

The Virginia Master Naturalist Program



Mission

To develop a well-informed corps of volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Agency Sponsors

Collaboration among 5 sponsoring
state agencies:

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Department of Forestry

Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Virginia Museum of Natural History



Virginia
Cooperative
Extension





Certification Process

Basic Training

+

Advanced Training

+

Volunteer Service

=

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist



Certification Process

Basic Training

at least 40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts



A Virginia Master Naturalist Knows...

- All aspects of his or her role as a Virginia Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history
- Biogeography of Virginia
- Ecology (basic concepts)
- Geology (basic concepts)
- Resource management (basic principles)
- Some native flora and fauna in the region
- Process of science
- Roles of Virginia state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources



A Virginia Master Naturalist Can...

- Use a key to identify organisms
- Use a field guide
- Share knowledge with others
- Make and record observations in nature
- Recognize when he or she does not know the answer to a question, but be able to seek out answers from people, books, or other reliable resources



Every Master Naturalist training includes...

- Both field and classroom experiences, with a minimum of 25% of the course time spent in the field
- Information from unbiased, research-based sources
- Material on the following topics:
 - Introduction to the Virginia Master Naturalist program
 - American Naturalists
 - Basic Ecology
 - Biogeography
 - Geology
 - Nature of Naming
 - Education and Interpretation Skills
 - Citizen Science and Research Skills
 - Ecology and Management of the systems occurring in the region
 - Overview of vertebrates, invertebrates, trees and other plants (biology, ecology, identification, conservation and management)



Certification Process

Basic Training

40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts

+

Advanced Training

8 hours

Specialized topics that build on basic training

Required annually to maintain certification



Advanced Training-Objectives

- Promotes continued learning and development of naturalist skills
- Provides Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills necessary to work in local volunteer efforts
- Provides Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few topics
- Builds on the core curriculum initially provided
- Provides information on natural resources and resource management information applicable to Virginia
- May be a full 8 hours of one training, or a series of shorter trainings over time



Certification Process

Basic Training

40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts



Advanced Training

8 hours

Specialized topics that build on basic training

Required annually to maintain certification



Volunteer Service

40 hours

Education, citizen science, or stewardship

Required annually to maintain certification



Service Projects

- Must be dedicated to the beneficial management and conservation of natural resources in the community
- Must be of public benefit, not personal gain
- May be a series of short, unrelated experiences or a long-term commitment to one project
- May take 3 forms: education, citizen science, or stewardship



Volunteer Service: Education

For volunteers who enjoy public speaking or working with youth!

Examples include:

- Being a volunteer interpreter at a state or local park
- Developing an interpretive trail
- Being a guest presenter on a natural resource topic in a classroom



Photo by Mike Hayslett



Volunteer Service: Citizen Science

For volunteers who enjoy helping with scientific research!

Examples include:

- Collecting data for the VA Wildlife Mapping program
- Collecting data for the VA Frog and Toad Calling Survey
- Participating in a Christmas Bird Count
- Conducting water quality monitoring



Photo by Mike Hayslett



Volunteer Service: Stewardship

For volunteers who just want to get their hands dirty!

Examples include:

- Maintaining trails at a state park
- Pulling out exotic invasive plants and planting natives at a nature center
- Restoring bird-friendly habitat at a local park



Photo by Mike Hayslett



Is This Program For Me?

- Are you curious about nature?
- Do you enjoy the outdoors?
- Do you want to make a difference in the environment?
- Do you care about the natural areas and native species in your community?
- Do you want to be actively involved in managing, conserving, and educating about Virginia's natural resources?
- Do you have time to complete the training?
- Do you have time to complete the volunteer service?
- Are you interested in being a part of a local team and interacting with other individuals who care about natural resources?
- As a possible charter member, do you have a sense of adventure?
- **If so, then YES, the program may be for you!**



Is This Program For Me?

- Are you mostly interested in getting the training and less interested in the volunteering?
- Are you wanting the certification for your job or to promote yourself in some way?
- Are you hoping to use the certification for environmental advocacy?
- Are you more interested in promoting personal opinions about the environment than research-based information?
- Are you thinking that your Master Naturalist service will count towards Master Gardener service requirements?
- If so, then, **NO**, this program may not be for you.