



Virginia Master Naturalists

The Pollinator

News from the Virginia Master Naturalist Program
Summer 2024



*This delightful photo was taken by VMN volunteer David Yeager in the Middle Peninsula Chapter. A male [prothonotary warbler](#) (*Protonotaria citrea*) is eating a female [Eastern pondhawk](#) (*Erythemis simplicicollis*) dragonfly. Both species are sexually dimorphic, meaning that the males and females look different from each other. Both species live in wetland habitats, such as flooded forests and swamps. They even have very similar diets consisting of insects and other invertebrates. And yet, even with so much in common, one species will clearly be the prey and the other the predator in a warbler-pondhawk*

matchup!

From the VMN State Program Office

Dear Virginia Master Naturalist community,

Weather is always a reliable topic of conversation. It's raining outside as I write this note, and I'm rather thankful for that, given that so much of Virginia has been experiencing drought this summer. Both weather and climate are important topics in the VMN program. All VMN volunteers learn about weather and climate in their basic training courses. Some volunteers go on to do service related to these topics, such as mapping tidal flooding in the annual [Catch the King](#) event, monitoring plant phenology with [Nature's Notebook](#), or giving talks in their communities about climate change issues. VMN volunteers in more than 100 locations collect data for the [Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network](#) (CoCoRaHS), making highly localized precipitation data available for farmers, emergency planners, meteorologists, and others.

And weather does make a difference! Perhaps you've heard how [the hard work to clean up the Seine before the Paris Olympics may be thwarted by the unusually high rainfall](#)? Here at home, VMN volunteers assist with the [James River Watch](#), providing weekly water quality data all summer long so that people who want to boat, swim, or play in the James and its tributaries can check on water conditions and avoid times when bacterial counts are high (which frequently happens after heavy rains.) Plus, any VMN volunteer who leads nature walks or organizes outdoor events has to pay close attention to the weather and adapt accordingly. Leaders in several VMN chapters wisely opted to postpone volunteer picnics this summer due to extreme heat.

Want to know more about weather and climate? At our upcoming [VMN Statewide Conference](#) in September, we'll have a session that focuses on the synergism between Virginians and climate led by Dr. Andrew Ellis, Professor of meteorology and climatology in the Department of Geography at Virginia Tech.

Until then, watch the forecast and enjoy whatever weather comes our way. Hopefully the weather will cooperate for the [many summer butterfly surveys](#) our VMN volunteers are organizing in the next couple of weeks!

Michelle D. Prysby
VMN Program Director & Senior Extension Specialist
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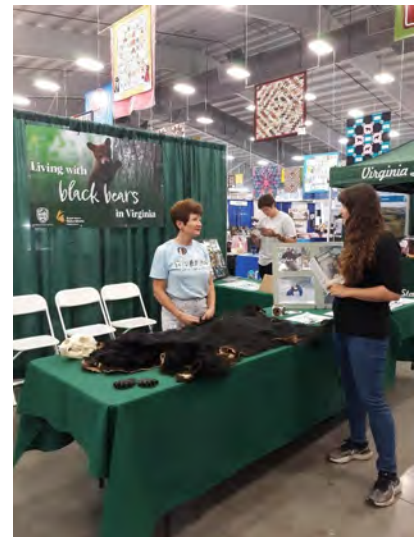
Features

Living with Black Bears Project - Expanding Eastward

--Contributed by Courtney Hallacher, DWR Statewide Wildlife Education Coordinator

DWR is looking for additional VMN chapters to join the Living with Black Bears (LWBB) outreach and education project. As black bears have become more common across Virginia, DWR has teamed up with and trained VMN volunteers to provide important bear education within their communities in hopes of alleviating negative interactions and human-bear conflicts.

[Full article>>](#)



Living with Black Bears project volunteers staffed a booth at the Virginia State Fair where they talked to thousands of visitors about bears. Photo by Becky Kyle.

A Major Milestone for Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Restoration

--Contributed by Henry McBurney, VMN-Historic Southside Chapter

Along with the once vast longleaf pine savannahs spread across the southeastern U.S. landscape that, in 1607, began supplying the world's appetite for sorely needed products, went their accompanying vibrant understory ecosystems. This great ecological loss, scarcely noticed for hundreds of years, is now finally getting the attention it deserves, thanks to the Longleaf Cooperators of Virginia.

[Full article>>](#)



A happy crew sees the last cartload of native seeds/forbs appropriately flagged and ready for transport. Photo by Bobby Clontz.

New Volunteer in the Middle Peninsula Chapter Gets Off to a Great Start

--Contributed by Luann Johnson, with photos by Susan Walton and David Yeager

David Yeager is one of the newest trainees in the VMN-Middle Peninsula Chapter, having graduated earlier this year. Little did the chapter leaders know of his dedication and commitment to the spirit of Virginia Master Naturalists, most especially to all things to do with birds. Be sure to view the whole article to see an adorable pair of owlets!

[Full article>>](#)



David Yeager, a recently graduated VMN volunteer, checks a prothonotary warbler nest box. Photo by Susan Walton. **Page 3 of 6**

Volunteer News

Laurels - Spring 2024

Each quarter, we invite VMN chapters to share stories of volunteers' awards and accomplishments.

This quarter, learn about:

- A special birding celebration in memory of a volunteer
- A field trip focused on the relationships between plants and cultural history
- The Junior Naturalist club in Mecklenburg County

...and more!

[Full article>>](#)



Ranger Emily (also a Southern Piedmont Master Naturalist) introduces Elvis, an eastern king snake, to Junior Naturalists. Photo by Scott Wright.

New Milestone Achievements by VMN Volunteers

The VMN State Program office recognizes volunteers who complete 250, 500, 1,000, 2,500, and 5,000 hours of service. And, another VMN has hit 10,000 hours!

[Full article>>](#)



From Our Sponsors and Partners

News On the Coast

Find out how the public can contribute to Virginia's first Ocean Plan (DEQ/Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program) and be a part of the annual Catch the King Tide crowdsourced study of coastal flooding (VIMS/Wetlands Watch).

[Full article>>](#)



Humpback whale. Photo by Virginia Aquarium.

Support

Donors support many aspects of the VMN program statewide so that we can keep providing what our volunteers need to channel their passions for nature into on-the-ground projects that make a difference for Virginia's natural resources!

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Contributors

This edition of *The Pollinator* was compiled by Michelle Prysby (VMN Program Director). Contributors of text and images for the blog stories included Bobby Clontz, Penny Firth, Tanya Hall, Courtney Hallacher, Daina Henry, Linda Hughes, Luann Johnson, Lena Kroll, Rikki Lukas, Henry McBurney, Josie Shostak, Charlene Uhl, Virginia Witmer, Scott Wright,

David Yeager, and Tiffany Brown (VMN Program Assistant).

We welcome submissions from chapters, volunteers, sponsors, and partners about initiatives that would be of interest to our audience. Please [contact Michelle Prysby](#) if you have something to share.

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