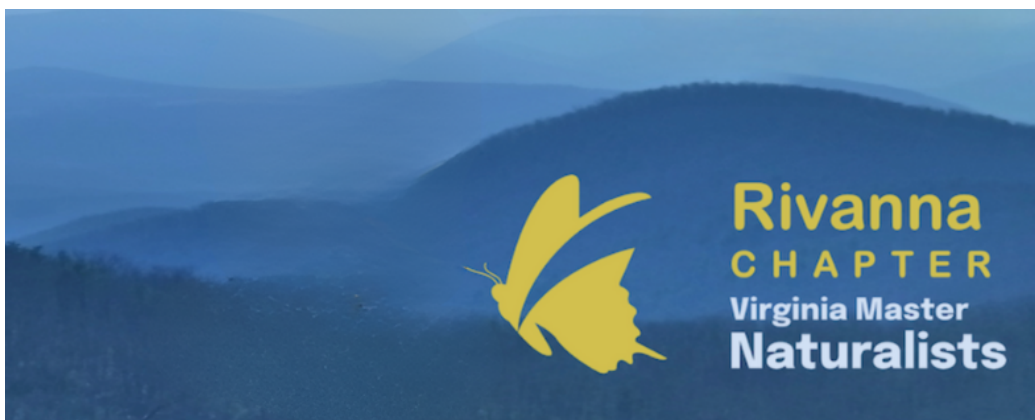




Rivanna Master Naturalists

August 2025 Newsletter



RMN PRESIDENT FOR 2025

DAVE SAYLOR

Mee

Summer Greetings

Hello fellow RMNs – I hope everyone is making the most of these summer days!

Virginia Master Naturalists State Conference

A gentle reminder regarding the upcoming Virginia Master Naturalists State Conference, scheduled for September 5–7 in Richmond. I highly encourage everyone to participate, even if you can only attend for a single day or part of a day. The event features a fantastic lineup of presentations and field trips. Please note, registration closes on August 18th.

Reflections on Grandchildren and Nature

I am fortunate to have spent significant time with my grandchildren—aged 7, 5, and nearly 1—over the past couple of months. Exploring the wonders of nature with them and nurturing their curiosity about the world around them reminds me of my own childhood experiences. Simple joys such as finding tadpoles in a puddle along a hiking trail, listening to an owl at night while camping, quietly sneaking up on turtles by a pond, the thrill of catching a Bluegill with a worm they dug up in their garden, admiring “pretty rocks” they collected, or stumbling upon ghost crabs on the beach—all these moments, I hope, will inspire in them a lifelong passion for the natural world and a commitment to its preservation.

Our younger generations face ever-increasing challenges regarding the environment. It is our responsibility to do all that we can to guide and support them in becoming good stewards of the Earth. This is the essence of what the Master Naturalist program is all about. If my efforts succeed, I will have future candidates for the Master Naturalist classes of 2036, 2038, and 2042!

Dave

saylor5504@gmail.com

LOADING TO & LOOKING ON

Log-in to the RMN webpage, click on the “Members toolkit” tab, and scroll down towards the bottom of the page. Here you will see two links, one to view the photo galleries, and one to upload your photos.



Highlights of the August Leadership Team meeting

President Dave Saylor gave a reminder about the upcoming VMN conference in Richmond in September, and discussed the 2024 Infographic, giving information about our chapter.

Past president Ruth Stornetta led a discussion about a RMN chapter presentation at the VMN conference describing a project completed. Ultimately the group decided that there is not enough time to prepare a quality presentation for this year’s conference.

Treasurer Neal Grandy presented the monthly report and a proposed budget for 2026.

Advisor Ellen Powell discussed an interactive program on worldwide markets for wood, which she will present at the VMN conference.

Continuing Education member Lucy Hartley gave an update on summer continuing education events and upcoming CE programs.

Curriculum Committee Chair Catherine Buck discussed efforts to streamline and reorganize the class notebook.

Membership Chair Debbie Luzynski-Weber congratulated RMNs recently honored with milestones and certificates.

An Outreach update noted that the interest list generated at tabling events now exceeds 400 people.

Projects Chair Dave Smith will be working with members of his committee to improve Better Impact.

Web/Newsletter manager Joanna Hickman reported that all newsletters are now archived on the website.

Ruth Stornetta, with the Stewardship group, discussed adding more-accessible plots at Pen Park for “adoption”, and significant trust established between RMN and RCA and Albemarle County on working projects.

Ruth Stornetta, with the RMNFun group, reported on fall plans for the group.

The 2026 RMN annual meeting will be held on 2/14/2026 at PVCC.

A website refresh is in progress.

Several people have successfully re-enrolled in RMN after being polled about reasons for inactivity.

Sherri Fitzgerald is working on a kestrel box initiative for Albemarle County.

Honorary RMN membership was discussed.

The Rivanna Master Naturalist leadership team welcomes all members to attend the monthly meeting held on the second Monday at 7:00 PM on Zoom.

Submitted by RMN Secretary Daria Kiselicka

Rivanna Chapter Annual Report		
2019		2024
23	new trainees	24
191	total enrolled members	211
151	active volunteers	175
11,051	total volunteer hours	14,421
15,000 ⁺	total contacts made	20,000 [±]
53 [±]	sites stewarded	65
53 [±]	citizen science studies	29 [±]
\$287,326	hours in value given	\$481,000*

*Government rate used: \$38/hr



**This month's plants live in the water and
are mostly overlooked as food sources.**

The first plant is the Wapato, the common name is the Indian Potato or Wide leaf Arrowhead. This plant grows in freshwater ponds/lakes, mud flats and wet areas around fresh running streams. It is my understanding that it grows from coast to coast

The leaves are basil and palmate, the main way to ID them is to look for the veins that look exactly like a spider. It has a three petaled white flower that blooms July through September.

The edible part of the plant is the tuber or 'potato'. There can be as many as 20 to 30 tubers per plant, they will be in an area about a foot square beneath leaf level. The tubers in standing water were harvested by our local indigenous folks by using their feet to separate the tubers from the roots.



Once separated, the tubers would then float to the top to be harvested. If they're in the mud, just dig down with your hands or use tools to harvest. When harvesting, plant back any small tubers for future plants. Unfortunately, I've never found enough around the Cville area to sustainably harvest. We were at Huntley Meadows a few weeks ago and I've never seen so many. That place could be harvested with no ill effects, it was amazing.

The tubers can be used just like you would our regular potato. They can also be dried for later use or ground into flour for a bread-like food. The tubers taste similar to sweet potatoes and they are high in carbs and protein and low in fat. In addition to the tubers, the young leaves, stems and rhizomes can be eaten raw or cooked. The Wapato was a staple crop of our ancestors in this area.



The second plant is the Pickerel Weed. This plant also grows in freshwater ponds and lakes in the shallow edges. It also has heart/arrowhead shaped leaves similar to Wapato but it does not have the distinctive spider veins. It has spikes of blue to purple flowers from summer to fall.

Remember that all aquatic plants must be cooked before eating unless the water is drinkable !! Both of these amazing plants can be found at Ruritan Lake in Fluvanna.

A toxicologist's guide to poison ivy's itch and bee stings' burning pain – 2 examples of nature's chemical warfare

Published: August 7, 2025 8:30am EDT

From **THE CONVERSATION**. [Click here for the link.](#)



PHOTOS ABOVE SUBMITTED BY RMN DAVE VIOLIN

Photos Below from a South Carolina Trip from RMN Kim Swarz.



Great blue heron



Black-bellied whistling ducks,



Barred owl (holding a crab in its foot)



Skimmer dragonfly.



THE HISTORY OF THE RIVANNA MASTER

NATURALISTS' CHAPTER

Many in the Charlottesville area first heard of the Master Naturalists program in 2005 from Michelle Prysby, at a meeting of the Natural History Roundtable. Dede Smith chaired and hosted the meeting while serving as Ivy Creek Natural Area's Executive Director.

Michelle, based at Virginia Tech, shared her vision of a statewide cadre of volunteers under the oversight of the Virginia Master Naturalist movement and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Texas started up the first MN program in 1997, providing a county-based model that the VMN adopted. Michelle Prysby continues to serve as the VMN's director, but also completes her certification hours every year as an RMN member.

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In 2006, a small but resourceful and determined group of acquaintances agreed to take on the huge process of creating a new VMN chapter. This core group included Dede Smith, Peter Warren (Horticultural Agent for the Albemarle County Cooperative Extension), LoriAnne Barnett, Susan Pleiss, Mary Lee Epps (Ivy Creek Natural Area supporter), Anne Mallek (Virginia Museum of Natural History), Ida Swenson (Rivanna Conservation Society educator) Carol Franda and Ruth Douglas, an educator who still teaches us about botany, ephemerals and invasives.

These hardy folks reviewed the VMN's recommended organizational model, certification process, by-laws, and operating handbook, as well as a syllabus of required topics for the training class. From this point on, Ida Swenson recalled, "The heavy lifting began!" Five months later, the committee submitted the RMN's application with a list of prospective participants and approved projects. Susan Pleiss momentarily brightened up one postal clerk's attention when she submitted the USPS form for our post office box. He reportedly exclaimed, "Oh! Are you

nudists?” We draw a firm line between *naturalists* and naturalists to this very day. As Ida said: we don’t want to scare off the wildlife!

Becoming a chartered VMN chapter required the completion and the graduation of a training class, with 40 classroom hours and 15 field observation hours. Fortunately, the inaugural group could count on their own strengths as resourceful, experienced educators. Michelle Prysby (VT/VMN), Lou Verner (DWR), Peter Warren (DWR), Ruth Douglas, Sam Austin, Tom Biggs and John Murphy all contributed in stellar ways to teaching the first training class. Forester Tom Dierauf (DOF) and Dan Bieker (farmer and PVCC professor on Field Ornithology and Appalachian Ecology) coordinated field trips, and like many of our instructors, remained active in the chapter for many years. Compiling a reading list from scratch in the pre-digital era, Mary Lee Epps (UVA Economics professor) ordered books, articles, maps and guides, noting that “the closest thing we had to a ‘text’ was Dede Smith’s recommendation, the *Peterson Guide to Eastern Forests*.” In the days of photocopying and snail mail, assembling the foundation literature for the initial class demanded monumental efforts, culminating in copying, collating and assembling The Notebook, an essential resource distributed as a thick looseleaf binder. This extensive tool finally went online in 2019, under the leadership of Curriculum Chair Sandy Finley ’16 and the tech savvy of Brigitte Hogan ’15.

While the founding members prepared the class and the Notebook, they simultaneously reviewed applications, typed and sent acceptance letters, and compiled a reputable volunteer projects list. Eighteen people began the inaugural Class of 2006 on September 12th at Ivy Creek’s Education Building, where we still meet today. By graduation, committee members Mary Lee Epps, Frank Wilczek, and Ida Swenson (who all took the class) tallied enough volunteer hours to be certified.

The first Timekeeper, Carole Franda, tallied up reported hours by hand. Others sorted themselves into the core chairs and committees that still anchor the chapter’s activities:

Presidents: LoriAnne Barnett and Dede Smith

Treasurer: Mary Lee Epps

Secretaries: Reba Peck (Corresponding), Ida Swenson (Recording)

Curriculum: Ruth Douglas

Outreach/Recruitment: Staci England and Frank Wilczek

Projects: Susan Pleiss

Hospitality: Helen Gordon, Laura Dollar, and Rachel Bush Floyd

Class of 2006 graduates also included Stephen Botts, Lucy Cocke, Anne Eisenhardt, Bill Feeney, Jeffrey Hoskin, Frances Lee Vandell, Marjorie Maxey, Daniel Montgomery, Jessica Rowland, Mary Spear, Dorothy Tompkins, and Michelle Whitlock. Frances, Mary and Dorothy have remained active RMN contributors, and many inaugural class trainees served on various committees. [To see a list of RMN leaders from 2006 to 2026, click here.](#)

Energized by completing the first class and earning the charter, the ambitious founding group decided to organize a second training class for the Spring of 2007 while still developing, delivering, and grading the 2006 Fall class. These folks, who gave so generously of their time, already had full time jobs, families to raise, or community commitments in other areas. Finding themselves downright exhausted by the end of the 2007 training, the ultimately concluded that one class prep per year stretched the chapter’s volunteer mojo quite enough, thank you very much. The enduring popularity of the class, affirmed each year by an abundance of applicants and positive feedback from our grateful graduates, continues to make acceptance into the RMN program quite competitive.

Along the way, Carol Wise ’11 (Nature Conservancy and UVA fundraiser) instituted a regular speakers’ series on Thursday nights for Continuing Ed, which Mary Tillman ’10 continued until 2022, when Karen Mulder ’15 stepped in to chair the CE roster of talks and field trips by our many talented members (epitomized by John Holden ’09. [Click here for a roster of past presentations.](#) See [KLM](#)

As soon as Michelle discovered the right system, the VMN switched from paper tallies to an online service for recording hours. The chapter’s transition to digital resources, web communications, and email connectivity took time to take root, as did the move to a new system in 2019, Better Impact. COVID’19 forced us all to begin Zoom committee meetings, class

and continuing education events. Fortunately, some of us knew how to manage that transition, earning our Curriculum committee recognition from the VMN as one of three (out of 30) Virginia chapters to graduate a training class in 2020. Amazingly, the pandemic interrupted the chapter's uptrend in volunteer hours only slightly, since many members pivoted to home-based citizen science projects (*e.g.*, bird, bud and rainfall counts). The pandemic also taught the training class organizers an important lesson: smaller field trips, in groups of six or so, or self-guided field trips provided a far better learning experience.

Nowadays, 20 to 30 Curriculum committee members help organize and run the training class. Each year, as many as 50 individuals contribute to committees, leadership, or behind the scenes. According to our statistics, this is about one-third of our active membership! The chapter's energy is still encouragingly vital and active. As of 2025, the training class has prepared over 490 individuals, volunteering on more than 95 listed projects. Direct contacts at public events or for schools range from 14,000 to 20,000 during any given year. RMN volunteer hours annually add up to about 14,500 hours—roughly \$481,000 in monetary value—and those are just the hours our 175± active members remember to report!

So the RMN's work provides quite a complement to the other 29 chapters that contribute to VMN's statewide impact. In 2024, the VMN reported 3,481 volunteers providing 259,000 hours, which adds up to about \$8.35 million dollars' worth of effort benefiting Virginia's natural resources. Michelle Prysby's initial vision has certainly grown into a hugely fruitful enterprise.

Ida Swenson, an indefatigable volunteer and co-founder, joined the VMN's Golden Circle after she accrued more than 5500 hours, particularly passionate in Outreach and Education. As she wrote: "Being part of establishing the Rivanna Master Naturalists has been one of the most constructive things I have done... we have a wonderful sense of giving back, and of preserving the natural heritage we all love." Well said.

VOLUNTEER

RMN Outreach Committee

If experiences like those below appeal to you, contact Beth Kuhn, Outreach chair, at bethkuhnrnm@gmail.com. We'd love to have you as a volunteer or committee member!

The Fluvanna County Fair is just days away, and Pat Klima has only one volunteer to help! This is always a fun experience with many people stopping by. Please consider helping out.

: Pleasant Grove Park in Fluvanna County
: Wingspan, and help children explore the artifacts in the Nature Room.

Pat needs help at 8:30am for Wingspan set-up. The fair opens at 10am.
: 10am-12 noon, 12noon to 3:30, OR, your available hours. The times listed above include set-up and break-down.

Contact: Pat Klima
at rapunzel2658@gmail.com



This interpretive experience is especially fun if you enjoy birding, but is accessible for all RMNs. If you haven't used Wingspan before, you will be oriented to the activity when you arrive.

Thanks for all you do, Beth (shown above)

OUTDOOR WALKS IN AUGUST

WITH RUTH DOUGLAS

August 16

August 18th

Wildflower Walk at Ivy Creek Natural
area on this Sat. the 18th

Walk with walk leader, Ruth Douglas, enjoy late summer wildflowers such as goldenrods, tick-trefoils, thoroughworts and horsemint, all of which should be blooming in the fields. Along the reservoir's edge, we might find swamp milkweed, cardinal flower, and other wetland plants. **Co-sponsored with the Jefferson Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society, 9:00-11:00 am, meet by the kiosk near the parking lot. Free and open to the public.**

Mushroom Hike at Braley Pond

August 21

Sharon Cole and Susanna Williams are planning to lead a hike with a focus on mushrooms. We would like to advertise the hike (planned for next Thursday) on the RMN Facebook page and via email. We already have it all written up - can you help guide us on how to distribute it?

Reach out to Sharon Cole for more details. - skrickcole@gmail.com

BETTER IMPACT SURVEY

Can you help us improve the Opportunity List in Better Impact by providing information about the volunteer activities you love?

If so, please respond to this survey by August 25. RESPOND TO THE EMAIL SURVEY SENT OUT ON AUGUST 11 by Jennifer Jarrett . Please fill out the survey email that was sent to your email and then send to JenniferJarrettRMN@gmail.com.

Survey questions sent to your email and repeated here. Please answer the ones in your email. to answer in your email.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Which RMN volunteer activity do you enjoy most?
2. Do you have any updates to the online description of the activity you mentioned? You should be able to see it by logging into Better Impact and then choosing Opportunities/Opportunity List.
3. If the activity you mentioned lacks a contact, would you be willing to share your name and email address so new participants can ask you questions about the activity?
4. Do you have any other suggestions for the BI Opportunity List?

I will be grateful for any information you can provide. As a 2024 graduate, I recognize that I have a lot to learn! Will you help?

Please do not reply to this message but respond to me at JenniferJarrettRMN@gmail.com.

Best regards,

Jennifer Jarrett

Upcoming Events at Quarry Gardens



Hi Friends,

Get out your calendars and save these dates! Quarry Gardens has tons of fun planned for the remainder of 2025. See below for the full schedule, or click this link for a printable version: <https://quarrygardensatschuyler.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Scheduled-Events-July-through-December-2025-QG.pdf>. And as always, visit our online calendar for the most current information and to register for events: <https://quarrygardensatschuyler.org/calendar/>

Please join us whenever you can! We rely on your support and participation.

Best,
Rachel

August 2025

- Second Saturday Music Series: August 9th, 6:00-8:00 Kelly Carney. Bring a picnic dinner!
- August 10, 2:00-5:00, Blue Ridge Mycological Society Foray (Free for QG and BRMS members! Visit brmsclub.org for more information)
- August 10, 6:00-8:00 PM: Caterpillar Walk with Courtney McLaughlin, \$10/adult, \$5/youth (Free for QG members)
- Wednesday, August 13, 10:00-2:00, Homeschool Day: \$10 flat fee per household
- Fridays, August 1, 8, 15, 10:00-2:00: Self-guided visiting hours, \$10/adult, \$5/youth
- Sundays, August 3, 10, 17, 10:00-2:00: Self-guided visiting hours, \$10/adult, \$5/youth
- QG will be closed for new exhibition installation and building repairs August 18-31

September 2025

- Wednesday, September 10, 10:00-2:00, Homeschool Day: \$10 flat fee per household
 - September 13, 6:00-8:00: music by Katherine Nies, live art by Chicho Lorenzo, lantern boat launch at dusk. \$10/ticket
 - Saturday, September 27, 2:00-5:00 Piedmont Discovery Center Plant Sale!
 - Saturday, September 27, 3:00-10:00: Music and Mushroom Festival! Mushroom cultivation workshop 3:00-5:00, music by Perennial Collection 5:00-7:00. Wine poured by the Virginia Wine Collective! (Seeking a food truck), ultraviolet flashlight tour after dark! \$25/adult, \$10/youth
 - Fridays, Sept 5, 12, 19, 26, 10:00-2:00: Self-guided visiting hours, \$10/adult, \$5/youth
 - Sundays, Sept 7, 14, 21, 28, 10:00-2:00: Self-guided visiting hours, \$10/adult, \$5/youth
-
-

DID YOU ENJOY THE RMN TRAINING CLASS? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER HOURS?



It's tempting to think that the RMN class simply runs itself. In reality, about 20 to 30 people pitch in each year to make it happen. It is the KEYSTONE of all our efforts.

Curriculum is our *largest* committee, our *greatest* font of new members, and our *main connection* to specialists and CE speakers who teach us so well about nature.

- Be a class host: attend your favorite class again
- Be a field host: get to know or revisit some amazing natural areas
- Evaluate and contribute new resources (readings, videos, podcasts)
- Help us firm up our tech if that's your specialty
- Get to know the new class: our future leadership!
- Guide trainees through the class as class liaison



Committee meets once a month
(7pm to 8pm± on third Mondays,
Zoom or in person, summers off)
Class runs February through May

JOIN THE GANG!
Get volunteer hours!

IVY CREEK WILDFLOWER WALK WITH RUTH DOUGLAS '06 SAT AUG 16 9 TO 11AM



Join flower maven extraordinaire Ruth Douglas for a walk at Ivy Creek for to see the late summer bloomers: goldenrods, tick-trefoils, thoroughworts and horsemint, all of which should be blooming in the fields. Along the reservoir's edge, we might find swamp milkweed, cardinal flower, and other wetland plants.

Co-sponsored with the Jefferson Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society, 9:00-11:00 am, meet by the kiosk near the parking lot. Free and open to the public. **Good for CE hours.**





2025 RMN CONTINUING EDUCATION SERIES
AUGUST 28 at 7PM **LIVE at IVY CREEK**

What should we know about our water supply?

Bethany Houchens, with Liz Palmer '22

If you think our water supply, water sources, and watershed management are important...(they are!)...meet Bethany Houchens. Bethany brings an overview from the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, where she has achieved various objectives since 2016, and currently serves as Water Resources Coordinator. Her experience includes the revamping of reservoir and potable water sampling programs in our area. Bring your best questions! The RWSA is dedicated to modeling excellent environmental stewardship: found out how, learning about the current strategy.

Good for CE hours



4th THURSDAY NIGHT TALKS FOR CE HOURS
SEPT 25 Monarchs with Carolyn Smith
OCT 23 Author David George Haskell

IVY CREEK BARN DOCENT RIVERVIEW FARM TOUR MENTORING SATURDAYS 10-12AM SUNDAYS 10-12AM, 12-2 GOOD FOR CE (TRAINING) HOURS OR VOLUNTEER HOURS

Ever wonder what's inside the Ivy Creek barn?

Learn about its historic narrative and how we talk about the African American heritage of Riverview Farm with visitors on weekend mornings.

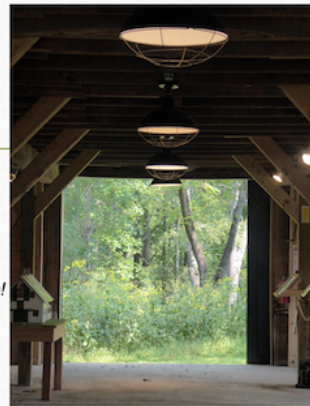
RMNs are invited to shadow Karen '15 in the barn to see how it's done from **12 to 2pm on Sunday on these dates**. As a rule, the barn **CAN ONLY BE OPEN** with one guide & at least one one adult present. *Help keep it open!*

Show up on these Sundays at 11:50am:

May 25	June 15	June 19 Thurs (Juneteenth)	August 17
	September 14	October 12	November 9

Reply to this email to RSVP for a date. Please do not **REPLY ALL**.

GOOD FOR CE or VOL hours. You can also shadow from 10 to 12 on Saturdays or Sundays—if interested, please write Mariah at mariah@ivycreekfoundation.org to sign on more 'officially'.



**Join Wild Virginia's book club on the 2nd Monday of each month
at 7pm via Zoom!**

Online 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM EST

Click Here to RSVP



- Click here to [LOG IN YOUR HOURS](#)
- Click the Hours tab.
- Click the Active button.
- Questions? Contact Debbie Luzynski-Weber

RMN Membership Chair/Timekeeper (hoosdeb@gmail.com)

Log in Your Hours

Thank you!

[CLICK HERE TO SEE STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS](#)

POSTING ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE RMNGooglegroups listserv

To post announcements, mention projects, and pass on information of interest to RMN members, please contact rivannamn.info@gmail.com.

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COME JOIN US AND SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES AND PHOTOS.

RMN PRIVATE Group - Rivanna Master Naturalists Private Group - Only RMNs can join and post. Join us to post your own pictures and see photos by others.

"Rivanna Master Naturalists Help" Page - This page is **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** if they want to ask questions, see what we are doing, etc.

Rivanna Master Naturalists Public Page - Our public face to the world.

GOODLinks

Log In Your Volunteer Hours Click on **BETTER IMPACT**

Resources for Master Naturalists [Click Here](#)

Virginia Master Naturalist Webinars - Check out the available webinars at the [VMN Webinar page](#) for Continuing Education Credit

Contact Info for RMN Leadership Team

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Training Class rmncurriculum@gmail.com

Volunteer Projects Chair rmnprojectschair@gmail.com

Membership and Better Impact rivannamnmembership@gmail.com

Check out our website www.vmn-rivanna.org

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/ affirmative action employer.



**Virginia
Department
of
Wildlife
Resources**