

**Minutes of the Spring VHS Meeting
Mason Neck State Park
21 May 2010**

Kory started the meeting with introductions, then Scott read aloud from the Activities Log (old business). We then jumped into committee reports.

Susan started by requesting submissions for the newsletter, which comes out sometime in July.

Paul gave the Catesbeiana update during the new business portion of the meeting. 185 copies were printed, and 170 issues were mailed out at a cost of \$171. The group discussed the possibility of changing to an electronic format, such as PDF. Kory expressed concern that without hard copies on shelves, people would just skim through the PDFs and never revisit them for deeper reading. It was agreed that giving people the option for an electronic format in addition to the hard copy was a good idea. It was mentioned that Joy Ware has Powhatan survey data yet to submit, but we did not know whether she was aware she has to submit it.

Pattie gave the Treasury report. The VHS currently has 175 members. Twenty-five of those are lifetime members. The VHS has \$5,609 in the bank. The largest expense was in March for a \$500 grant. The second-largest expense was for Catesbeiana. It was announced that as of April 20th, the VHS began accepting payments via PayPal. In fact, we added five new members and one renewal who paid via PayPal. The PayPal announcement is going to be placed prominently at the top of the newsletter. Additionally, an expense report has been put on Google Documents.

Pattie also gave a web store update. The web store has been renewed for this year, at a cost of \$50 per year. It has been a while since we've received a paycheck from Cafe Press. Paychecks go out in increments of \$200. Currently the VHS is at approximately \$125. Sales have been low because we need more material for the web store. The calendar is our best seller, but we didn't get a calendar out there this year. People were asked send pictures to Pattie for the next Calendar. A request was also made for herp-related artwork submissions, possibly via a contest, to sell on the web store.

Kory gave the Education Committee report on behalf of Mike Clifford. Mike is doing a lot of herp presentations. He has been receiving 2-3 emails per week from people to identify various herps. One example was given about a woman who reached out to him asking about a tick preventative for her yard and wanted to know if it would hurt the amphibians. VHS is keeping track of these communications, and we need to make sure we cc Mike when we get those identification requests. Leeana Pletcher presented to the Virginia Master Naturalist Pocahontas chapter in March.

Kory gave the Research Committee report on behalf of Joy Ware. Joy leads a group called Snake Force One which studies health and disease status of (mostly) snakes in various national wildlife refuges, such as Pesquille Island, James River, and Rappahannock. Joy found an abundance of internal parasites in the blood of one snake. There are many more surveys coming.

Kory gave the Conservation Committee report on behalf of Tim Christianson, who is in Ecuador. Tim is working on a herps presentation for a workshop for Virginia's master naturalists to use to train people about herps. He also has an opportunity to teach a herps course for the Christopher Wren Association (associated with the College of William and Mary). We discussed promoting the Federal Duck Stamp program, since that program's profits go to national wildlife refuges. Tim has also been looking into the idea of a herp stamp to raise funds for herp preservation. Per Tim, we need to wait until we're a non-profit, then revisit this idea. Finally, we discussed an idea for a promotional poster to illustrate the threats to herps, possibly to be sold through the web store.

Kory gave Jason's Herp Blitz report. Jason is organizing a blitz at Chincoteague State Park on the Eastern Shore on June 12th-13th. Jason requested that people pre-register for this survey.

John White gave a brief web site report. The site generates lots of traffic. Kory has a goal for redesign the contact us page and the front page, specifically to clarify what we're all about. We don't want to scare people off by giving the impression that active participation is mandatory for membership. Look for a redesign coming up soon.

That concluded the committee reports. We then moved on to new business.

We talked about recently obtaining non-profit status. The VHS now has the ability to get tax exemptions for purchases. It's nice to give the tax number to the Cafe press (web store) so we don't have to use Pattie's social security number anymore.

John took it on himself to get us business cards. People present at the meeting were encouraged to take five to ten with them.

Kory submitted field notes about a Mediterranean Gecko he found in Newport News. This represents a range extension for the species. Kory learned that there is a policy against field notes for non-native species. Kory said he would talk more about this later in the meeting.

Reptile Day is coming up in Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville on July 24th. Kory asked for volunteers to help Jason out at the event.

The location of next year's surveys was discussed. Kory is talking with Don Schwab of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Don works in Dismal Swamp and is a former state herpetologist. They are trying to organize a possible survey there. Kory mentioned the idea of maybe revisiting some of the same places every one or two years, and the Dismal Swamp would make a great location for that. Also, Tim has been talking to a guy who would like us to do a sea turtle survey.

We discussed locations for the Fall meeting. We were looking into the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, but so far it's not for free. We need a place that's either free or that charges only a modest fee. For a keynote speaker, Larry has reached out to a paleontologist. Kory's going to solidify these plans so we can get on the paleontologist's calendar.

Susan gave a DGIF-related update. The VHS is going to the AAG (Agency Advisory Group) meeting. DGIF has asked constituent groups to attend the meeting. Various hunting groups and conservation groups attend to weigh in on issues, therefore so should we. It's an opportunity for ideas for funding for DGIF. Next up at the AAG is strategic planning for the agency.

Kory then kicked off a discussion about whether to keep notes on invasive species. Should we include them in Catesbeiana? Kory argued that any herpetology going on in Virginia is worthwhile to capture. Maybe we should add a separate section for them in Catesbeiana. Paul recommended we add a header category for them. Paul said we need criteria to distinguish between those invasive species that can survive in the wild in Virginia, versus those that cannot.

Kory suggested that we set up a Google group to encompass the VHS and other U.S. herpetological societies.

The meeting was adjourned at park official David Stapleton began discussing park rules and guidelines.

Submitted by Scott Duncan