

VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT for 2021

Compiled by Mike Clifford (mjc4h@vt.edu), Education Committee Chairman.

October, 2020 to October, 2021.

The VHS Virtual Fall Symposium was held on November 21, 2020. The keynote speaker was venom expert Bryan Fry from Australia. Other renowned speakers from around the world included Wolfgang Wuster, Ray Morgan, Leslie Boyer, J.D. Kleopfer, Kristen Wiley & Jim Harrison, Ben Abo, Ashley Dayer & Brian Moyer, and Bert Harris. They covered a wide variety of herpetological topics of interest to Society members and guests.

Our Animal Identification Team has responded to a large number of herp ID requests from the public. A rough count shows about 800 identification requests answered during the past year. Among the most common animals photographed were Eastern Ratsnakes, Northern Watersnakes, Dekay's Brownsnakes, Eastern Gartersnakes, various cooters and sliders, five-lined skinks, Green Frogs, Gray Tree Frogs, Marbled and other salamanders. Several new locality records were set.

Mark Khosravi taught an online National Wildlife Control Operators Association Certified Reptile & Amphibian Course Level 1 on December 4, 2020. This course provides information on reptiles and amphibians commonly managed by WCOs. (Level 2 of this course will be offered in-person, coming soon, and will include venomous snake safety and handling.) Upon completion of this course and successful passing of a test, the WCO will receive a certificate of completion. In July 2021 with and through NWCOA, Mark taught Level 2 venomous snake training safety in handling for Wildlife Control Operators and for Prince William Animal Control. He also assisted in Level 1 training Reptiles and amphibians course for Wildlife Control Operators.

On March 31, 2021, Mike Clifford conducted a successful 2-hour virtual herpetology class for new Master Naturalist trainees in the Central Piedmont Chapter. Using Zoom, the presentation featured a PowerPoint slide show with some interactive activities. After being postponed twice in 2020, it was great to finally get this class completed. On July 31st, Mike, assisted by Ty Smith, presented a PowerPoint and live animal program about the native snakes of the Sailor's Creek Battlefield State Park and surrounding areas. The audience saw photos of the snakes, along with some live specimens brought by Ty. The many youngsters in the audience enjoyed petting the snakes and handling the skins and plastic replicas on display. About 30 people attended the event.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the Virginia Herpetological Society are working together to distribute a large number of the late Joe Mitchell's The Reptiles of Virginia that were found in storage. Among the recipients were Virginia Master Naturalist Chapters from across the state.

Meagan Thomas: "I presented two virtual lectures on native reptiles and amphibians to students associated with Beyond Boundaries and Jacobs Chance within the past few months. I also led a nature walk for the same groups that focused on herp identification. I presented virtually to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden last month on

"garden herps" which included a discussion of herpetofaunal identification, dispelling of common myths, and ways to create backyard habitat for herps. And finally, I'm running a booth this Saturday at the Virginia Beach "Take back the Lake" event that will include a table of information related to native reptiles and amphibians as well as a craft where individuals will be able to construct "toad abodes" and "frog hotels" for use within their backyards."

Travis Anthony: "This will overlap with Larry Mendoza, but on March 30th Larry and I presented an educational program on native snakes to a group of about 10 youths (~ages 8-12) of the Excel to Excellence program, which provides educational support and resources to youths in the Richmond Metro area. The children observed and handled a variety of captive native snakes and were presented a sideshow about snake biology and identification. The children and their parents frequently observe snakes where they live, and this program increased awareness and appreciation of local species of snakes. We were invited back to present to students in their summer program in July." On July 16th Larry and I presented an educational program on native snakes to a group of about 40 youths (~ages 8-12) of the Excel to Excellence program, which provides educational support and resources to youths in the Richmond Metro area. The children observed and handled a variety of captive native snakes and were presented a sideshow about snake biology and identification. The children and their parents frequently observe snakes where they live, and this program increased awareness and appreciation of local species of snakes.

Educational activity report for Susan Watson, VHS Permits Chair, and as usual, Susan 'wears two hats' to all activities as a VDWR Wildlife Information Biologist, and as an officer of VHS. All activities were done through work at VDWR, but VHS information is always presented, as well. Susan presented the following virtual presentations:

- December 10, 2020: "Meet Virginia's Salamanders", virtual presentation to Prince William Conservation Alliance (PWCA). The presentation included general information on Virginia's salamanders, and then more specific information on common salamanders locally found in the Prince William County area. More than 60 participants registered for this presentation.
- January 21, 2021: "Vernal Pools: Fragile and Threatened Seasonal Wetlands", virtual presentation to Merrimac Farm Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN). Susan co-presented with VCU faculty, and the presentation included general information on Virginia's vernal pool habitat and its obligate wildlife species. There were approximately 25 participants.
- March 2, 2021: "Vernal Pools: Fragile and Threatened Seasonal Wetlands", virtual presentation to Middle Peninsula Chapter of VMN. Susan co-presented with VCU faculty, and the presentation included general information on Virginia's vernal pool habitat and its obligate wildlife species. There were approximately 25 participants.
- March 10, 2021: "Vernal Pools: Fragile and Threatened Seasonal Wetlands", virtual presentation to Riverine and James River Chapters of VMN. Susan co-presented with VCU faculty, and the presentation included general information on

Virginia's vernal pool habitat and its obligate wildlife species. There were approximately 50 participants.

Temple Moore "taught the latest Northern Neck Master Naturalist class the Herpetology section for their basic training. It was approximately one hour and given to 24 folks; 19 students and 5 "interested people" given on August 31".

Erin Anthony: Spent a week consulting with National Geographic for educational films for both National Geographic and Disney. This was not limited to just herpetology.

Bonnie Keller: "Bill Crisp, Bonnie Keller and Robyn Mallard had a table at the Remington Fall Festival on Oct 9. We represented VHS, displaying a number of VHS posters, as well as live native species. We also ran a fundraiser and collected \$100 for VHS. Pictures were posted to the VHS Facebook site. The same group will be at Centreville Day on Oct 16 with the same setup. FYI- Robyn is my adoptive daughter."

Web-based Educational Report:

Imagery provided for publications which includes "Virginia Herpetological Society" in the credit line:

- 28-May-21 Video clips for DWR use (Bullfrogs, Eastern Painted Turtles, Northern Watersnakes, Snapping Turtles)
- 19-May-21 Northern Watersnake and Eastern Copperhead video clips for DWR use
- 18-May-21 Green Frog video clips for DWR use
- 10-May-21 Range Maps for article "Snakes of the United States"
- 05-May-21 Musk Turtle Image for the book "Paleo Primer 3"
- 22-Mar-21 Imagery for "Nature in Your Backyard" an Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District publication

This year 291 files consisting of infographics, photos, and text were added to the VHS Website.

Original content posted to the VHS Facebook page in 2021:

Date	Title	People Reached
28-Sep-21	Virginia's Greensnakes	4980
24-Sep-21	Albino Green Treefrog	2768
23-Sep-21	Virginia's Cricket Frogs	2261
23-Sep-21	Native Snake Classification	2607

Date	Title	People Reached
21-Sep-21	Bullfrog vs. Green Frog	7080
20-Sep-21	American vs. Fowler's Toad	12268
18-Sep-21	Tail Shakers	3216
17-Sep-21	Native Snake Max Length	3867
16-Sep-21	Native Ophiophagous Snakes	2132
14-Sep-21	VA Venomous Snakes	8999
12-Sep-21	Snake Head Shape	41312
09-Sep-21	Copperhead vs Harmless snakes	15150
05-Sep-21	Difficult Native Herp Quiz	1641
16-Aug-21	Green Treefrog Video	2325
08-Jul-21	Cope's Gray Treefrog	1967
28-Jun-21	U-Haul Gartersnake	4010
27-May-21	Footage from the Field	1943
17-May-21	Courting Northern Watersnakes	1930
03-May-21	Some early spring herpin' in VA	1655
09-Mar-21	Venom Delivery System	3451
05-Mar-21	Tri-colored Snakes of VA	2921
26-Feb-21	Odor Detection in Snakes	3989

Date	Title	People Reached
24-Feb-21	Cooters of Virginia	12173
07-Feb-21	Mole & Eastern King Part 2	1221
06-Feb-21	Mole & Eastern King Part 1	3854
		Total 149720