



# SHENANDOAH SAW-WHET

Fall Newsletter  
2020

A NEWSLETTER OF THE *SHENANDOAH CHAPTER* OF THE VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS PROGRAM.

OUR NEWSLETTER IS NAMED IN HONOR OF THE NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL — A SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY.

## UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

### **Invasive Plant Workshop**

Sep 29<sup>th</sup>, Oct 7<sup>th</sup>, & Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>

See VMS for details

### **Intro to Nature Journaling**

Oct 17<sup>th</sup> @ Clifton Institute

See VMS for details

### **Sensory Trail Maintenance**

Anytime you want!

Contact Laure Wallace to coordinate.

### **Astronomy for Everyone**

Nov 14<sup>th</sup> @ Sky Meadows

See VMS for details

## FROM THE EDITOR

BY TIM KOPPENHAVER

In early September, I traveled for the first time since the pandemic hit spending four days along the Delaware coast. Traveling brings great opportunities to put our naturalist training to work by identifying new species we don't normally spot in the Shenandoah Valley. I certainly took advantage of the opportunity over the four days I was in Delaware finding species such as Caspian terns, Sandpipers, Marbled orbweavers, and Pickerelweed.

Not letting those sightings go to waste, I uploaded the captured images to **i-Naturalist** so that others around the world, including scientific researchers, could use the collected data. It's one of the small ways to fulfill the obligations I carry as a master naturalist.

When back in Virginia and documenting wildlife sightings through i-Naturalist, those efforts count as approved volunteer hours under the citizen science category in VMS. Of particular interest is the state-sponsored "Virginia Wildlife Mapping" project. On page 9 of this newsletter you will find a more detailed description of this excellent program and the potential it offers for fulfilling socially-distanced volunteer opportunities.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY KELLY MACOY**

Our lives continue to be impacted by COVID-19, but the natural world carries on... Autumn has officially arrived with a crispness in the air. Bird and monarch butterfly migration and fall foliage will soon begin to take center stage. Autumn is a season of change. A warm welcome to two new members of the Board of Directors; our new Chapter Advisor, Kevin Bowman, Sky Meadows Park Manager and Ariel Firebaugh, our new Blandy Experimental Farm representative. A sad good-bye and huge thank you to Nick Davis who is no longer our SCBI representative.

Though we cannot meet in large groups, we can still volunteer in smaller groups. It's always a pleasure to see chapter members in person even with a mask and from six feet away.

Best regards,  
Kelly

## **FAMOUS NATURALISTS**

Thomas Jefferson is well-known as the founder of the University of Virginia, scripter of the Declaration of Independence, and third president of the US. But he was also quite the naturalist. He once wrote that politics was his duty but natural history was his passion. When tied to his desk by political duties, he longed to be "out in the rich fields of nature, studying grain weevils or noting the blooming dates of flowers".

Jefferson had a lifelong fascination with the flora and fauna of Virginia and a reputation for a wide knowledge of botany and zoology. He kept in touch with a worldwide network of naturalists and sponsored fact-gathering expeditions across it including the Lewis & Clark expedition in 1803. While serving as minister to France during the 1780s he frequently requested plants from home to dazzle European aristocrats with the remarkable beauty, size, or curiosity of New World species.

Though a voracious reader and collector of books, Thomas Jefferson wrote just one: *Notes on the State of Virginia*. This book contained vigorous arguments about the nature of a good society, including such topics as religion, freedom of speech, equality, and expense management. But it also was a first comprehensive account of the topography, climate, minerals, animals, rivers, mountains and many other resources of any North American commonwealth.

Though Jefferson gave much to society, he was never happier than when at Monticello riding across the fields and experimenting with new crops being one of American's first serious students of botany, zoology, climate, and geology.

## MEMBER PROFILE

### MEET KEVIN BOWMAN

#### *Sky Meadows Park Manager*



As most chapter members know, **Tim Skinner** recently retired as manager of Sky Meadows State Park (SMSP). In April of 2020, **Kevin Bowman** was promoted from within to become the park's new manager. In this new role, Kevin now also serves as advisor to our VMN chapter and has already begun providing our board with very valuable advice and guidance.

Kevin began his career at SMSP in 2014 when he was appointed Chief Ranger for Visitor Experience. Prior to that he had worked for the National Park Service in Gettysburg – the area in which he had grown up. In his youth, Kevin developed a real fondness and appreciation for agricultural. In college, Kevin studied history. He says now that SMSP is the perfect place to bring these two interests together. Rich in history, SMSP provides recreational offerings that connect visitors with farming practices that formed the surrounding landscape. Simply put, Kevin believes agriculture is a great means to tie history and nature together.

Moving into his new role right about the time a pandemic was taking hold has been a unique challenge for Kevin. Nonetheless, there is a little silver lining – visitation to the park is up significantly. Even though he and other park staff cannot engage with visitors as much as in pre-pandemic times, Kevin is glad that at least more people are able to gain an appreciation for the outdoors during these difficult times.

When Kevin's not working, you're sure to find him attending to the needs of his three young children. Or if time allows, you may find him involved in Civil War re-enacting events; although he tries to only participate in those events that most accurately represent the times and offer some type of public engagement.

Congrats to Kevin for his promotion to park manager and we look forward to your continued guidance as chapter advisor!

## VOLUNTEER SERVICE

VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS ARE DEDICATED TO VOLUNTEERING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES PERFORMING DUTIES SUCH AS CITIZEN SCIENCE, EDUCATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND CHAPTER ADMINISTRATION. A SAMPLE OF SHENANDOAH CHAPTER MEMBER'S EFFORTS IS PRESENTED BELOW.

### Wavyleaf Basketgrass

*(Oplismenus undulatifolius)*

According to the Virginia Dept of Conservation and Recreation, Wavyleaf basketgrass (WLBG) has become widespread and is an aggressive invasive species. It adapts to forest understory where it creates dense continuous carpets, outcompetes other ground-layer species, and suppresses shrub and tree seedlings.

WLBG has been discovered at Sky Meadows State Park at its higher-elevations. Recently though, while doing good stewardship conducting removal of other invasive species (Perilla and Stiltgrass) in our chapter's Outdoor Lab, WLBG was found along the Sensory Explorer's Trail and Vernal Pool areas. Our chapter has responded well to this threat, especially so as led by **Mary Keith Ruffner**.

At the end of July, she and **Kristin Zimet** confirmed the existence of WLBG along the Sensory Explorer's Trail. They reported their finding to Sky Meadows' park manager **Kevin Bowman** and then began pulling what they could. The park then put in place GPS coordinate system for locating and tracking WLBG. Unfortunately, a larger patch was found a few days later near the Vernal Pool area of the trail. They then reached out to **Kelly Macoy & Ed Tobias**. It was time for a more aggressive approach and a call for volunteers.

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, the first removal day took place with procedural guidance from **Sally Anderson**. Nine chapter members showed up! But still more work needed to be done so in conjunction with Sally, **Laure Wallace** and **Paul Guay**, they arranged three additional workdays in August where at least 13 volunteers showed up.

The battle continues but THANKS TO ALL for helping to get this highly aggressive invasive under control.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE ACTIVE MEMBERS WITH TEN OR MORE YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE!

Sally Anderson, Class of 2007  
Rose Breece, Class of 2007  
Robert Edmonds, Class of 2010  
Richard Stromberg, Class of 2007  
Laure Wallace, Class of 2008  
Kristin Zimet, Class of 2010

Linda Bender, Class of 2010  
Belinda Burwell, Class of 2007  
Mary Keith Ruffner, Class of 2010  
Irene Upshur, Class of 2008  
Margaret Wester, Class of 2008

**INVASIVE PLANT ALERT**

**Wavyleaf Grass**

*(Oplismenus undulatifolius)*

**Threat**

Wavyleaf grass has become a widespread and aggressive invasive species in Virginia. It is adapted to forest understory, where it creates dense continuous carpets, outcompetes other ground-layer species, and suppresses shrub and tree seedlings. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service assessed wavyleaf and found it to rank as a High Risk (USDA-APHIS 2012). The public, especially citizen scientists, are encouraged to be on the lookout for wavyleaf and report any sightings. See contact information below. In Virginia, wavyleaf is listed as a Tier 2 noxious weed.

**Report Sightings**

If you believe you have found an occurrence of wavyleaf grass, there are several ways to report your discovery. Call or email the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (contact listed below). Use the online mapping tool [eddmaps.org](http://eddmaps.org), *Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System* (requires free registration). Smartphone users can download an app dedicated to making reports of invasive plants, MAEDN, *Mid-Atlantic Early Detection Network* (App Store or Google Play). In any case, it is extremely helpful to take close-up photographs. Images should focus on where the leaf meets the stem and any apparent flowering.

**TO REPORT A SIGHTING:**

Kevin Heffernan, *Stewardship Biologist*  
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
[kevin.heffernan@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:kevin.heffernan@dcr.virginia.gov) | 804-786-9112

Online mapping and reporting tool:  
<http://eddmaps.org>

Smartphone app:  
**MAEDN, Mid-Atlantic Early Detection Network**

For more information:  
[www.stophisplant.org](http://www.stophisplant.org)



**Description**

Wavyleaf grass is a recent introduction to Virginia. It is a low-lying, trailing perennial grass, branching and rooting at nodes along creeping stems called stolons. Leaf blades are flat, about 0.5 to 1 inch wide, between 1.5 and 4 inches long, and deep green with rippling waves across the grass blades from base to tip. Leaf tips are elongated. Leaf sheaths and stems are noticeably hairy, although the hairs are short, approximately 0.25 inches. Wavyleaf blooms from mid-August into November. The flowering spikelets have glumes (lower bracts) with very long awns (extended, pointed tips). The awns produce a sticky substance that allows the grass seed to adhere to passing hikers or animals and readily disperse. Wavyleaf can be confused with invasive Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), joint-head grass (*Arthraxon hispidus*) and native deertongue (*Dichanthelium clandestinum*).

**Wavyleaf "Mimic" Plants**

**Japanese stiltgrass**



**Joint-head grass**



**FLORA & FAUNA CALENDAR**

*Some regularly recurring events and resources of interest for our chapter’s territory*

<b>Time of Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>Sept to Dec 1<sup>st</sup></b> (approximately)	Hawk Migration at Snicker’s Gap, Clarke County. Best viewing time is late September through mid-October.
<b>September - October</b>	Witch Hazel ( <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> ) blooms. Witch-hazel was first discovered in Virginia, hence its specific scientific name, <i>virginiana</i> .
<b>September – November</b>	Monarch Butterfly ( <i>Danaus plexippus</i> ) southern migration.

**Other Resources**

**WILDFLOWER CALENDAR** - Shenandoah Nat’l Park:  
[www.nps.gov/shen/learn/nature/upload/WildflowerCalendar\\_Web.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/shen/learn/nature/upload/WildflowerCalendar_Web.pdf)

**WHAT’S BLOOMING NOW** - State Arboretum of Virginia:  
[blandy.virginia.edu/arboretum/what-s-blooming-now](http://blandy.virginia.edu/arboretum/what-s-blooming-now)

**VIRGINIA BIRDING AND WILDLIFE TRAIL:**  
[vafwis.dgif.virginia.gov/FindWildlifeVA/#/findWildlife](http://vafwis.dgif.virginia.gov/FindWildlifeVA/#/findWildlife)

**WILDLIFE VIEWING TIPS** - Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries:  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife-watching/respect-wildlife/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife-watching/respect-wildlife/)

*“The profound elevation of the spirit in a wild place, rejuvenation, does not always require a rush of adrenaline. Sometimes lingering in a country’s unpretentious hills and waters offers all one might wish of wisdom.”*

*From Crossing Open Ground by **Barry Lopez***

## PHOTO STORIES

IMAGES CAPTURED BY SHENANDOAH CHAPTER VMNS ALONG WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SPECIES, PHOTO TECHNIQUES, AND OTHER USEFUL TIPS & INFO.



PHOTOGRAPHER: Kasey Clark

LOCATION: Middleburg, Virginia

SUBJECT SPECIES: Red-spotted Newt  
*Notophthalmus viridescens*

CAMERA: i-Phone 10



PHOTOGRAPHER: Richard Stromberg

LOCATION: Elizabeth Furnace

SUBJECT SPECIES: Closed Gentian (*Gentiana clausa*) CAMERA: Sony Cybershot

NOTES/TIP: Bumblebees force their way into the flower to get nectar. Where the petals meet at the top shows as a white star before the flower has been pollinated. Once pollination has occurred, the star disappears, so the bee knows to ignore that flower.

### **Volunteer Opportunity**

Looking for a citizen science volunteer opportunity with minimal social distancing concerns? Consider the Virginia Wildlife Mapping project through i-Naturalist. This can be done by yourself or in a small group. Simply download the **i-Naturalist** app, start observing and photographing and upload your findings to the Virginia Wildlife Mapping project.



**Virginia Wildlife Mapping** is a citizen science project by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to better understand the distribution of Virginia's wildlife. Our highest priority is to collect data on our Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), as listed in Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan. The information gathered from this project will be used to augment the survey, monitoring, and research efforts by DWR and our partners.

Once verified by DWR staff, observations are added to the Virginia Species Observations database, which is maintained by the DWR and used to assist environmental review and conservation planning efforts. We hope that this project will both inform our agency and other researchers about Virginia's species distribution as well as empower citizen scientists to assist in the conservation of Virginia's wildlife.

### **Volunteers in Action - Pollinator Plots**

Our Pollinator Plots project has had twenty-eight workdays involving weeding, edging, sod suppression, mulching, planting and watering. In total, sixteen Shenandoah Chapter VMNs volunteered! Thanks to all who continue to support this important project. In addition **Phyllis Partain** grew many plants from seed as well as helped get a donation of seedlings from Hill House Nursery in Rappahannock County.

## PLACES OF NOTE

INTERESTING LOCATIONS TO VISIT IN OUR SHENANDOAH CHAPTER TERRITORY

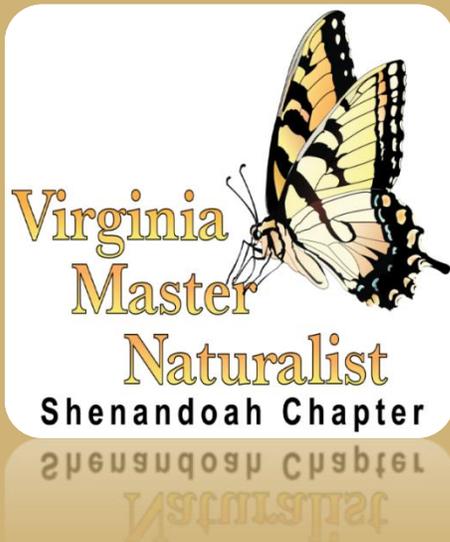
### **SMITH MEADOWS**

#### Overview

Located in Clarke County on the grounds of Smith Meadows Farm Store and Smithfield Farm B&B, this 500-acre property open dawn-to-dusk with self-guided trail is part of the Virginia Wildlife and Birding Trail. The 2-mile trail loops through woodland, orchards, fields and riparian belts supporting a variety of species. Red-tailed hawks, ruby-throated hummingbirds, eastern kingbirds, purple martins, butterflies, dragonflies all are common on the property. Park at the store, where afterward you can browse the shelves for sustainably-farmed, local foods.

#### Location





*The Virginia Master Naturalist program and the Shenandoah Chapter are 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.*

## CONTACT US

Shenandoah Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists

Chapter Website: [vmnshenandoah.org](http://vmnshenandoah.org)

Chapter Email: [ShenandoahVMN@gmail.com](mailto:ShenandoahVMN@gmail.com)

**President:** *Kelly Macoy*

**Vice President:** *Fred Wenzel*

**Treasurer:** *Janet Rigoni*

**Secretary:** *Debi Fischetti*

Education Committee Co-Chair: *Rebecca Harriett*

Education Committee Co-Chair: *Alex Newhart*

Membership Committee: *Janet Rigoni*

Volunteer Opportunities: *Michelle Fontaine*

Outreach Committee: *Tim Koppenhaver*

Program Committee: *Fred Wenzel*

Sky Meadows Outdoor Lab: *Ed Tobias*