



VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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VHS Survey Summary

Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area (CWMA) Charles City County

VHS surveyed CWMA ([website](#)), which is comprised of 5,217 acres and is located between the Chickahominy River and Morris Creek in Charles County, VA. Due to the large amount of acreage to be surveyed, two dates were selected to complete the survey, Sunday May 1st and Sunday May 15th. The Sunday dates are necessary to avoid any conflicts with the spring turkey hunting season (Monday-Saturday).

CWMA is a remote area, encompassing deciduous forest and many wetland habitats including rivers, creeks, marshes and beaver ponds. It is of special interest to the Conservation Committee as 17 herp species, with Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) Tier I-Tier IV conservation status ([bewildvirginia.org](#)) are within the potential range of CWMA. Carpenter Frogs, Rainbow Snakes and Spotted Turtles are either known or likely.

Survey participation was limited to 2016 VHS members and one invited guest with pre-registration. There was good turnout, despite not so great weather conditions on May 1. Thirteen participants surveyed in cool and rainy weather that day, yet they were still able to find approximately 20 species of reptiles and amphibians. On May 15, the weather was still a bit cool, but it was much sunnier and stayed dry that day. This day brought out nineteen participants, and approximately 25 species of reptiles and amphibians were found. Highlights from May 1 included three northern copperheads, two northern racers, and an eastern kingsnake under metal debris at a special location where the CWMA supervisor led one group. Also, there were a few box turtles found that day, which is a Tier III species. Highlights on May 15 included an eastern ratsnake that had just captured an eastern



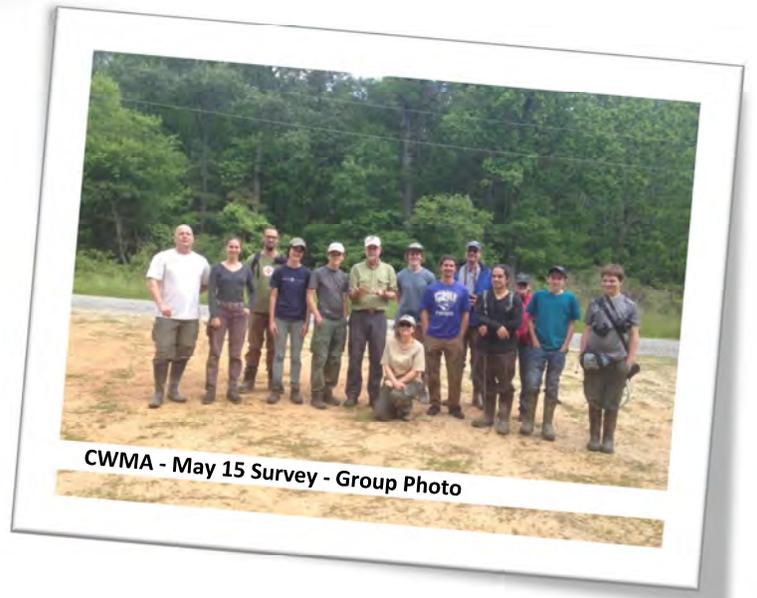
cottontail, several box turtles, a county record broad-headed skink, and last but certainly not least a beautiful and brightly-patterned eastern hog-nosed snake found at the end of the day crawling across a road.

CWMA is located at 12510 Eagles Nest Road (Rte 621), about 8 miles east of Charles City (courthouse complex) and 12-14 miles west of Williamsburg. Thanks to Dave Perry for coordinating this survey!

See more about the May 1st survey [here](#),
and more about the May 15th survey [here](#)!



CWMA - May 1 Survey - Group Photo



CWMA - May 15 Survey - Group Photo

Upcoming VHS Surveys

<http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/news/index.htm>

11th Annual HerpBlitz Stewarts Creek Wildlife Management Area Carroll County

May 28th and 29th, 2016

This year for the 11th HerpBlitz we will be surveying Stewarts Creek Wildlife Management Area in Carroll County, Virginia. Survey coordinators (Jason Gibson and Paul Sattler) visited the site on Saturday March 12 and found the site to be very remote and rugged. There is no cell phone signal or bathroom facility on the entire property. To access the survey sites requires long hikes through mountainous terrain. The property mainly consists of upland hardwood and pine forest. There are many streams and seeps on the property. Many salamanders will be found on this survey. The survey will be conducted on Saturday May 28 and Sunday May 29. May 28 will be a full day survey and May 29 will be a half day survey. Preregistration is required. Please preregister with Jason Gibson (frogman31@gmail.com).

For more information on the Stewarts Creek Wildlife Management Area see the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries website <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wmas/detail.asp?pid=30>.

The property is located seven miles southeast of the city of Galax. Lodging options are limited to primitive camping on the wildlife management area, camping in nearby campgrounds, or getting a hotel/motel in Galax or Independence Virginia. **Due to limited parking the survey on Saturday will be limited to 15 people. The survey on Sunday will be reserved for members only.** This is a very important survey because of the unique position of this wildlife management area. This is the first time a survey has been conducted in the Pee Dee / Yadkin River watershed. Who knows what we might find.

[VHS Membership Sign-up](#)

[List of documented herps for Carroll County](#)

[Infectious Diseases of Our Native Herps and Disinfection Protocols](#)

[How to dress and what to bring](#)



VHS Quarry Gardens Survey Schuyler, VA; Nelson County

** VHS Members Only * Saturday June 4th - 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM*

VHS is planning to survey The Gardens in Schuyler, which is comprised of 40 acres around the gardens and 600 acres in total with 15 miles of trails in Nelson County, VA.

The magnesium-rich soil around the quarries has supported the growth of unusual ecosystems and plant communities. In the 1920s a soapstone processing plant was located in Schuyler. Five of these quarry pits are the center of what is now The Quarry Gardens at Schuyler. In 1990 the land became privately owned and currently exists to:

- Preserve and exhibit relics of the soapstone quarrying industry
- Assist the natural process of plant and habitat restoration
- Showcase native plant communities for public education and enjoyment
- Maintain records of plants and animals as a resource for study.

Survey participation is limited to 2016 VHS members and [pre-registration is a requirement](#).

Restroom facilities are located at bottom floor of the house. Lunch will be provided to participants, however it is advised to still bring a light snack and plenty of bottled water. Sturdy footwear should be worn. Please also be prepared for a woodland environment, mosquitoes and ticks.

Schuyler is in central Virginia, about 25 miles south of Charlottesville, between Route 29 and Scottsville.

You can find about the Quarry Gardens at their website: <http://quarrygardensatschuyler.com/>

The VHS coordinator for this survey is [Matt Neff](#).

[VHS Membership Sign-up](#)

[List of documented herps for Nelson County](#)

[Infectious Diseases of Our Native Herps and Disinfection Protocols](#)

[How to dress and what to bring](#)



2016 Annual Spring Meeting & Survey

Natural Bridge; Rockbridge County

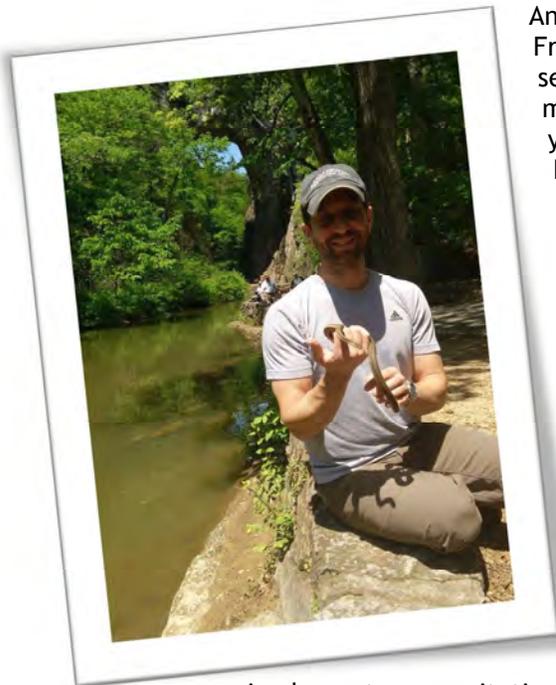


June 10th - 12th 2016

The Virginia Herpetological Society's annual survey for 2016 will be conducted at Natural Bridge. This historic location is comprised of roughly 1,500 acres of backcountry and developed trails in Rockbridge County. The property's herpetofauna has never been properly surveyed, giving the VHS a unique opportunity to document species before the land eventually becomes a new state park. **Please register** for this event [here](#).

The schedule for the weekend is as follows:

- Friday, June 10 - Business Meeting and Survey Coordination (6PM to 9PM)
- Saturday, June 11 - Main Survey (8AM to 3PM)
- Sunday, June 12 - Secondary Survey, **VHS Members Only** (8AM to 12PM)



Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings on Friday and the survey on Saturday. The secondary survey on Sunday will be open to VHS members only. If you are not already a member, you can become one

here: <http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/vhs-membership/membership.html>

Please be aware that you will come into contact with biting insects, ticks and chiggers. Please dress and prepare accordingly.

There are two venomous snakes that are found in Rockbridge County: the [Northern Copperhead](#) and the [Timber Rattlesnake](#). *Please become familiar with their appearances.

In response to various reptile and amphibian pathogens that have been detected in Virginia (Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis and Ophidiomyces

ophiodiicola), the VHS will

implement new sanitation practices of equipment and footwear. We do not want to be responsible for spreading these diseases to new herp populations. Details will be provided in the pre-survey email.

Natural Bridge is offering discounted veranda rooms for VHS participants (must call before May 15). Get your reservations in early! Once they are full, there will be other lodging available but at their normal rate. In addition to the rooms held at Natural Bridge, the Natural Bridge KOA is also holding a block of campsites. Just let them know you are part of the VHS group when booking.

Reservations:

Natural Bridge Hotel:

800-533-1410 Ext. #0.

15 Appledore Lane

Natural Bridge, VA 24578

<http://www.naturalbridgeva.com/accommodations>

KOA:

800-562-8514.

214 Killdeer Lane

Natural Bridge, VA 24578

<http://www.naturalbridgekoa.com>

Natural Bridge is also offering a group discount on their interpretive programs for any VHS family members that will be on site, but not participating in the surveys. The discount pricing is \$15 per adult, \$8 for children 7-17 and children 7 and under will be free with accompanying adult. These tickets include access to The Natural Bridge of Virginia, Cedar Creek Nature Trail, Monacan Indian Exhibit, Saltpeter Mine, Lost River, Natural Bridge Caverns and the Drama of Creation shown at dusk.

<http://www.naturalbridgeva.com/recreation>

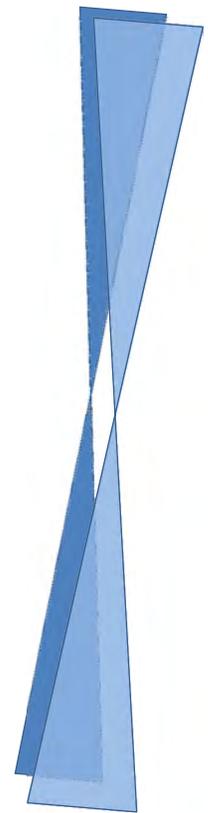
We look forward to seeing you at the survey!
[List of documented herps for Rockbridge County](#)
[Infectious Diseases of Our Native Herps and Disinfection Protocols](#)
[How to dress and what to bring](#)



Herps are even found at nearby Foamhenge!

Other Events

	Northern Virginia Reptile Expo	Richmond Reptile Expo
Dates	8/27, 10/01, & 12/10/2016	7/23 & 10/22/2016
Location	Prince William County Fairgrounds Manassas, Virginia 20108	Richmond International Raceway Colonial Bldg, 602 E Laburnum Ave Richmond, VA 23322
Admission	\$8 / \$3 child	\$8 / \$3 child
Time	9 am to 3 pm	9 am to 3 pm
Contact	http://mdreptilefarm.com/northern-virginia-reptile-expo/	http://mdreptilefarm.com/richmond-virginia-reptile-expo/



I can't ever remember a time in my life when I wasn't fascinated by the world around me and by reptiles and amphibians. I'm lucky to have grown up with parents that loved being outdoors, hiking, and camping. I do believe had it not been for those experiences I had as a kid I wouldn't have the job that I have today. Working with herpetofauna professionally and personally I am constantly surrounded by exotic animals, but one of my favorite pastimes still is herping (looking for native reptiles and amphibians in nature).

Being so close to the Nation's capital, many folks are surprised to hear you can find a lot of wildlife right in your own backyard. I live in Alexandria, VA and one of my favorite places to go is only 25 minutes away. Virginia has an amazing amount of herpetological diversity. It's one of those Mid-Atlantic States, so you have northern, southern, and Appalachian ranges of different groups of herp populations. That means there is a lot to see!



You should always remember when you look for reptiles and amphibians in the wild, leave everything how you found it in nature. If you flip over a log or board, make sure to place it back how it was before you continue on your hike. Even if you don't happen to see anything, you want to make sure that herps that live under those logs or the food they eat, like insects and different invertebrates, have a place to live and thrive after you leave. Also make sure to clean off your boots before and after you're done with hiking. This helps reduce the spread of different diseases that could affect

local animals as well as prevent the spread of some invasive plants through seed dispersal.

Last year, 2015, was the first time I had visited this regional park since I was a kid and it didn't disappoint. There are a variety of different habitats: vernal pools, streams, rocky outcrops, and shaded logs beneath mountain laurels. The first visit in early April I decided it was time to end my cabin fever. The first specimen I found was pretty close to the gravel parking lot, it was a Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*). These salamanders are so common in eastern forest habitats they come close to matching the biomass of white-tailed deer! Needless to say, I found many more during the hike.



As I ventured down the scenic forested path it quickly became sandwiched between two steep embankments. A little further on a creek appeared on the left side and this is where I started seeing more wildlife. Under the smallest piece of bark, which I almost didn't turn over, on the trail opposite of the creek was a tiny red eft (*Notophthalmus viridescens viridescens*).

These little guys are a bright reddish-orange letting predators know that they are toxic. They are terrestrial for the first 1-3 years of life and become aquatic adults. This just goes to show even the smallest piece of forest debris may harbor a cool creature. Not even 20 feet away under a log on the creek-side of the trail was an adult Red Salamander (*Pseudotriton ruber ruber*).

Although Red Salamanders are a bright red with a peppering of black dots, they aren't toxic at all. They rely on springs and small streams to reproduce and will attach their eggs to the undersides of rocks. I ventured down the creek and passed a few small waterfalls and found another neat salamander under a flat rock, a hybrid between a Three-lined and Long-tailed Salamander (*Eurycea guttolineata x longicauda*). In Virginia these hybrids occur when coastal ranging Three-lined Salamanders meet the mountain ranging Long-tailed Salamanders. I had not seen this before and was pretty excited.

Further down as the creek met a river I continued along. Bluebells were in bloom and it made the trek very pleasant as the leaves weren't on many of the towering trees yet. I kept walking along the river until I found a small seep. I followed the seep up the hill

flipping rocks and found a Queensnake (*Regina septemvittata*)



under a larger rock. These secretive snakes only feed on molting crayfish - talk about a picky eater! Further up the seep I found a Green Frog (*Lithobates clamitans*), the calls from these guys sound like a banjo string, unfortunately for me he wasn't calling, just sitting next to the water looking for a meal to pass by. I had been out hiking for a good three hours and decided it would probably be a good time to head back home as the light was starting to fade. As many herpers can attest to, the hike back was very quick as you are passing logs that had previously been checked.

Not bad for my first venture out that spring! Between four different visits I ultimately ended up finding 3 species of snakes, 7 species of salamanders, and 5 species of frogs. It's nice to find a habitat so close to the city that's still teeming with wildlife!



BOOK REVIEW

Tracks & Sign of Reptiles & Amphibians: A Guide to North American Species

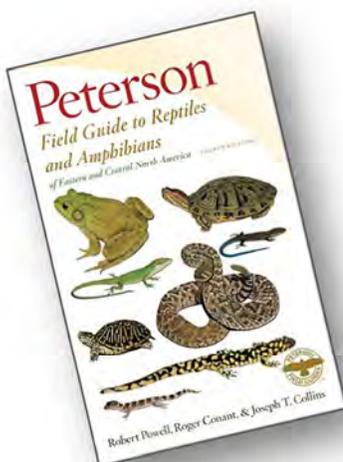
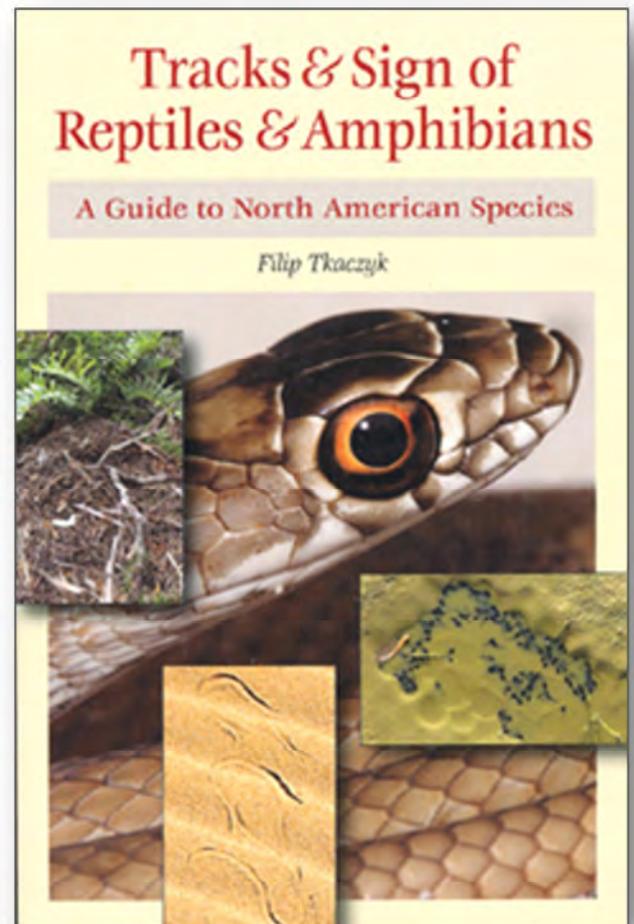
October 15, 2015. Stackpole Books. 468 pp. Author: Filip Tkaczyk.

This unusual book is the fourth in the series of Stackpole's highly regarded "track & sign" guides. The first three books covered mammals, birds, and insects & other invertebrates. All are unique and valuable references for the field naturalist. This new reptile & amphibian guide is a worthy addition to the series.

A large portion of this book is devoted to the tracks and trails left by a variety of reptiles and amphibians as they roam their territories. Illustrations include detailed drawings, scaled color photos of tracks and trails, live animal photos, and range maps. The author does not claim to cover all North American species, but does include a surprisingly good variety, including many found in Virginia. For example, you can see tracks of the American Toad, the Eastern Newt, the Jefferson Salamander, the Pickerel Frog, the Snapping Turtle, the Little Brown Skink, and the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake.

The book has a nice chapter on snake and lizard "Sheds" with scaled color photos of several Virginia species and a section on scale nomenclature. Another chapter covers "digs, lays, and burrows" with another good selection of color photos. My favorite chapters cover the nuances of scat identification and scent marking. So, there's the poop! Nice book.

~ Mike Clifford
VHS Educational Committee Chairman



Also note for this spring: the 4th edition of the *Peterson Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America* was released on April 12, 2016.

Virginia Native: Eastern Glass Lizard

OPHISAURUS VENTRALIS



Characteristics

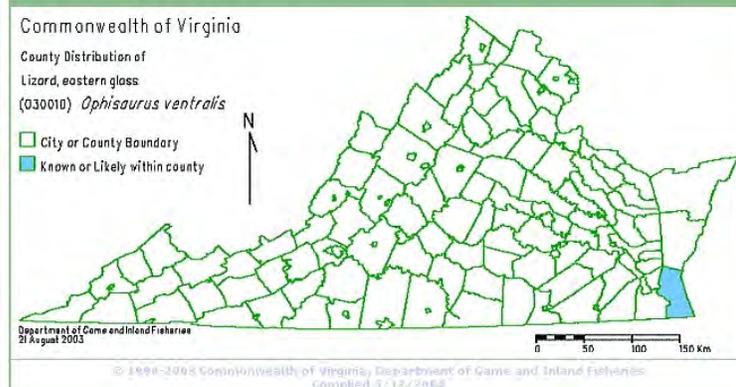


This rather large lizard looks more like a snake than a lizard. It has no legs and is smooth and shiny. It is the only limbless lizard in the United States with a deep groove along the sides. From the tip of the nose to the base of the tail, it can measure up to 12 in. (1,082 mm), and including the tail, up to 42.6 in. (1,083 mm). The tail, when complete, is more than twice as long as the body. The tail is fragile and often broken off at the tip. A broad tan dorsal stripe extends onto the tail. A dark stripe flecked with white occurs on each side above the lateral groove. This stripe broadens with age, and old individuals are almost completely black or greenish flecked with white. Three to seven vertical white bars bordered by black occur on the neck and head. The female coils around the eggs in the nest but does not defend the eggs as skinks do. Approximately 8-17 eggs are laid from June to August, and they take 56-61 days to hatch.

Distribution

This species has been found only in Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park. It is listed as state threatened. This lizard inhabits grassy areas with sandy soils, wet meadows, forested wetlands, hammocks, and pine woods.

County occurrence maps chapter for Lizard, eastern glass (030010)



Foods

This lizard hunts under grass cover and under the ground for insects and their larvae, spiders, snails, small snakes, and other lizards. Grasshoppers are its primary prey.

Virginia Wildlife Action Plan Rank: Tier II – Very High Conservation Need

- Has a high risk of extinction or extirpation. Populations of these species are at very low levels, facing real threat(s), or occur within a very limited distribution. Immediate management is needed for stabilization and recovery.

Common Name: Eastern Glass Lizard

Scientific Name: *Ophisaurus ventralis*

Etymology:

Genus: *Ophisaurus* is derived from the Greek words *ophio* meaning "snake" and *sauros* meaning "lizard".

Species: *ventralis* is from the Latin word *venter* meaning "of the belly", referring to the serpentine form of locomotion used by this lizard.

Average Length: 18 - 42.6 in. (45.7 - 108.3 cm)

Virginia Record Length: 23.8 in. (60.4 cm)

Record length:

42.6 in. (108.3 cm)



Special Announcement

<http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/2016contest.html>

A Guide to the Snakes and Lizards of Virginia Photo Contest: The Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries is in the process of revising the highly successful publication A Guide to the Snakes of Virginia. The new guide will not only include updated taxonomic changes and life history information, but also will include lizards! We would love to have VHS members involved in the development of A Guide to the Snakes and Lizards of Virginia through a photo contest. The winning snake photo will be used for the cover, and the winning lizard photo will be on the introductory page to the lizard section. The VHS will award a \$50 prize to each winner. So send us your best photos! Winners will be announced at the VHS Fall Symposium.
(instructions provided in the link above)

