



Virginia Master
Naturalists

Introducing the **Rivanna Master
Naturalists Program**





What is the purpose of the Master Naturalist program?



To train and oversee a statewide group of dedicated **volunteers** who provide education for all ages, outreach, and service that directly benefits the management of natural resources and natural areas within our community and region.

Why Become a Master Naturalist?



VOICES FROM THE LAND



- To experience the satisfaction of preserving our natural heritage
- To join a vibrant network of other naturalists
- To receive and learn how to share excellent training about our local natural environment
- To experience enriching, fun trainings, field trips, continuing education, and social outings
- To keep learning and teaching about nature



Master Naturalists are trained to

- Use field guides
- Use keys or apps to identify organisms or plants
- Teach, guide and share knowledge with others
- Make and record accurate observations in nature
- Recognize when *we do not know the answer* to a question but know where to look for answers from people, guidebooks, apps, or other reliable sources

Pssst! Applicants do not have to be educated in science or biology, or 'experts' in any aspect of the natural sciences! You just need to be curious about nature.

This MN program is for you

- ✓ If you want to be actively involved in managing, conserving, and educating others about Virginia's natural resources
- ✓ If you enjoy volunteering
- ✓ If you like learning about nature
- ✓ If you enjoy the outdoors
- ✓ If you have time to complete the training (February to May, 1x week + 5 field trips)
- ✓ If you are interested in being part of a local team with others who care about natural resources and nature's beauties

This MN program is probably not for you

- If you are more interested in getting training than volunteering
- If classroom-style learning is not *really* your thing
- If you want the certification for your job
- If you hope to use the certification for environmental advocacy
- If you becoming a Master Gardener is what you *really* want to do...
- If you hope that your Master Naturalist service will count towards Master Gardener service hours

Our Main Goal: Volunteer Service

How do we do it? *Many ways.*
As an MN volunteer, you can...



- Do a one-time, one day task
- Make a long-term commitment to a single project
- Work independently, on your own
- Work as part of a regular team
- Become part of an existing project
- Contribute to a new project developed by an RMN volunteer or member or classmate
- Initiate and organize your own project

CITIZEN SCIENCE

EDUCATION

STEWARDSHIP

ADMINISTRATION

Volunteer Service: Examples of Citizen Science



- Record data for VA Wildlife Mapping
- Participate in a bird or butterfly count
- Monitor water quality
- Help biologists collect information in the field
- Tag, count, observe (monarchs, hawks, tree buds, rainfall, BioBlitz surveys)



CITIZEN SCIENCE
EDUCATION
STEWARDSHIP
ADMINISTRATION

Volunteer Service: Examples of Education



- Lead Nature Programs for kids and/or adults as
 - ❖ Walk Leaders
 - ❖ Nature Guides v Docents
 - ❖ Instructors
 - ❖ School Tour Guides
 - ❖ Public Program Speakers
 - ❖ Junior Naturalist Leaders
 - ❖ Interpretive Guides
- Develop an interpretive trail or brochure
- Be a guest presenter on a nature-related topic in a classroom, a community meeting, any group
- Partner with schools or groups, like Girls and Boys Clubs, to present programming or teach

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Volunteer Service: Examples of Stewardship



- Maintain trails at a state or local park as trail monitor
- Pull invasive plants and/or plant native plants, trees, riparian buffers in a public park or on a trail
- Plant a riparian tree buffer
- Design/install a pollinators' garden in a public park
- Clean up the Rivanna River, the James, or the Chesapeake Bay watershed

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STEWARDSHIP
ADMINISTRATION

Volunteer Service: Examples of Administrative Help



- Do PR, organize training class, oversee hospitality at events, find new projects, engage speakers
- Write a chapter newsletter, public article or website newsletter article
- Help run the annual VMN conference, a VMN leadership day event, or a workshop
- Join a committee that needs your strengths in organization, communication, socializing, teaching

** Every year, more than 40 chapter members help with RMN administrative tasks behind the scenes!*

Step One: Basic Training Class at Ivy Creek Natural Area Education Building



- Weekly class, first week of February to last week of May
- 13 of 15 classroom talks and 5 to 9 field trips attendance
- Even years (ex. 2026): **Wednesday mornings**, 9:30am to 12pm
Odd years (ex. 2027): **Tuesday nights**, 6:00pm to 9:00pm
- Field trips, mostly on Saturday mornings (minimum of 5)
- Topics cover regional natural history, conservation and management, teaching tips, and field research skills
- Instructors are local specialists, experts, and professors

Step One: Basic Training Class at Ivy Creek and the Big Outdoors



Our curriculum adheres to topics and subjects required by the VMN during 40 hours of class and 15 hours in the field, taught by Virginia-based specialists in various fields of nature study. The course gives you a solid basic foundation in:

AQUATICS
BIRDING
BOTANY
CITIZEN SCIENCE
CLIMATE
ECOLOGY
ENTOMOLOGY

GEOLOGY
HERPETOLOGY
HYDROLOGY
ICHTHYOLOGY
IDENTIFICATION
INTERPRETATION
KEYING ID

LAND RECLAMATION
MAMMALS (LOCAL)
NATURALISTS
ORNITHOLOGY
SOILS
TRACKING ANIMALS
WETLANDS ECOLOGY

Step Two:

After Graduation:
Getting 1st Certification
hours in 12 months

Training Class + 8 + 40



Graduation from Basic Training

Good attendance: at least 13 of 15 classes
+ 5 of 12± possible field trips
+ 3 hours volunteering

Then... One Year to get First Certification

8 hours of Continuing Education (CE)

8 hours – can be done concurrently with basic training
Specialized topics that build on basic training
Required annually to maintain certification—RMN provides opportunities

plus

40 hours of Volunteer Service

Can begin during Basic Training on approved projects in education, citizen science, stewardship, or administration.
There are currently 91 approved projects in motion.

Required annually to maintain certification

=

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist

Then Each Year to Remain Certified = **40** + 8

40 Hours of Volunteer Service



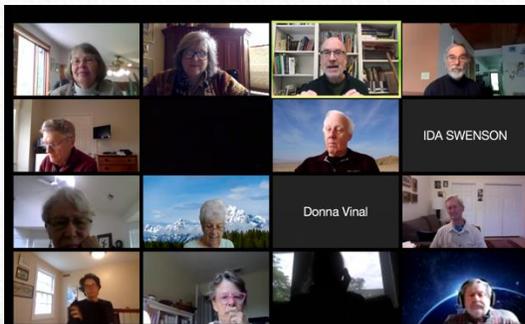
- Minimum of 40 hours volunteer service to maintain certification each year after graduation
- Minimum of 8 hours in lectures or advanced trainings offered by RMN and other groups
- Service hours must be dedicated to the beneficial management of the natural resources within the local community
- Service hours for public benefit, not personal gain or on private property

Renewing Certification Annually = 40 + 8 8 Hours Continuing Education (CE) or Advanced Training

May include:



- Short courses, workshops, trainings, or webcasts offered by state or local partners on specialized topics (such as invasive plant management, animal control, stream monitoring)
- Specific training for planned service projects (such as Wildlife Mapping, Living with Bears)
- Public lectures and walks on natural history topics that pertain to local natural resources, offered by the RMN and other groups
- RMN monthly CE speakers' series (Thursdays)



Tips on how to apply: 1 Application & 3 References

APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE at <http://btrr.im/rq92z>

REFERENCE FORMS ARE POSTED at www.vmn-rivanna.org/training or you can request them and ask any application related questions at rivannamapplications@gmail.com

*We prefer emailed submissions to limit paper waste, but do not want to hinder anyone's involvement or interest. **Please ask for help** if you cannot access online services at RMNcurriculum@gmail.com*

Step 1. Complete application and sign Volunteer Enrollment Agreement at <http://btrr.im/rq92z>

Step 2. Find Reference Forms posted on our website at www.vmn-rivanna.org/training.

Email form to **3** references you have listed on your application. This is not a character reference. Select 3 references for yourself who will support your willingness and ability to be a volunteer. (No nature-related expertise or education is needed on your part.) It is your responsibility to get the forms to your recommenders, and their responsibility to get them to RMN. The form instructs your supporters that they need to return the form no later than January 5th to rivannamapplications@gmail.com.



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Application Deadlines & Class Dates

Q&A SESSIONS: ON ZOOM AND IN PERSON

MID-NOVEMBER, MID-DECEMBER (SEE WEBSITE)

ONLINE APPLICATIONS AND 3 REFERENCES DUE:

JANUARY 5th firm

NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE:

3rd WEEK of JANUARY BY EMAIL

FIRST DAY OF CLASS:

FIRST WEEK FEBRUARY

LAST DAY OF CLASS:

MID TO LATE MAY



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Things to know if you are accepted

- If you are accepted, a class fee of **\$175** covers guidebooks and valuable resources, payable after acceptance. **Scholarships are available: please ask for one if need be.**
- Classes are limited to 24 trainees, so entry can be competitive if many apply.
- You must commit to attend 13 out of 15 classes and 5 of 12 field trips (some on Saturdays).
(But we also realize, life happens and will work with you if complications arise.)
- To graduate, you must also complete and report 3 hours of volunteer service. We'll help you.
- You must pass a gentle, open-book, take-home test and a gentle practical test in May.
- **If internet or email connections are not easy for you**, we will try to work out how to help.
- **After graduation**, you will have **one year to complete 40 hours of volunteering** and **8 hours of continuing education (CE)** to become a certified MNs. For continuing certification, you must complete the 40 volunteer + 8 CE hours requirement. RMN announces volunteer opportunities and organizes speakers' series, field trips, and events with other groups to help you gain these volunteer and continuing education hours.



Virginia Master Naturalists

Our Virginia MN Partners make it all work!

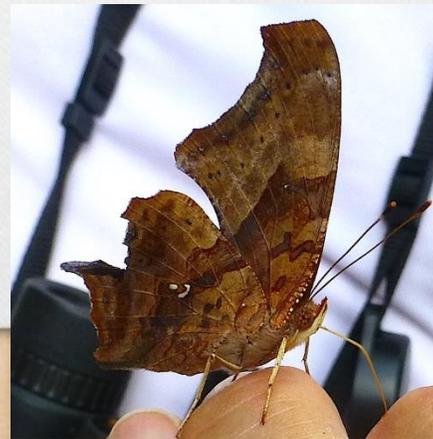


- Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)
- Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Department of Forestry (DOF)
- Department of Wildlife Resources (formerly DGIF)
- Virginia Museum of Natural History
- VIMS Center for Coastal Resources Management
- Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Tech



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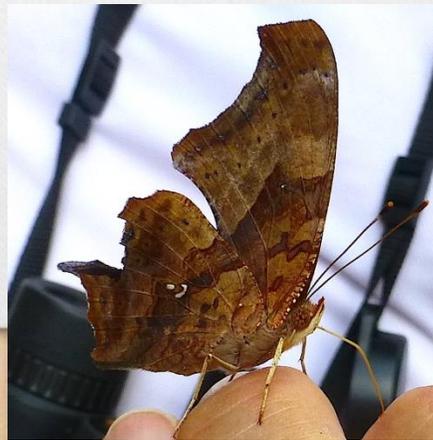
www.VirginiaMasterNaturalist.org
www.vmn-rivannamn.org
or contact rivannamn.info@gmail.com



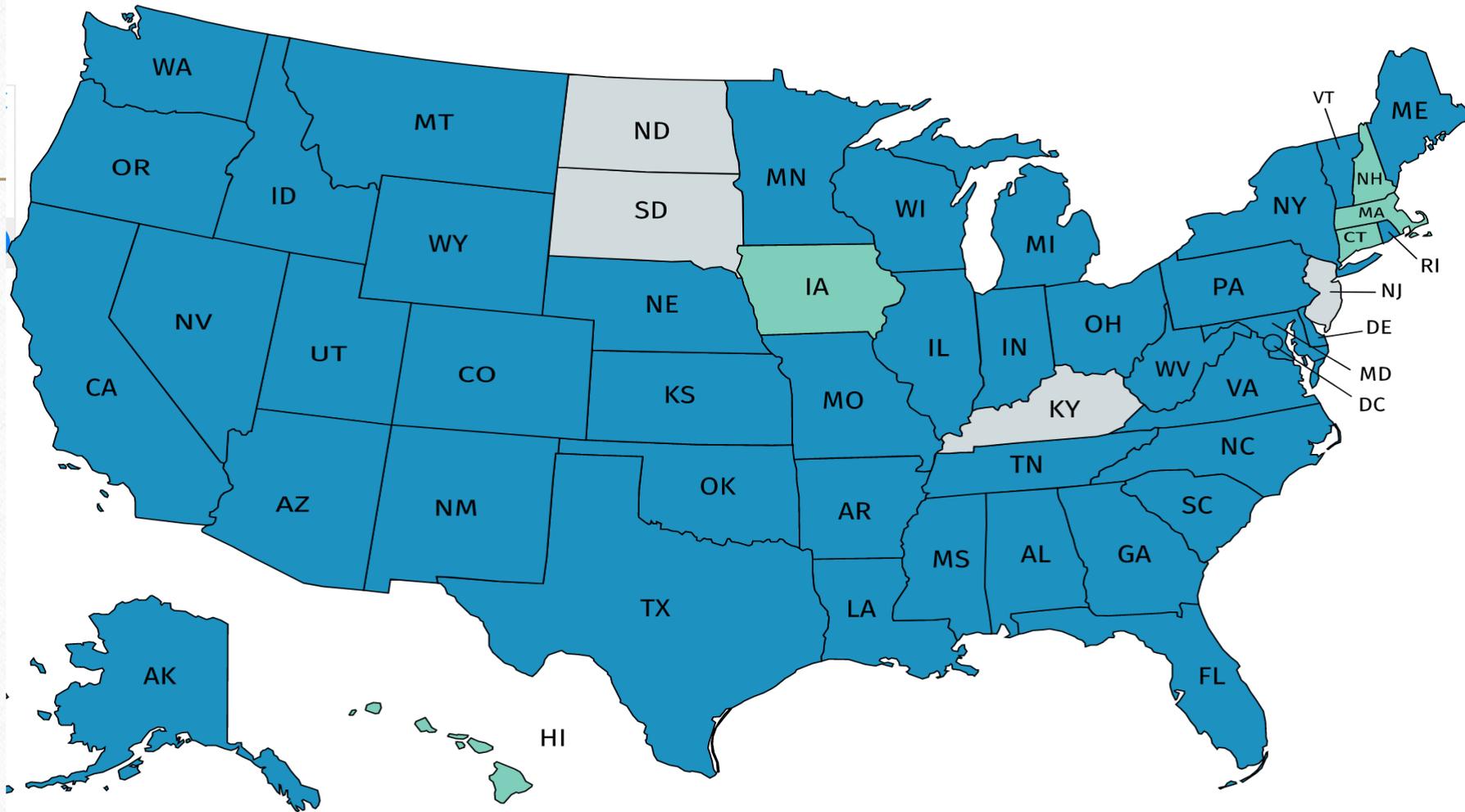


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A few more facts about Master Naturalists



FYI: US Master Naturalist or MN-like Programs



FYI: Facts & Figures about the RMN (Rivanna Chapter) and 30 Chapters of Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN)



	<u>RMN 2024</u>	<u>VMN statewide</u>
Enrolled volunteers [175 active]	211	3,481 volunteers
Direct contacts through outreach	25,000+	482,326 contacts
RMN volunteer hours reported	14,421	259,043 hours
Monetary equivalent of hours	\$547,998	\$8.35 million

Be
One!



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www.VirginiaMasterNaturalist.org
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rivannamn.info@gmail.com

