

# RAPPAHANNOCK RAMBLINGS

Issue 1 Volume 6

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## Continuing Education Survey Results

By Rikki Lucas

Forty chapter members responded to a survey by the Continuing Education committee in February. The results of the survey will be used to improve the Continuing Education program, and offer learning opportunities that volunteers actually want! A summary of these results is provided here.

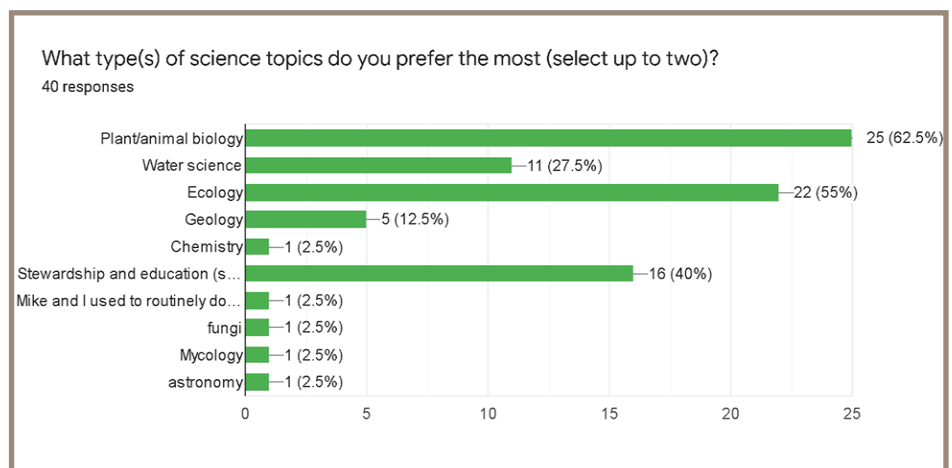
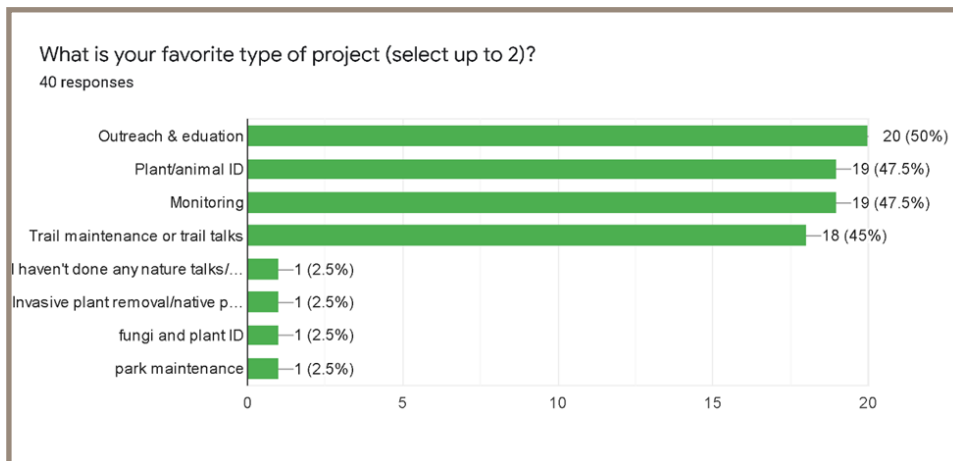
Responses received were evenly distributed across members both long-standing and brand new, giving us a good spread of both experience and fresh eyes!

First, we wanted to characterize the experience and the interests of our members. Favorite projects are split evenly among outreach and education, Plant/animal ID, monitoring, and trail work. Favorite topics are a little more diverse, but the majority is overwhelmingly in favor of: plant/animal biology, ecology, and stewardship.

*“The mountains are calling and I must go...”*

### In This Issue

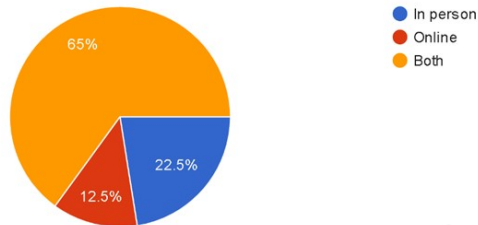
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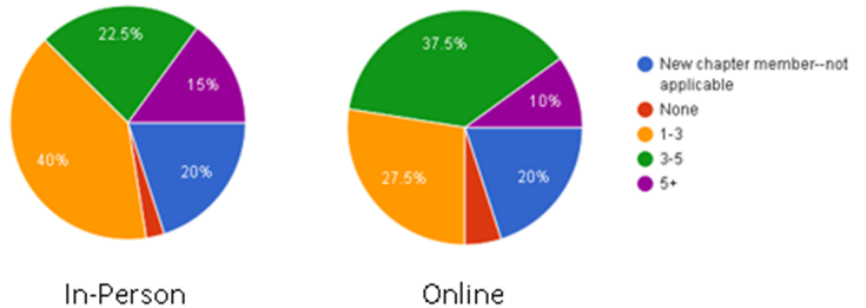
## Continuing Education Survey Results (con't.)

65% of members prefer to have a mix of both in-person and online Continuing Education opportunities. However, we did note that members attend more online events than they do in-person (excluding chapter meetings). How much of that was COVID-influenced was not accounted for.

Do you prefer in-person or online Continuing Education opportunities?  
40 responses



**Average number of Continuing Education events attended each year**



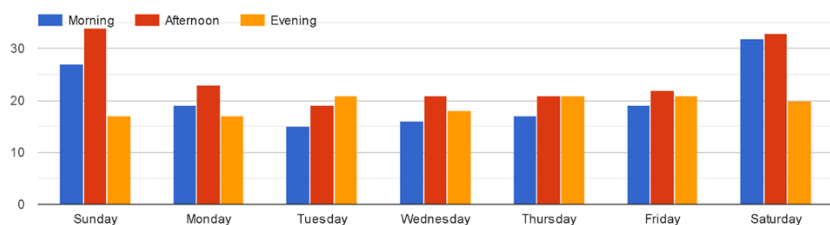
We had over a dozen members who are willing to lead Education events for the chapter, which is great! Sometimes the best way to learn is by just listening to the people around you! Potential topics that were offered up were:

- Historic preservation and “reading the landscape”
- LOTS of BioBlitzes and trail walks
- Nature journaling
- K-12 education tips
- Soil and fungi

We want to offer these training exercises and field trips with members’ availability in mind—not everyone is free the same day and time as the others! We also requested feedback on the best days of the week and time of day for activities. While weekends are indeed the most available days, Sunday afternoons are, surprisingly, very open timeslots—members who want to lead Blitzes and trail walks should keep this in mind!

Weekday afternoons and evenings are also potential timeslots to get a few members together for smaller localized activities—about 20 people could be available at any time.

What is your availability to attend in-person events, such as trainings and field trips?



(con't. p. x)

## VMN Member Spotlight - Day Goldsmith

By Day Goldsmith and Kyle Close

This month's member highlight will focus on the chapter's Secretary, Day Goldsmith, a graduate of the chapter's most recent cohort.



### Background and Interests as a Naturalist

Day Goldsmith is a recent graduate of the Fall 2021 Master Naturalist Class. She recently moved from Florida where her naturalist background was primarily in freshwater biology - working as a biologist for the state conducting water quality monitoring, macroinvertebrates surveys, freshwater plant surveys, and stream/lake assessments. However, she also spent time during her Master's degree sampling for amphibians in Central Florida lakes, working on roadkill species identification for a project optimizing wildlife exclusion methods, and helping with invasive species removal and habitat restoration. She moved to Virginia in summer of 2021 with the goals of seeing the seasons change in Shenandoah NP, hiking on the AT, finding terrestrial salamanders in the wild, and learning everything she can about Virginia ecology.

### What made you want to be a Virginia Master Naturalist?

Day was looking for resources to learn about Virginia's ecology and an organization to plug into for environmental volunteer work, when she came across the CRC Fall Basic Training class and decided to join! Day loved how the curriculum systematically taught all of the different aspects of Virginia's natural history and how comprehensive the lectures were. The natural history of Virginia is very different from Florida, so she feels like she is starting over. Her favorite outing was the mushroom hike with Harry Puffenberger and Penny Firth as she has always photographed mushrooms and lichens but had no idea where to begin on taxonomy.

### How have you found your overall experiences so far as a member and what has been your favorite experience so far?

Her favorite parts of being a VMN member are the continuing education presentations, learning from other naturalists who are passionate about their specialties, and any opportunity to get out into the field to see new things. Hands down, her favorite experience so far was joining in on the spotted salamander survey at the Ni River/Salamander Trail. This was exactly the type of experience she was hoping for when she joined VMN. After the survey, she took what she learned from that experience and found spotted salamanders and egg masses with her kids in vernal pools on her own property.

### What VMN related topic are you looking forward to in 2022?

She is hoping for upcoming VMN programs on mushrooms, vernal pools, interpreting the landscape, and nature journaling. This year, Day is planning to volunteer at Motts Run Nature Center, to help survey at Motts Run Reservoir site for the DWR VBWT Adopt-a-Trail program, and to continue to serve as Secretary on the CRC Board.

# How to Create and Lead Your Own Nature Walking Seminars

By Penny Firth

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND HOW TO GET STARTED

During June/July, 2021, I piloted the idea of Walking Nature Seminars using the Canal Path and Scout Trail along the Rappahannock River upstream of Fredericksburg. I led three *Canal Path* seminars, all of which received very positive feedback. During a warm spell this February, I led a second series of three seminars at Alum Spring Park: *Secrets of the Winter Woods*. The feedback from winter participants was equally enthusiastic. Developing a Walking Nature Seminar is time-consuming, but I think the outcomes may be worth the effort, especially if you offer multiple seminars in the same location.

People seem to learn best by experiencing things in real time, outdoors. More show, less tell. My steps were: 1) Select a natural area. 2) Plan a carefully curated series of stops and do a **lot** of background reading. 3) Invite participants and select dates. 4) Develop handouts. 5) Lead the walk.

## SELECTING LOCATION

Select a place with lots of natural history interest, including different habitat types, water if possible, a public path, and parking. Scout the area thoroughly just before each seminar, checking to be sure the subjects of your planned stops are still there (especially fungi).

I selected a flat route for the *Canal Path* seminar because I invited my 55+ community and mobility is an issue for some of them. This seminar was an out-and-back, ~2 miles. For the *Winter Woods* seminar, I wanted a shorter walk due to the expected cold. This seminar was a 0.3 mile loop along Hazel Run and through the nearby woods.

## PLANNING STOPS

I included eight planned stops to cover the topics I wanted to include, but not overwhelm the participants. I once read that an unplanned nature walk sounds like a boring office tour to your ~~vietims~~ participants. “This is my desk, and here is a chair...”

I wanted the stops to encompass a breadth of topics, and include lots of cool but lesser-known facts. My seminars included maps, geomorphology, human dimensions (from indigenous peoples to the present), invasive species, specific trees of interest, physical evidence of specific birds, decomposer fungi, orchids that rely on mycorrhizal fungi, and specific plants and their relation to fossil fuels and passenger pigeons.



Photo by Penny Firth

The information I showed during the seminar was backed up by a **lot** of reading. I learned many new things while studying for the seminars, and I reviewed my notes prior to each walk.

(con't p. 5)

## Walking Seminars (con't.)

### INVITING PARTICIPANTS AND SELECTING DATES

My efforts could be improved. I wanted ~8 people per walk. I invited/announced by email and was quickly ensnared in a convoluted email exchange to accommodate date/time requirements with three *Canal Path* walks. Picture Lucy in the chocolate factory. For the *Winter Woods* seminar, I saved myself a lot of time by choosing a spell of mild weather and scheduling for the three most popular dates. Some chocolates were left on the conveyor. Lesson: Don't expect to meet everyone's needs/desires.

There was a high attrition rate for my community folks. People forgot, put the wrong date on their calendar, decided it was going to be too hot/cold, invited friends who didn't show, had allergies, realized they had to work that day... The master naturalists, by contrast, all showed up on time, ready to go.

### PRODUCING THE HANDOUTS

My handouts included maps, photos, and a few bullet points about the items to be discussed at each planned stop. The handouts were developed directly from my background notes, and helped remind me what to cover at each stop, as well as provide take-home materials for the participants.

For the *Canal Path* seminar, I included a "watch and listen for..." list including invertebrates, fish, herps, birds, mammals, fungi, ferns, trees, and herbaceous plants. The *Winter Woods* participants got a photo/name sheet for a communal scavenger hunt with prizes (field guides, small magnifying glasses, local wildflower seeds...).

A logistics sheet was emailed to participants shortly before the seminars. It included where/when to meet, what to wear/bring, and a reminder to reveal health issues to the walk leader.

### LEADING THE WALKING NATURE SEMINAR

After the extensive prep work, this was definitely the most fun. Participants really enjoyed the topics, asking questions, using all of their senses to appreciate nature. I discouraged conversation between canal path stops, and we were rewarded with numerous birds, turtles, and a fawn. At Alum Spring, a yellow-bellied sapsucker posed on his drilled tree for quite a while, and the lichens and liverworts were in beautiful form. I used a laser pointer, a hand lens, and binoculars to help participants spot and fully appreciate subjects.



I could envision leading more seminars in the two locations I have already used, and I may add new sites in the future. Joella Killian suggested targeting organizations like Friends of the Rappahannock or youth groups. A Walking Nature Seminar could also be included in future CRC training classes. Splitting the effort to prepare and lead a seminar between two people might also make sense. I believe Walking Nature Seminars should have a place in our pantheon of education and outreach efforts, and I thank the master naturalists who participated in the first set.

# Virginia Master Naturalist Program Central Rappahannock Chapter 2021 Year In Review

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of trained volunteers providing natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship in their communities.



**55 VOLUNTEERS**  
contributing service



**3,313 HOURS**  
benefitting Virginia's  
natural resources



**\$96K DOLLARS**  
in monetary value of  
volunteer service



Volunteers conducted stewardship activities such as trail building, invasive plant management, and litter cleanups at **15 parks, natural areas, and other sites** in the community. They also created **1 new habitat site**.



Volunteers contributed to at least **16 natural resource inventory, monitoring, and research studies**, collecting data on pollinators, birds, invasive species, and more!



Volunteers made more than **3,100 direct contacts** through educational programs such as community nature walks, presentations, and training new VMN volunteers.

## SAMPLE PROJECTS



Education programs at Mott's Run Nature Center

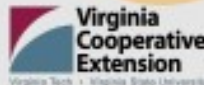


Vernal pool monitoring at Crow's Nest preserve



Cleanups and monitoring of area waterways

## VMN STATE SPONSORS



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Photo credits: Top--Ann Mason Field, Bottom left--Madelyn Chappell, Bottom middle--Harry Puffenberger, Bottom right--Bethany Brown

## Calendar of Events

The upcoming months will present the community with some of the area's most well attended events for the year, the largest being **Earth Day 2022**, which is expected to bring in almost 5,000 visitors. With over 80 confirmed sponsors and vendors, this year's Earth Day will be on **Saturday, April 23 at Old Mill Park** and will run from 11:00 am through 4:00 pm. There are still some volunteer openings on Better Impact for two hour shifts starting 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm. There will also be a series of Eco Talks at the event, with our own chapter president, Harry Puffenberger, providing a talk on mushrooms.

**Bio Blitzes** are on! April 9 through April 22 is the **City of Fredericksburg bioblitz**. [Virtual BioBlitz | Earth Day on the Rappahannock \(earthdayfred.com\)](#)

The international **City Nature Challenge 2022** will be taking place between April 29 and May 2. [City Nature Challenge Washington DC Metro Area – APRIL 29 – MAY 2, 2022 | Discovering nature in and around Washington DC \(citynaturechallengedc.org\)](#)

Contact Rikki Lucas for more info at [lucasr2@alumni.vcu.edu](mailto:lucasr2@alumni.vcu.edu)

May 6 through May 8, **Mt. Rogers Naturalist Rally** (8+ hours of continuing education offered). More info can be found at [Blueridgediscoverycenter.org](http://Blueridgediscoverycenter.org)

June 4 Fossil Tour at Stratford Hall, interested parties should contact Rob Wilkinson at [rcw3d@yahoo.com](mailto:rcw3d@yahoo.com). More info will be released at the upcoming chapter meeting.

Next Chapter Meetings: April 19 and May 17

Next Chapter Board Meeting: May 5

Please contact Kyle Close ([kylclose@gmail.com](mailto:kylclose@gmail.com)) if you have any events for our calendar. Next issue will include dates between June 15 and July 31.

## ECOTALKS

The Earth Day Festival is offering an information session series on special environmental topics for the first time. This exhibit is great to have an in-depth experience to learn about unique, local opportunities and discover connections between you and Mother Earth.

**11:30AM**– Easy Ways to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint  
**11:55AM**– Fossil Free Fredericksburg & The Climate Reality Project

Challenge yourself! In this session, participants will learn what they can do in their everyday lives to reduce their use of fossil fuels and impact local, state, and national legislation.

**12:00PM**– Awesome 'Possumz  
**12:25PM**– AWESOME 'POSSUMZ

There's more to an opossum than one may know. Learning about native and often misunderstood wildlife benefits, everyone. During this session, you'll be introduced to the Ambassadors from AWESOME 'POSSUMZ- a local organization.

**12:45PM**– Birds of Prey Program  
**1:15PM**– Earthquest Inc.

Hawks, Owls, & Eagles... oh my! Join Earthquest Inc. for a spectacular show on birds of prey. Watch these birds in action; this is a session that you do not want to miss. This session will explore the intricacies of these birds and why protecting them is so important.

**1:30PM**– Best Tree Practices for Healthy & Vibrant Trees  
**1:55PM**– Tree Fredericksburg

Tree Fredericksburg's mission is to restore the urban canopy in the City of Fredericksburg. They have planted over 8,500 trees with volunteer labor under the guidance of 48 certified tree stewards! This session will show you how to plant, mulch, water properly, & prune a tree so that your trees thrive.

SATURDAY,  
APRIL 23, 2022  
11:30AM – 2:30PM  
OLD MILL PARK  
AMPHITHEATER

### MORE INFORMATION & SESSION RESOURCES



[ClimateRealityProject.org](http://ClimateRealityProject.org)  
[FossilFreeFredericksburg.com](http://FossilFreeFredericksburg.com)  
[Generation180.org](http://Generation180.org)  
[350.org](http://350.org)



[awesomepossumz.com](http://awesomepossumz.com)



[earthquest.org](http://earthquest.org)



[TreeFredericksburg.org](http://TreeFredericksburg.org)



[virginiamasternaturalist.org](http://virginiamasternaturalist.org)

**2:00PM**– Mushrooms More Than Meets the Eye  
**2:25PM**– Virginia Master Naturalists

Not sure how you feel about mushrooms or fungi? After this session, we are sure that they will grow on you. This session will explore the wide world of mushrooms & fungi. You will have the chance to learn about where to find them, their health benefits, and more!



Fredericksburg  
Parks, Recreation & Events

## Chapter Survey (con't.)

Lastly, we asked members for ideas for lesson topics that they were interested in learning about. We received several requests for Interpretive Speaking lessons—we've already reached out to someone about this, and are setting up something for this spring! We also got several requests for field trips and hands-on training, especially when accompanied by a chapter meeting overview (so a two-part lesson allowing both general overviews and an in-person exercise). A few expressed interest in online Education events, which are currently predominantly hosted by the State VMN level; expanding this to the chapter is already in the experimental phase by presenting the chapter meetings online as well.

The biggest lessons the committee learned from this survey are:

Members really just want to learn new things! Many would love to learn from each other, as we have a lot of members with knowledge and skills that others do not. We can work on offering more opportunities for members to shine in their own spotlights and share their experience with the chapter.

Members are enjoying the virtual and in-person split, and providing opportunities for both should help us keep members engaged regardless of their personal preferences (and crazy schedules!)

We definitely need to get some Interpretive speaking workshops going for the chapter—that was a highly requested topic, and we are definitely listening!

Thanks again to everyone who responded. The Continuing Education committee is always on the lookout for topics and talent, so reach out at any time if you've got something you want to share!

## Contact Us

### Central Rappahannock Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists

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[www.virginiamasternaturalist.org](http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org)

 [Central Rappahannock Chapter -  
Virginia Master Naturalists](https://www.facebook.com/CentralRappahannockChapterVirginiaMasterNaturalists)

## Chapter Officers and Committee Chairs

### Chapter Officers

**President:** Harry Puffenberger  
[hpuffen@yahoo.com](mailto:hpuffen@yahoo.com)

**Past President:** Jim Scibek  
[j-m-scibek@msn.com](mailto:j-m-scibek@msn.com)

**Vice-President:** Amy Settle  
[arsettle@msn.com](mailto:arsettle@msn.com)

**Treasurer:** David Way  
[bikeman101797@gmail.com](mailto:bikeman101797@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** Day Goldsmith  
[day.mcclanahan@gmail.com](mailto:day.mcclanahan@gmail.com)

**Chapter Advisor:** Andrew Peal  
[andrew.peal@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:andrew.peal@dcr.virginia.gov)

### Committees

**Membership/Special Events**  
Chair: Imogene Treble [trebleie@gmail.com](mailto:trebleie@gmail.com)

**Project Committee**  
Chair: Rikki Lucas [lucasr2@mymail.vcu.edu](mailto:lucasr2@mymail.vcu.edu)

**Continuing Education/Advanced Training**  
Chair: Amy Settle [arsettle@msn.com](mailto:arsettle@msn.com)

**Basic Training**  
Chair: Jim Scibek [j-m-scibek@msn.com](mailto:j-m-scibek@msn.com)

**Outreach/Publicity**  
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**Communications Committee**  
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