



Rivanna Master Naturalists

September 2025 Newsletter



RMN PRESIDENT FOR 2025

DAVE SAYLOR

A Gentle Welcome to Fall

With the arrival of autumn, our community enters one of its busiest seasons. The energy and dedication shown by all of our members is truly inspiring. A sincere thank you to all who have generously volunteered their time and effort to the myriads of ongoing projects. Your commitment is the foundation of our success.

VMN State Conference Reflection

This past weekend marked my first in-person experience at the annual VMN State Conference in Richmond—and it certainly won't be my last. Our VMN colleagues, Michelle and Tiffany, together with strong support from the organizing Chapters, orchestrated an exceptional event. The array of seminars and field trips was impressive; so many choices, with nowhere near enough time to experience them all!

Networking and Collaboration

Beyond the scheduled activities, one of the greatest benefits of the conference was the chance to connect with fellow Master Naturalists. Ample opportunities for both planned and spontaneous socializing facilitated the exchange of ideas, strategies, and best practices. It was enlightening to see how other Chapters address challenges, compare notes, and discover fresh perspectives. I left the conference feeling more knowledgeable, energized and inspired, ready to help make our already great RMN Chapter even stronger!

Dave

saylor5504@gmail.com

STATE CONFERENCE EXPERIENCES

During the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project “How-Tos” field trip a monarch caterpillar the instructor had in a cage had taken the “J” shape and almost completely in line with the instructor’s talk, immediately started shedding its outer layer and formed a chrysalis. You can imagine the joy of the class and the surprise of the instructor who admitted never having capture such a live moment.

Moment experienced and photo taken by RMN Barbara Morris



Ranger Hil with pawpaws at Powhatan State Park



VMN State Conference

The Rivanna chapter was well represented at the 2025 state conference held in Richmond, offering numerous opportunities for both continuing naturalist education through field trips and seminars, as well as meeting and networking with other naturalists from all over Virginia. The keynote address was an inspiring story of the James River: From Sewer to Park, highlighting the fight to restore the James from the most polluted river in the US to a place embraced by the public for recreation and contemplation.

Following the keynote address, the program continued with seminars and field trips. The standouts for me were the pawpaw field trip and a seminar on collaboration with other agencies. I learned a lot, including the difference between native and invasive wisteria, how other chapters focus their energy with a chapter project, what's wrong with cultivars, and the best way to gather pawpaws. The conference was a wonderful experience and gave me hope and happiness to see so many others who share a love of nature and a desire to protect and improve our environment. I encourage all of you to attend a state conference if possible. There are no requirements to participate other than being a Virginia Master Naturalist, and the experience is quite worthwhile for everyone.

Submitted by RMN Ruth Stornetta



Pawpaws sphinx moth caterpillar (another species dependent on the pawpaw)



Zebra swallowtail caterpillar (pawpaw is sole food source)

Highlights of the September Leadership Team meeting

President Dave Saylor attended the recent VMN State Conference in Richmond and enjoyed networking with other chapter presidents. Dave liked that some chapters have retreats for leadership team members.

Past President Ruth Stornetta also attended the conference and learned that some chapters have a single project that all members can participate in. This is another idea to consider for our chapter.

Treasurer Neal Grandy presented the monthly financial report. A financial review will be conducted this year.

Advisor Ellen Powell encouraged members to collect acorns and bring them to the Department of Forestry office.

Continuing Education committee member Liz Palmer reported on a recent presentation at Ivy Creek by Bethany Houchens from RWSA. Several field trips are planned for September. The October continuing education program by David Haskell will be on Zoom.

Curriculum Committee chair Catherine Buck reported that the committee will meet later this month and has several new members including some from the recent class.

RMNFun plans a fall trip on Dragon Run. The RMN Annual picnic is scheduled for October 4th at Darden Towe park.

Ruth Stornetta from Stewardship reported that a workday at Pen Park is scheduled for September 20th. This is for the Rivanna Forest Health Project. Other local groups collaborating on this project include the Blue Ridge PRISM, CATS, and the Nature Conservancy.

The RMN Website has been refreshed thanks to Karen Mulder and help from Lauren Record.

Sherri Fitzgerald has made several kestrel boxes that she plans to place on her property. She found many people at the VMN state conference interested in collaborating on projects like this one.

Karen Mulder suggested that Linda Fink receive a certificate of appreciation this year.

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 Carol Long



The Elephant Mosquito

A few weeks ago, I was taking photographs of the buttonbush in my rain garden in Crozet when to my surprise, this large mosquito landed and began to feed on the nectar. I have since learned that this is a beneficial native mosquito called, appropriately, the elephant mosquito (*Toxorhynchites rutilus*). Both the male and female adults of this large, colorful mosquito feed exclusively on nectar, and do not bite or consume blood. Even better, the larvae of *Tx. rutilus* are predacious and eat the smaller larvae of the biting mosquitoes that spread disease. If you'd like to catch a glimpse of this special insect, they are diurnal, so they can be spotted feeding on flowers during the daytime.

Submitted by RMN Jessica Eileen Wood

Check out our new website

Ivy Creek Plant Walk

Sept. 20, 2025;

9:00-11:30; meet at Kiosk

Join guide Phil Stokes to see fields abundant with colorful wildflowers in peak bloom. We'll find several

We can help out our avian friends and other critters by

different species of common goldenrods, asters, bonesets, and tick trefoils. We'll also search for scarcer wildflowers including orchid lesser ladies tresses and horsemint with it's unusual flower's combination of colors. Along the route we'll also find trees having well developed fruits and nuts such as persimmon and sassafras. Open to all. No registration needed.

Submitted by RMN Mary Lee Epps

**turning off lights after dark,
putting out fresh water and
leaving the leaves.**

Submitted by RMN JoAnn Dally



Butterfly House and Native Plant Garden at Pleasant Grove Park

from FMN Walter Hussey

Over one thousand visitors will have toured the Butterfly House and Native Plant Garden at Pleasant Grove Park as we prepare to close for the season on September 14th. The exhibit was free to the public and provided an opportunity, in an enclosed environment using our greenhouse, to experience the native butterfly lifecycle while learning about the importance of host and nectar plants.

This project is another collaboration between the Rivanna Master Naturalists and Fluvanna Master Gardeners as a part of the [Pleasant Grove Park: A Natural Experience](#) plan that has been ongoing since 2014.

RMN and FMG volunteers provided daily butterfly and plant care and served as Tour Guides on the weekends. The tour gave visitors an opportunity to see all the stages of development from eggs to larvae, to chrysalis to butterflies.

As one RMN said, "people are mesmerized at the simplicity and yet the length of time for the butterfly life cycle". We're already working on plans for next year as we incorporate the many lessons learned. If you'd like to be part of this project, including planning for next year, or any other at Pleasant Grove Park, such as our 70+ acres of wildlife meadows, Chestnut Restoration Demonstration Grove, Nature Room, etc. please contact RMN Walter Hussey, whthinker@yahoo.com as there are plenty of ways to get your hours and help throughout the winter.



Photos submitted by

RMNFun Dragon Run



The fall paddle season registration for Dragon Run is open. [Registration link:](#)
If you'd be interested in spending the night before at a b&b on the Northern Neck closer to the Dragon and doing the paddle on a weekday, please send me an email at rs3j@virginia.edu
Ruth Stornetta

Natures Bounty



by RMN Steve Pullinger

Stopping bad colds !!

Thank goodness fall is just about here but so is 'bad cold season'. Here's two plants that just may help in preventing colds but also lessen their severity if you do get one. We'll talk about Echinacea and Elderberry. Both of these plants have many medicinal and edible qualities.

Echinacea, or purple coneflower, is a native plant of North America and has been used for many medicinal purposes for hundreds of years. As of late, it is mostly known as an immune enhancer and an anti-inflammatory agent. The leaves, flowers and roots can be used but I use only the flowers of this one. Remember, once you use the root the plant is gone.

Coneflower can be made into tea, salves or tinctures. I use only the flowers from plants that are completely fertilizer free. I harvest the flowers, dry them and then fill an empty pint or quart jar as tight as I can push them in. After filling the jar with flowers, I pour in honey all the way to the top of the jar so that all the flowers are submerged and covered. Leave this for a minimum of a month in a dark, cool cabinet. A month will give the flowers plenty of time to infuse the honey with its taste and therapeutic properties.



I bite a leaf or flower from each plant before I harvest, you want a plant that will have a burn to it on your tongue and lips. I have seen some plants that actually numbed the tip of my tongue. After a month or more of sitting, strain the honey and use this in your regular teas as a sweetener or just put a spoon of it in your mouth if you feel the need. The leaves and flowers can also be dried and then used as a tea. I have never tintured any in ETOH



Elderberry is medicinal and edible. Remember that the entire plant is toxic EXCEPT the fruit and the blooms. I dry the blooms each summer, taking only a few from each plant. Once the flowers are dried, just store in a tight glass container. I use the Elderberry flowers in my 'bad cold tea', which is sweetened with the above Coneflower honey. My tea consists of 1/3 dried Elderberry flowers, 1/3 dried Mullein leaves (best off first year plants) and 1/3 Yarrow (leaves and flowers). I have found this to really reduce the effects of colds if you do get one. I harvest the fruit in the same above manner. Once dried, I run the fruit through my herbal coffee grinder and reduce them to powder. I put about 1/2 inch of the powder in a pint jar and fill it with honey. Once sealed, I turn the jar every couple of days for at least a month. After this it is ready for a tea sweetener or simply use on crackers or in a spoon. Health websites may say the fruit seeds are toxic unless cooked or heated although there are no documented cases of this happening. I air dry mine on a dark cookie sheet in the bright sun and the heat from this alone is sufficient.

Both of these plants are worthy of being in your flower beds or garden. You can harvest every year without jeopardizing the plant.

From RMN Christine Putnam. Pick a time and RSVP please to chirshputnam@gmail.com

Attention citizen scientists, naturalists, and explorers of all ages!

Piedmont Patch - Prairie
BIOBLITZ
DARDEN TOWE PARK

JOIN US! Saturday, September 20
... between the tennis courts and soccer fields
Survey Times:
10am-1pm, 2pm-5pm, 8pm-12am
RSVP at centerforurbanhabitats@gmail.com



Four Reasons to Leave the Leaves

Leaf It for the Wildlife:

Fallen leaves provide vital habitat, food, and nesting materials for insects, invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Also, invertebrates overwinter in the leaf layers.



Leaf It to Save Money:

Leaves can boost soil fertility, suppress weeds, and retain moisture, reducing the need to spend money on fertilizers and mulch.



Leaf It Out of the Landfill:

Every year, Americans dump more than 33 million tons of leaves and other yard debris – more than 13 percent of the country's total solid waste! In addition, greenhouse gases are released during the decomposition of organic material contributing to climate change.



Leaf It to Save You Time:

Forget about raking and bagging the leaves. Instead, spend time in your garden or take a walk and enjoy the crisp fall weather.



What About My Dead Flowers?

Seed heads provide an important food source for overwintering birds. While you may wish to cut off dead flower heads, let them go to seed in the autumn. Wait until mid to late spring to cut them back. We recommend cutting about a foot or two up the stalk, leaving the hollow cavity-like stems for native bees.



Bird Art by Charlotte Holden, Bartels Intern



LOG IN YOUR HOURS



Photo by RMN Doug Rogers



Blue Button Jellyfish spotted at False Cape State Park. Not a true jellyfish, blown up by Hurricane Erin. submitted by RMN Kimberly Lohan

VOLUNTEER

RMN Outreach Committee

If you would like to volunteer for an activity or tabling event, ontact Beth Kuhn, Outreach chair, at bethkuhnrnm@gmail.com. We'd love to have you as a volunteer or committee member!

FALL MIGRATION HIKE MAPLE FLAT PONDS SIGN UP WITH JOHN HOLDEN SEPT 13 SATURDAY - 9:30-1:30PM



John Holden and Doug Rogers lead an exploration of the unique environment of Maple Flat Ponds in several distinct areas for rare wildflowers, migrating dragonflies, warblers and late summer butterflies (some of which will be migrating). Expect to walk a level 3.5 level miles. We may even see one of our salamander species moving into the dry ponds as part of their life cycle.

Carpool meets at 8:15 in Charlottesville, one hour drive. Rain will cancel. Counts for CE hours.

Sign up directly with John Holden for details on timing, carpool and meeting at Runningwithantlers@gmail.com



ATTRACTING POLLINATORS 9:30AM – IVY CREEK KIOSK SATURDAY SEPT 13 9:30AM



Fall is an excellent time to add native plants to your yard or to start a native plant garden.

Join garden docents Sarah Bingham '15 and Tana Herndon '07 for a tour of Ivy Creek's four native plant gardens:

- Pollinator Garden
- Pocket Meadow
- Shade Garden
- Hummingbird Garden

Get tips for attracting and supporting pollinators and answers to your native plant garden questions. No reservation needed. CE hours.



INVASIVE REMOVAL AT PEN PARK FOR VOLUNTEER HOURS SAT. SEPT 20TH 9:30 AM -1:30PM



New Invasive removal site at Pen Park just behind the picnic shelters along the fitness trail. Much more accessible and visible than previous site.

This is part of a multi-group project organized by RCA with CATS, PRISM and TNC.

Write ruthstornetta1@gmail.com if you don't know what those acronyms stand for (!) or for more info, or to let her know you're interested.



CEDAR CREEK BATTLEFIELD BIRD WALK SEPTEMBER 25 THURS 10AM – DAY TRIP

MEET 8:15AM at Kohl's off 29, 396 Town Center Dr, Cville

OTHERWISE: 8437 Valley Pike, Middletown (near 81 and 66 junction)



Join RMN Mike Pierce '16 to learn about
--Rewilding a national park
--Bird walk with Old Rag MN Charlene Uhl
--Battle of Belle Grove, Civil War history

Bring binoculars and packed lunch
Be prepared for walking and weather
Good for CE hours (not including driving)

NOTE: Drive to Cedar Creek is 2 hours and 115 miles:
carpooling at Kohl's is highly recommended. CCB is
near-ish to the junction of I-81 and I-66.

Please reply directly to Sherri Fitzgerald '22 at
scfdc@icloud.com or 310-614-7251



2025 RMN CONTINUING EDUCATION SERIES
TALK: SEPTEMBER 25th at 7PM **LIVE** at IVY CREEK

Monarch Butterflies

Carolyn Smith, Monarch Guardian Extraordinaire



Former international diplomat and translator Carolyn Smith will share more from her passionate rapport with monarchs, where she took a group of us to see her 130-acre restored meadow during the monarch egg-laying season, just before the south leg flyaway...

Carolyn is wonderfully engaging as a speaker, and truly knows her topic inside and out. Join us LIVE at Ivy Creek. Good for CE hours. Will not be recorded...

**4th THURSDAY NIGHT
TALKS FOR CE HOURS
ZOOM URL TO COME**

OCT 23 George David Haskell on
NOV/DEC We're done!
**Send ideas for great speakers!

RMN FALL POTLUCK PICNIC! DARDEN TOWE PARK PICNIC SHELTER SUNDAY OCTOBER 5TH 3-5PM



RMN's Fall Picnic is on Sunday October 5 at Darden Towe Park Picnic Shelter (by the dog park). Potluck and bring your own utensils and plates. Drinks will be provided. INCLUDES: Scavenger hunt, nature trivia.
1:30 pm: Pre-picnic walk and talk with Jessie Wingo highlighting recent projects in the park. Meets at 1:30 at the picnic shelter.

Suggestions for potluck-by-surnames:
A-H desserts
I-Q main dish
R-Z salads
<see how we mixed that up. there???

Questions? Contact Ruth at ruthstometta1@gmail.com



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.

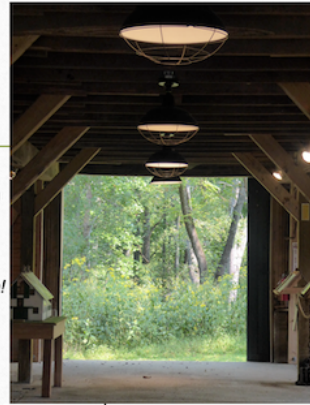
RMNs are invited to shadow Karen '15 in the barn to see how it's done from **12 to 2pm on Sunday on these dates**. As a rule, the barn CAN ONLY BE OPEN with one guide & at least one one adult present. *Help keep it open!*

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'.



FREE WEBINAR

Blue Ridge PRISM Brown Bag Webinar

**Calling All Hikers:
You Can Be an Eco-Hero!**

Thursday, September 25

12 noon - 1 pm

This webinar will be recorded.



**BLUE RIDGE
PRISM**

www.blueridgeprism.org

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

September 2025

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

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

Log in Your Hours

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

SEE SOME OF OUR POSTS FROM FACEBOOK BELOW

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

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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**