



Virginia Master Naturalist

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The Virginia Master Naturalist Program is jointly sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History.



Volunteer educators, citizen scientists, and stewards helping Virginians conserve and manage natural resources and public lands



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photo by Carol Hammer



People who are curious about nature, enjoy the outdoors, and want to contribute to natural resource management and conservation in Virginia are perfect candidates to become Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers.

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

Becoming a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist:

- starts with completing a 40-hour **basic training course** offered by a local chapter of the program;
- includes an additional 8 hours of **advanced training**;
- requires 40 hours of **volunteer service**; and
- typically takes 6-12 months.

Visit to find chapter locations. In an area with no existing chapter, several interested people and an advisor from a sponsoring agency may apply to start their own.



The basic training course covers the background knowledge and skills that every naturalist needs to have. Topics include:



Virginia biogeography



Core biology topics such as ornithology (the study of birds) and botany (the study of plants)



Management and conservation of ecological systems such as forests and wetlands



Teaching and interpretive skills



Citizen science and research skills

Each chapter tailors the course to fit its local geography and local environmental issues, so no two courses are exactly the same.

Each certified Virginia Master Naturalist is required to perform 40 hours of volunteer service. These projects can be as diverse as the Master Naturalists themselves.



Education – Teach adults and youth about nature!



Citizen Science – Collect data on wildlife and plant populations, water quality, and more!



Stewardship – Restore wildlife habitat, install a rain garden, or build a trail!