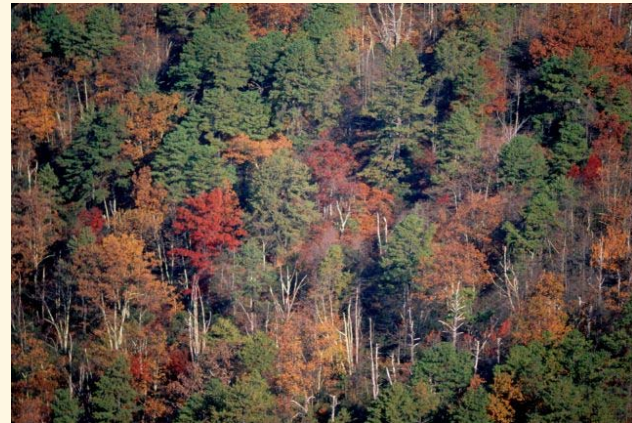




Virginia's Natural Resources



Clematis addisonii

Irvine Wilson

The Virginia Master Naturalist Program



Mission

To develop a well-informed corps of volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Understanding



Knowledge



Appreciation



Sharing



Involvement

Agency Sponsors

Collaboration among 5 sponsoring
state agencies:

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Department of Forestry

Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Virginia Museum of Natural History



Virginia
Cooperative
Extension





Certification Process

Basic Training

+

Advanced Training

+

Volunteer Service

=

Certified Virginia Master Naturalist



Certification Process

Basic Training

40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts



A Virginia Master Naturalist Knows...

- All aspects of his or her role as a Virginia Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history
- Biogeography of Virginia
- Ecology (basic concepts)
- Geology (basic concepts)
- Resource management (basic principles)
- Some native flora and fauna in the region
- Process of science
- Roles of Virginia state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources

A Virginia Master Naturalist Can...

- Use a key to identify organisms
- Use a field guide
- Share knowledge with others
- Make and record observations in nature
- Recognize when he or she does not know the answer to a question, but be able to seek out answers from people, books, or other reliable resources



Every Master Naturalist training includes...

- Both field and classroom experiences, with a minimum of 25% of the course time spent in the field
- Information from unbiased, research-based sources
- Material on the following topics:
 - Introduction to the Virginia Master Naturalist program
 - American Naturalists
 - Basic Ecology
 - Biogeography
 - Geology
 - Nature of Naming
 - Education and Interpretation Skills
 - Citizen Science and Research Skills
 - Ecology and Management of the systems occurring in the region
 - Overview of vertebrates, invertebrates, trees and other plants (biology, ecology, identification, conservation and management)



Sample Objectives: Ornithology

- Describe the **diversity and distribution** of birds in Virginia
- Describe the **role of birds** in Virginia ecosystems
- Describe the **natural history and basic biology** of birds
- Describe the **adaptations** of birds and how these relate to environmental factors
- Describe the **taxonomy** of birds
- Describe the **key characteristics** used to identify birds
- Describe **threats and/or issues** relating to birds in Virginia, such as habitat fragmentation
- Recognize some **common birds** occurring in the local ecosystems
- Recognize **rare or special species** that indicate habitat qualities
- Understand **appropriate techniques and methods** for studying birds



Certification Process

Basic Training

40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts

+

Advanced Training

8 hours

Specialized topics that build on basic training

Required annually to maintain certification



Advanced Training-Objectives

- Promotes continued learning and development of naturalist skills
- Provides Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills necessary to work in local volunteer efforts
- Provides Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few topics
- Builds on the core curriculum initially provided
- Provides information on natural resources and resource management information applicable to Virginia
- May be a full 8 hours of one training, or a series of shorter trainings over time



Advanced Training-Examples

- **Short courses and workshops offered by state or local partners on specialized topics such as forest management or public speaking skills**
- **Training specific to a planned service project such as invasive plant ID or Wildlife Mapping**
- **Public lectures on natural history topics if they meet the advanced training objectives and pertain to local natural resources**



Certification Process

Basic Training

40 hours

Classroom and field experiences

Natural history, conservation and management, teaching and research skills

Led by local experts



Advanced Training

8 hours

Specialized topics that build on basic training

Required annually to maintain certification



Volunteer Service

40 hours

Education, citizen science, or stewardship

Required annually to maintain certification



Service Projects

- Must be dedicated to the beneficial management and conservation of natural resources in the community
- Must be of public benefit, not personal gain
- May be a series of short, unrelated experiences or a long-term commitment to one project
- May take 3 forms: education, citizen science, or stewardship



Volunteer Service: Education

For volunteers who enjoy public speaking or working with youth!

Examples include:

- Being a volunteer interpreter at a state or local park
- Developing an interpretive trail
- Being a guest presenter on a natural resource topic in a classroom



Photo by Mike Hayslett



Volunteer Service: Citizen Science

For volunteers who enjoy helping with scientific research!

Examples include:

- Collecting data for the VA Wildlife Mapping program
- Collecting data for the VA Frog and Toad Calling Survey
- Participating in a Christmas Bird Count
- Conducting water quality monitoring



Photo by Mike Hayslett



Volunteer Service: Stewardship

For volunteers who just want to get their hands dirty!

Examples include:

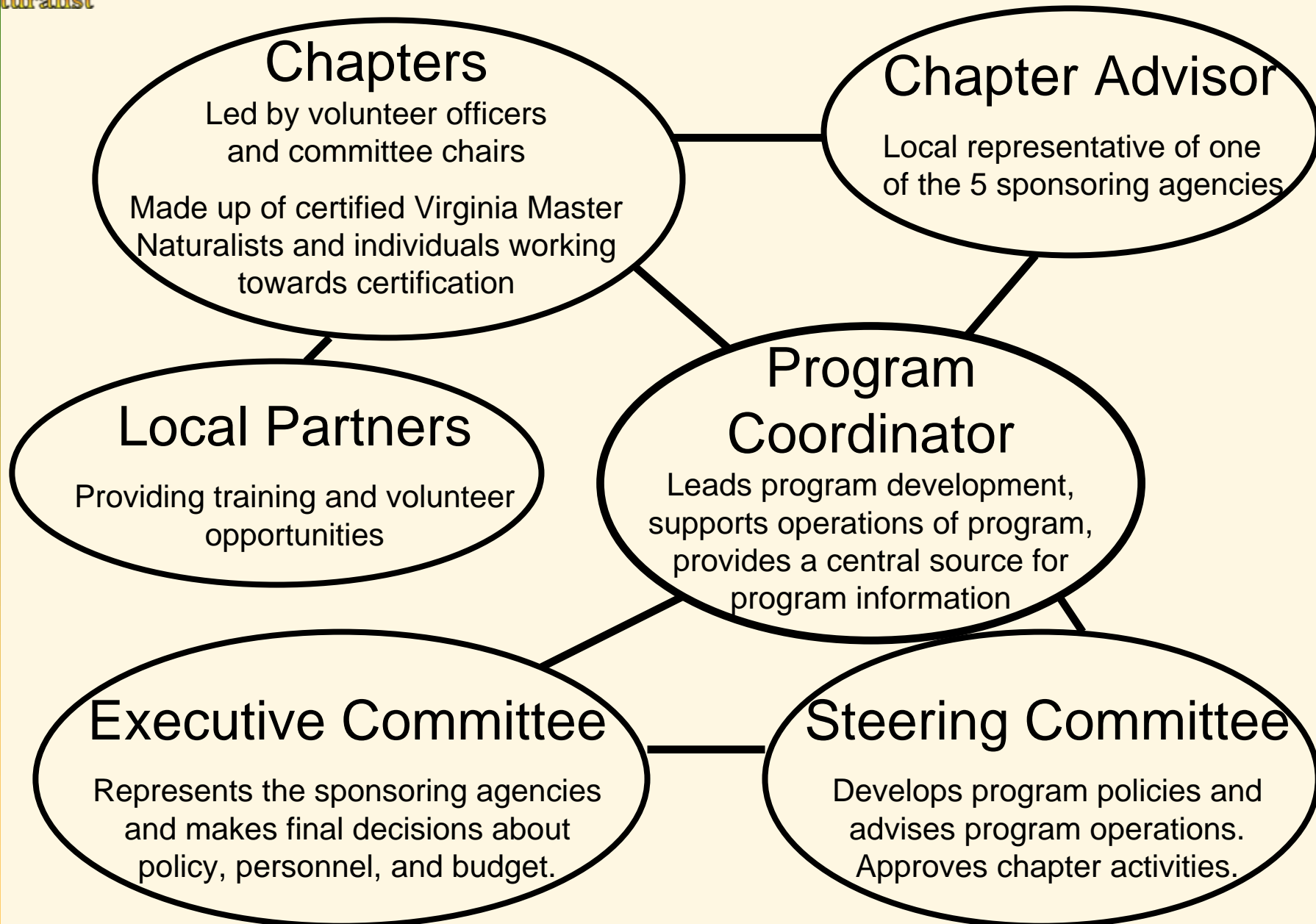
- Maintaining trails at a state park
- Pulling out exotic invasive plants and planting natives at a nature center
- Restoring bird-friendly habitat at a local park



Photo by Mike Hayslett



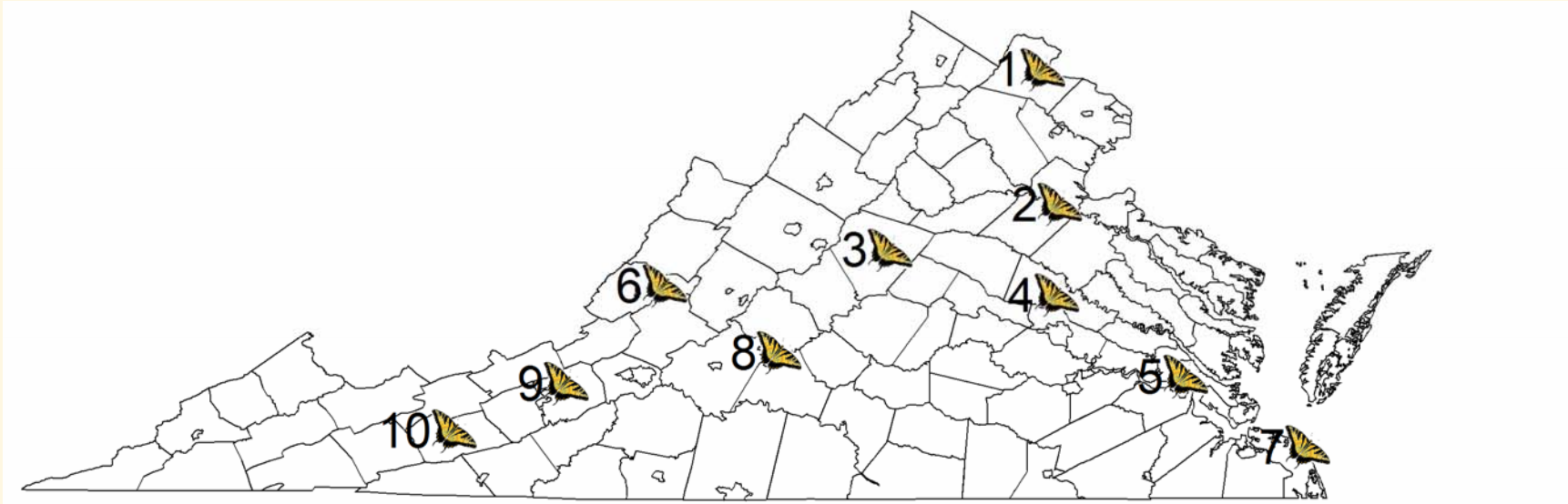
Program Structure





Chapters for 2006

Ten chapters are working towards charters in 2006. We will be adding additional chapters in early 2007.



Chapter Names (and base locations):

- 1: Banshee Reeks Chapter (Loudoun County)
- 2: Central Rappahannock Chapter (Fredericksburg)
- 3: Rivanna Chapter (Albemarle County)
- 4: Riverine Chapter (Ashland)
- 5: Historic Rivers Chapter (James City County)
- 6: Alleghany Highlands Chapter (Douthat State Park)
- 7: Tidewater Chapter (Virginia Beach)
- 8: Central Virginia Chapter (Lynchburg)
- 9: New River Valley Chapter (Blacksburg)
- 10: Beagle Ridge Chapter (Wytheville)



Program Structure: Chapters

- Geographic boundaries vary by chapter (i.e. not all by county)
- Each chapter is responsible for:
 - Recruiting participants
 - Conducting volunteer training
 - Acquiring and managing financial resources
 - Establishing partnerships with state, local, non-profit, and other organizations
 - Coordinating volunteer service projects



Program Structure

- Master Naturalists are part of a local team, or “chapter”.
- Participating in chapter governance, organization, and activities is an important part of being a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer.
- Chapters are volunteer-run. The chapter Board of Directors (volunteers) approves advanced training opportunities and service projects.
- Master Naturalists are also part of a larger statewide structure. They must adhere to statewide policies and keep records of their service to report back to the state (via the chapter’s record keeper).



Is This Program For Me?

- Are you curious about nature?
- Do you enjoy the outdoors?
- Do you want to make a difference in the environment?
- Do you care about the natural areas and native species in your community?
- Do you want to be actively involved in managing, conserving, and educating about Virginia's natural resources?
- Do you have time to complete the training?
- Do you have time to complete the volunteer service?
- Are you interested in being a part of a local team and interacting with other individuals who care about natural resources?
- As a possible charter member, do you have a sense of adventure?
- **If so, then YES, the program may be for you!**



Is This Program For Me?

- Are you mostly interested in getting the training and less interested in the volunteering?
- Are you wanting the certification for your job or to promote yourself in some way?
- Are you hoping to use the certification for environmental advocacy?
- Are you more interested in promoting personal opinions about the environment than research-based information?
- Are you thinking that your Master Naturalist service will count towards Master Gardener service requirements?
- If so, then, **NO**, this program may not be for you.

www.VirginiaMasterNaturalist.org

