

# RAPPAHANNOCK RAMBLINGS

Issue 3 Volume 6

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## Coming Soon: CRC's New Website

### By the Website Committee

**The CRC is entering the modern technological era with a new website!** The current website for The Central Rappahannock chapter is a blog-style, free service with few bells and whistles—and even fewer updates. Not the most user-friendly, and not particularly inviting to curious public eyes, the website has been a chapter's wishlist item for improvement for a while now. The new website will work on addressing some of those issues along with helping promote the chapter to a wider audience.

At the May 2022 board meeting, the board voted to establish the Website Committee and to allocate up to \$250 per year towards domain host fees. David Knapp will chair the committee. At the recent June 2022 board meeting, the board approved the recommendations outlined by the Website Committee with GoDaddy being the recommended web hosting website platform. The Website Committee will start work on constructing the site over the next few months with several goals outlined below.

The goals of the committee are to:

- Select an appropriate HTML template that suits our chapter's needs. GoDaddy has a lot of options of varying price and accessibility.
- Design a website that provides the community with an engaging, welcoming facade and a user-friendly interface
- Improve the chapter's methods for receiving and managing training class applications
- Recruit more members to the Website Committee to help with ongoing and regular upkeep of the website

In the end, the Website Committee wants to put forward a friendlier face to the public, and make it a lot easier for interested folks to apply to our chapter and to have outside organizations reach out to request programming. Better Impact will remain the primary point of information for current members.

The tentative timeline for the website launch is by the end of summer 2022 with regular need for updates, upkeep, and general management throughout the year on an ongoing basis. Expect the committee to put out several data calls for website content over time—photos, write-ups, etc. If you've got any beautiful photos of scenery, wildlife, outreach/group activities tucked away, start making a stash so it's ready when we are!

The committee currently has three members who are meeting weekly to get this plan off the ground. The committee is looking for additional members who have any interest in learning more and might be interested in helping out with the website. **Reach out to Dave Knapp at [dknapp1117@gmail.com](mailto:dknapp1117@gmail.com) if you'd like to join!**

*"The mountains are calling  
and I must go..."*

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## Opportunity Spotlight: Citizen Science

By Kyle Close

(Note: This article has links embedded throughout the article as underlined plain text. To access the site, hover over the underlined sections and click.)

One important part of the Virginia Master Naturalist program is carrying out services that provide benefits to Virginia's natural resources in our communities. And one of the best ways to accomplish this mission is through citizen science projects. Citizen science provides a wide array of beneficial work to communities through collective initiatives at the local, state, and federal level organized through governments, universities, businesses and nonprofits.

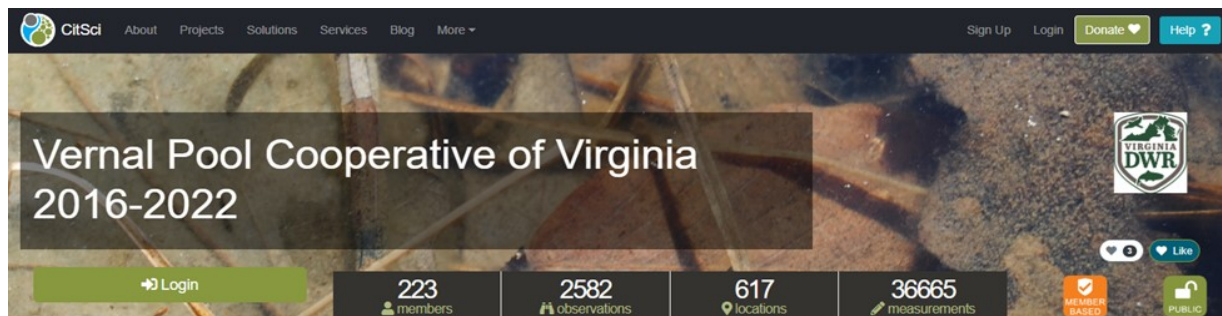
This article will not focus on any individual citizen science projects, but rather provide chapter members with a diverse list of resources related to citizen science, with the goal of helping raise awareness for the vast array of opportunities and hopefully increase interest for members to explore new ways of providing crucial services to our community as Master Naturalists.

A good starting point is first going over what citizen science is. In a Lunch and Learn series presentation from this past February, Michelle Prysby presented a great 58 minute overview of Citizen Science. Note, in addition to being an awesome resource for citizen science, watching the video can also be counted as one hour of continuing education which can be logged on Better Impact.

Link - [Lunch & Learn - Citizen science in natural resources: How volunteers are making a difference - Virginia Tech - Video \(vt.edu\)](#)

Citizen Science can have impacts at the local level as well as at the federal level. A great resource for working with federal agencies on important projects is [CitizenScience.gov](#). With 30 or so different federal agencies offering ways to engage in Citizen Science research, the catalog of ongoing projects on the linked website can be a little daunting to sift through, but by using the filter on the catalog's right hand side you will be able to choose the agency or type of science you are interested in, helping to cut down on some of the noise a bit. Some of the most applicable agencies to VMN include the Smithsonian, Fish and Wildlife Services, and the Environmental Protection Agencies. The "About Us" section also has a great one hour video going over pathways for participation in different programs.

A great source for Citizen Science projects currently being worked on by Virginia Master Naturalists is [CitSci.org](#). Some of the opportunities CitSci provides for Citizen Science include Vernal Pool monitoring and working with DWR on helping monitor/maintain the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trails. Each project will have a project owner with their contact info provided under their name.



Other noteworthy examples of potential Citizen Science projects include [Institute of Competition Sciences](#) which on occasion will have projects that fall in line with Virginia Master Naturalists, the closest one at the moment is the *Plant Mars 2022 Challenge*, where individuals can attempt to work with growing plants in martian like regolith simulants. Also worth checking out is [Society for Science](#) where they include a list of additional Citizen Science organizations that have relevance to VMNs in addition to great resources on how to start any Citizen Science project you might have interest in starting.

# Nature Education for Groups

By Tim O'Hara

Being out in the woods is great, and when it comes to engaging people with nature, there is nothing better. But, unfortunately, that's not always possible. Sometimes, people want nature brought to them – whether it's a group of older adults, a school group or something in between, here is how I go about creating programs that are both educational and (hopefully) engaging.

## Step 1: Find an audience

My wife says that standing on the street corner asking strangers if they want to hear about Opossums is “embarrassing” and “unacceptable”. So that means I need to find people who actually *want* to hear me talk about nature. In my business, my primary audiences are elder care facilities. They book me as part of their entertainment programs. But I have also done programs for church groups, garden clubs, libraries and community wildlife groups. Girl and Boy Scout groups, or other youth organizations, are also a potential audience for educational programs. If people know that you're a Master Naturalist, they will often ask you to speak to their group, or you may want to reach out and volunteer your services. Once you have a program scheduled, think about how you will present to that group. I use my laptop, usually connected to a TV with an HDMI cord, or a projector and screen. I have my own projector and screen in case I need it. Make sure you know what they have and what you might need to bring. Or depending on the setting, you may want to just do “show and tell” and skip using digital media.



Photo by Tim Huser

## Step 2: Pick a topic

This is probably the easiest part of the process. Specific groups often request a specific topic, but if they don't, pick something that interests *YOU*. When talking about a topic that you're passionate about, your enthusiasm will show through, and the audience will be more engaged. You should also decide what you want your “takeaway” message to be – the main idea that you want the audience to remember. For example, “we need to protect native pollinators” or “coyotes have an important place in the ecosystem.” Use that message as a central theme for your presentation.

## Step 2: Do a bunch of research

Aside from doing the presentation itself, this is my favorite part – I get to indulge the nature nerd in me and usually learn something new. Wikipedia is a good starting point, but it's not 100% reliable. When I find a fact that surprises me – especially without a reference - I always check multiple sources to decide if I should include it. I frequently try to address common misconceptions about certain species as part of my programs, so I try hard to avoid spreading other misinformation.

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## Nature Education (con't.)

### Step 3: The dreaded PowerPoint

PowerPoint can be great when used well, and a cure for insomnia when not. Tailor your presentation to your audience. Charts and graphs might be OK for a group of professionals, not so much if you're talking to kids. After a few years of doing programs, I have amassed catalog of presentations that I can customize for almost any audience. In general, I recommend keeping your slides simple and leaning towards more pictures and fewer words – there is nothing worse than someone putting up a PowerPoint slide and then reading it to you. A word of caution: if you're not using your own photos, be careful of copyrights. When you insert online pictures in PowerPoint it gives you the option for “creative commons only” which are in the public domain. Another good source for photos in the public domain is Wikicommons (<https://commons.wikimedia.org>). As I create my presentations, I note the main information for that slide in the note sections. Once I'm happy with my PowerPoint, I transfer those notes to notecards for easier reference. If you have Wi-Fi available during your presentation, short YouTube videos can be a good addition – and it gives you a break from talking. Of course, it's also helpful to have relevant “biofacts” like skulls or bird wings to engage your audience (I am, after all, the “roadkill guy”!)

### Final thoughts

The more programs you do, the easier it gets, and you'll find your own style. Always leave time for Q&A and don't be afraid to say, “I don't know”. I get questions that I can't answer all the time, and usually I make a note so I can find the answer later and get back to the person who asked. Some of these questions have led me to fascinating discoveries that I have incorporated back into that particular program. One of my *favorite* things about doing educational programs is when people, especially older people, want to share their nature experiences with me. I've heard some amazing stories, and learned a few things along the way. So remember, it's not appropriate to tell random strangers facts about opossums (or other wild animals apparently) – go find someone who *wants* to hear you talk!



Photo by Kim Buzell



## Calendar of Events

### **Chapter Meetings—at Fredericksburg Church of Christ, 336 Riverside Dr. Fredericksburg**

Tuesday June 21 at 7:00 PM

Tuesday July 19 at 7:00 PM

### **Board Meetings—At Wegman's**

Thursday July 7 at 6:00 PM

Thursday August 4 at 6:00 PM

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 August 15 and October 15.

We are taking applications for our next training class. Pass this information on to any interested friends!

## Join the Central Rappahannock chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists!

Fall 2022 training class begins in August

We are a volunteer-based program that fosters community partnerships to promote environmental stewardship and citizen science

The Central Rapp chapter serves Fredericksburg, Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, Caroline, Orange, and southern Fauquier

The training class runs every Monday evening August 1 – November 14 with four Saturday sessions

Applications are open until July 15!

Follow the QR code to the application



## Contact Us

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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  
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### Committees

**Membership/Special Events**  
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**Continuing Education/Advanced Training**  
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**Outreach/Publicity**  
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**Communications Committee**  
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