

VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT for Oct. 2016 to Oct. 2017

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 28 VMN chapters participate in a lengthy series of training sessions, typically including about three-hours of herpetology instruction. Tim Christensen taught the course "Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia" for the new Historic Rivers Chapter Cohort XI of the Virginia Master Naturalist program on November 1, 2016. 18 students attended. Mike Clifford taught the Herpetology class to two dozen new Pocahontas Chapter Master Naturalist trainees on April 1st. On September 20th in Farmville, Mike taught the Herpetology class to sixteen new Central Piedmont Master Naturalist trainees. Paul Sattler presented a program on Salamanders for the Central Virginia Master Naturalists on May 10th.

Susan Watson wears 'two hats' to all her activities (below) as both a VDGIF Terrestrial Wildlife Biologist and as an accomplished VHS leader. Her activities were done through work at VDGIF, but VHS information is always presented as well. Susan conducted Vernal Pool Cooperative of Virginia training sessions (identification and monitoring of vernal pool habitat on public lands) to various Virginia Master Naturalist Chapters on the following dates in 2017: February 18 & 25, March 18, & April 1. February 18 & March 18 were held at the VCU Rice Rivers Center, in Charles City County. February 25 was held in Fredericksburg at a National Park Service office and property. The last session was held at Bear Creek Lake State Park and Cumberland State Forest. For each of these trainings, a live spotted salamander, kept by VDGIF, was used for educational exhibit. Susan also taught the Herpetology Course for Historic Southside Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists, in Isle of Wight County, on February 21, 2017. For this event, a live salamander and live snake, kept by VDGIF, were used for educational exhibit. She also led a Herpetology Field Trip (Frog Walk) on June 10, 2017 for this VMN chapter. Susan taught the Herpetology Course for Riverine Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists, in Hanover County, on March 9, 2017. For this event, a live salamander and live snake, kept by VDGIF, were used for educational exhibit.

Other Presentations and Exhibits:

Larry Mendoza gave a talk for Scouts Day at Natural Bridge on 11/12/16. He brought live snakes and gave multiple scheduled talks throughout the day for about 400-500

scouts. Using Holiday Lake's captive-bred specimens, a hands-on "Snakes Alive" show for about 90 kids and parents was presented by Mike Clifford at the January 22nd, 2017 at Virginia 4-H Natural Resources Weekend. A classroom session on Defensive Behaviors and Adaptations of Reptiles & Amphibians was also presented that day. Herp programs featuring native species are a very popular at this statewide event, held every winter at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Appomattox. Mike Clifford gave a PPT presentation on Virginia snakes to over 100 landowner participants at the annual Woods & Wildlife Conference sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension on Sat., Feb. 25, at Germanna Community College's Daniel Technology Center in Culpeper. Sponsored by the Central Piedmont Master Naturalist Chapter on March 15, Mike also gave a "Snakes in the Heart of Virginia" standing-room only public presentation at the Farmville Library using PPT slides and live snakes from Twin Lakes and Pocahontas state parks. Bonnie Keller attended NatureFest on Sep 23rd on behalf of VHS and VA Reptile Rescue. There were ~150 people who stopped by the table to observe and learn about an Eastern rat snake, a Corn snake, an Eastern Milksnake, and a Western Hognose snake. Larry Mendoza did a tabling event at the Fauquier County Fairgrounds for Adventure Day for the Girl Scouts on 10/07/17. Over 350 girl scouts with their parents showed up. Larry brought live snakes and set up the VHS displays and hopefully recruited some new members. Susan Watson presented a Virginia's Amphibians presentation for the Math & Science Center Student Conference, in Henrico on March, 4, 2017. For this event, live salamanders kept by VDGIF were used for exhibit in the program (eastern tiger salamander and spotted salamander). Susan led a "Reptiles Bizarre and Beautiful" event with VDGIF exhibit, at the Virginia Living Museum, in Newport News, on March 25, 2017. For this event, two of VDGIF's live snakes (black kingsnake and mole kingsnake) were used for educational exhibit. Susan contributed to the "Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) RiverFest" with the VDGIF exhibit, at Appomattox Riverside (aka Ferndale) Park, in Dinwiddie County, on April 29, 2017. For this event, two of VDGIF's live snakes (eastern kingsnake and cornsnake) were used for educational exhibit. Susan did a snake program for at the Williamsburg Montessori School Summer Camp, in James City County on August 1, 2017. For this event, two of VDGIF's live snakes (eastern kingsnake and cornsnake) were used for educational exhibit. Susan assisted VDGIF Education staff with Teacher Workshop for Hanover County science teachers, by providing information on reptiles and amphibians in Virginia. This event was held at VDGIF Headquarters, in Henrico County, on August 14, 2017. For this event, live salamanders and live snakes, kept by VDGIF, were used for educational exhibit. Paul Sattler & Jason Gibson presented at the Virginia Museum of Natural History's "Reptile Day". They used the VHS Display Board to advertise the Society.

WEB-BASED PUBLIC & SCHOLASTIC 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. Most of the requests are from Virginia, but some are from other states and even from other countries. In 2017, we received a frog identification request from southern India and a turtle shell ID request from Australia. 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. Several of the photos submitted have turned out to be new county distribution records. Our Webmaster produced a great graphic summary of email and Facebook ID requests that can be seen

here: http://virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/2017_id_requests/2017-summary.html. Dr. Matt Close of Radford University reports that he teaches an Appalachian Herpetology class each May. Although not a VHS sponsored class directly, states that “VHS is undoubtedly a part of it (we rely heavily on atlases, Reptiles of VA, Snakes of VA, etc.).”