

VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT for Oct. 2014 to Oct. 2015

Compiled by Mike Clifford (mjc4h@vt.edu), Education Committee Chairman. VHS members are encouraged to submit a brief report their herp educational activities (local, regional, or state) to the VHS Education Committee. We compile an annual report that includes your educational efforts on the behalf of the Virginia Herpetological Society. Those interested in serving on the Education Committee are invited to contact the chairman.

LIVE PRESENTATIONS AND EXHIBITIONS

Education of Master Naturalists:

VHS members frequently serve as herpetology instructors and advisors for Virginia Master Naturalist programs and events around the state. New master naturalist candidates in the 30 VMN chapters participate in a lengthy series of training sessions, typically including about three-hours of herpetology instruction. Paul Sattler gave a talk on 12 November 2014 to the Central Virginia Master Naturalist group. The presentation was on the snakes of central Virginia and about 15 attended. On February 24th Mike Clifford taught the 3-hour herpetology class for the VMN Central Piedmont Chapter. March 14, 21, 22, April 11, & May 30, 2015: Susan Watson co-taught, with Anne Wright (VCU) & Lee Hesler (Master Naturalist) training classes for the Vernal Pool Cooperative of Virginia project. Participants were Master Naturalists interested in learning about vernal pools and what they can do to help locate, identify, monitor, and share data on vernal pools on public lands in their respective areas. These classes were held at the VCU Rice Rivers Center in Charles City County, except for the last class in May, which was at Sky Meadows State Park, in Fauquier County. March 28, 2015: Susan Watson led a small herp field trip for Historic Southside Chapter of VA Master Naturalists, at Chippokes State Park, in Surry County. March 31 & April 23, 2015: Susan Watson taught Herpetology courses to the Historic Southside Chapter (Isle of Wight County) and Riverine Chapter (Hanover County), respectively, of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program. These courses were for their new recruit classes. Mike Clifford taught a herpetology class and field trip for the Pocahontas Chapter in the Chesterfield area on April 4, 2015. Tim Christensen presented "Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia" to the new cohort class of the Tidewater Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists on May 18, 2015 for 15 students. July 10, 2015: Susan Watson co-taught a course, with Carol Heiser (DGIF), to Master Naturalists about frogs and habitats at home or in the community for frogs. Course was held in Augusta County at the county's government center. October 20, 27, & November 3, 2014: Susan Watson co-taught a class on Reptiles & Amphibians of Southeastern Virginia with Tim Christensen (and help from Chris Petersen & J.D. Kleopfer) for the Christopher Wrenn Association at the College of William & Mary, in Williamsburg. The course was for members of the association, and was held on 3 Monday afternoons, in late October into early November, 2014.

Other Presentations and Exhibits:

- Temple Moore presented "Amphibians and Reptiles of the Northern Neck" at the Heathsville Library on November 12, 2014. The session lasted almost two hours and was attended by about 40 people, all adults. He borrowed a corn snake from VDGIF which was a great help in getting people to understand more about the reptiles of the area.
- A hands-on "Snakes Alive" show for about 80 kids and parents was presented by Mike Clifford at the Jan. 25, 2015 Virginia 4-H Natural Resources Weekend. Herp programs featuring native species are a very popular at this statewide event, held every January at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Appomattox.
- Feb. 14, 2015: Susan Watson worked DGIF exhibit at the Virginia Living Museum's Reptile Weekend (Reptiles Bizarre & Beautiful) event, in Newport News.
- April 25, 2015: Susan Watson worked DGIF exhibit at Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) RiverFest, at Appomattox Riverside (Ferndale) Park, in Dinwiddie County.
- Temple Moore gave a talk on "Northern Neck Snakes" to the Rural Living 4-H Club in Warsaw on July 20th. There were 24 folks present, about 2/3 were 4-H members and the rest were parents of the kids. The talk lasted about an hour and was a PowerPoint supplemented with a live animal from VADGIF.
- August 20, 2015: Mike Clifford presented a required "snake safety" class in Waynesboro for a Virginia Power landscape crew that will be working in Shenandoah National Park. The session focused on how to avoid bites from rattlesnakes and copperheads while landscaping the power-line right-of-way.
- Bonnie Keller of Virginia Reptile Rescue reported these programs this year: 2 Programs for a summer day camp in Nokesville, VA; 1 program for a summer day camp in Woodbridge, VA; 1 program for the Rotary Club in Sumerduck, VA (for VHS); 1 program at Lockheed Martin in Manassas, VA (for VHS); 1 exhibit at Nature Fest in Herndon, VA; 1 birthday party in Nokesville, VA; 1 exhibit in Warrenton, VA.
- I also have a semi-permanent exhibit in my classroom in Fairfax, VA.
- Caroline Seitz reported that from September 30 2014 through October 1 2015, Reptiles Alive LLC presented 706 educational programs to approximately 52,880 people. She also performed a program for DC Animal Services without charging. This is a free service RA offers to help educate animal first responders about herps.

WEB-BASED PUBLIC EDUCATION

The VHS website and the Facebook page continue to serve as the leading public information sources concerning the state's native reptiles and amphibians. Our herp identification and information service for the general public is heavily utilized. Visitors to the VHS website are directed to submit their questions and photos to: animal-identification@virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com. From the numerous thank-you replies that we receive, the service seems to be truly appreciated. Plus, we frequently benefit from some interesting and usable photos, along with the occasional new county

distribution record, such as the recent Eastern Cottonmouth photos from Brunswick county. We have processed approximately 690 identification and information requests in the past year.