volume 18, Number 2). Opportunities to partner with organizations such as Ducks Unlimited represent another means of promoting duck stamp sales. VHS may want to consider selling T-shirts with John's graphics (pending authorization) and sending proceeds to support the Refuge System.

6.) Loudoun County Amphibian Monitoring Program (LAMP).

Tim met with LAMP participants David McCarthy and Nicole Hamilton on March 29, 2008. LAMP is a community effort to monitor amphibians in that county. LAMP may serve as a template/standard by which other counties/municipalities could create similar programs. It is recommended that LAMP representatives provide a presentation about their program at a future VHS meeting.

Research committee: Joy Ware reports that the research committee has been working on a basic disease/abnormality information sheet that will be available for use at the next spring survey. Each survey group will have someone responsible for recording any externally observable disease data or malformations. Prior to the survey Joy Ware will meet with each of the people carrying the disease sheet to answer any questions about the content, etc. This data will be in addition to the species data sheet currently used.

VHS Webmaster: John White reports the website is still a great success. He has seen an increase in hits to over 1,300 per month. Our most recent addition to the website is the copperhead and cottonmouth look-a-likes page. This section helps to point out identifying characteristics between the venomous snake and it's harmless misidentified counterpart.

The meeting ended in open discussion regarding survey dates for 2009, possible locations, including those surveyed previously vs. those not surveyed at all, and changing the Symposium to mid-October to avoid scheduling conflicts encountered this year and previous years.

Emily C Steele
VHS Secretary