



# SHENANDOAH SAW-WHET

ISSUE #6: SUMMER 2021

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

### **Shenandoah Chapter Picnic**

September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

4:00 pm at Sky Meadows SP

### **Virginia Master Naturalist, Shenandoah Chapter New Members Training Class**

Begins September 2021

(And again March 2022)

### **Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Conference and Volunteer Training**

October 1-3, 2021

### **Sensory Trail Maintenance Sky Meadows S. P.**

Anytime you want!

Contact Laure Wallace to coordinate.

## FROM THE EDITOR

BY TIM KOPPENHAVER

This past Memorial Day, I walked the still-developing Green Circle Trail which is a 6.3-mile loop through the City of Winchester connecting areas of historic, recreational, educational, and natural interest. The loop entails a variety of experiences - perhaps exactly what the city had in mind when they designed the route.

The trail provides a great opportunity to see the community at a much slower pace. And that slower pace is ideal for master naturalists interested in experiencing things we have been trained to find.

For my walk, the most obvious sightings were cicadas; their profusions most notable around more-mature trees in the city. I also spotted a large fishfly, which at first glance, blended in with the cicadas. In the wooded area at Shawnee Springs, the sweet smell of honeysuckle was pervasive, and the songs of Carolina wren were aplenty. At two spots along the loop are Virginia Cave & Karst Trail points of interest highlighting springs and limestone ledges. And a spur trail into Abrams Creek Wetland had several USDA traps for instar-staged Spotted Lanternflies.

Though urban in setting, the Green Circle Trail encompasses plenty to catch the eye, nose, ear, and interest of any Virginia Master Naturalist. Give it a try!

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY KELLY MACOY

The past month has seen two major emergences...Brood X cicadas from their subterranean cradle and us from our pandemic cocoons. It is a great time to get back out into nature to experience all of its special summer offerings.

Speaking of summer... Welcome to the Saw-Whet summer issue. This issue includes a couple of new locations for exploring and it also highlights the importance of administrative volunteering within the Chapter. There are several ways to become engaged with the chapter either administratively or within chapter projects. Read on to find out more...

See you at the Chapter Picnic on September 19th at Sky Meadows State Park!

## FAMOUS NATURALISTS

Excerpts from *Wilderness Regained* by Curtis Badger  
(Reprinted with permission)

*I grew up on the Eastern Shore, graduated from Onancock High School, and had no idea that I lived in a natural area that was in any way special. Our high school was tucked into a bend of Onancock Creek, and we could look out the windows and watch the rising and falling of the tide. A few miles downstream, Onancock Creek joined the Chesapeake Bay. Spartina marshes were so close to the baseball field that they frequently swallowed up foul balls.*

*I brought home my first wild game when I was fourteen. The birds were marsh hens, or clapper rail, and I was with my father in a little cedar skiff in a flooded salt marsh near Cedar Island. The moon was full, and the wind was northeast, pushing the tide high into the marsh, covering the grasses where the rails hid. At the time, it seemed an enjoyable but unremarkable day, another item in a catalog of events that were a part of growing up on the coast. I didn't value this life, this experience, until the day I sensed it was slipping away.*

*I had grown up, gone to college, and was working as a photojournalist in the air force in Alaska. My hometown newspaper arrived one day in June 1969, bringing news that a New York developer called Smith Island Development Corp had bought three islands and intended to link them by bridge to the mainland and build a golf course, a residential community to accommodate 50,000 people, retail shops, and restaurants. This news suddenly assigned currency to a way of life I had not considered as having any exceptional value, in much the way the value of life is not thoughtfully measured until life is threatened.*

**Curtis Badger** resides on Virginia's Eastern Shore and has written over thirty natural history books including *A Natural History of Quiet Waters - Swamps and Wetlands of the Mid-Atlantic Coast*; *Salt Tide - The Currents of Nature and Life on the Virginia Coast*, and his most recent book *A Culinary History of Delmarva*.

Curtis continues to support and advocate for The Nature Conservancy which was instrumental in preserving the way of life in which he grew up by halting the efforts of Smith Island Development Corp.

## OUR CHAPTER NEEDS YOU

### CONSIDER JOINING THE BOARD OR A COMMITTEE

*By Ellen Schwalenstocker*

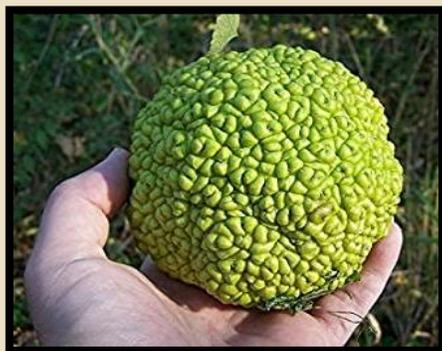
Of all the ways to be involved in the Chapter – stewardship, outreach, education, and administration, administrative activities often attract the least interest. Yet, there are many reasons to participate in the Chapter’s administrative functions – both for your personal enrichment as well as the Chapter’s.

- Administrative activities keep the chapter going. Without volunteers willing to step up to serve on committees and the Board of Directors, our Chapter cannot exist. State guidelines require that a Chapter must have a board composed of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Chapter Advisor(s) at a minimum. These officers can serve a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms. The Education, Membership, Outreach, Program, and Volunteer Opportunities Committees are essential in planning and coordinating the activities of the Chapter. They are how the Basic Training Program gets planned, this newsletter gets developed, events to promote our Chapter are staffed, new volunteer opportunities are identified, and fun outings are developed.
- Administrative activities provide a year-round opportunity to stay involved. Regardless of the weather, there is always something to do to keep the Chapter going. And you can do a lot of it from your own home.
- Administrative activities are an opportunity to contribute your unique skills. Our chapter members bring deep and diverse experience. Serving on a committee or the Board gives you a chance to exercise those skills.
- Participating in administrative activities is a great networking opportunity. Get to know your fellow volunteers better along with leaders from other organizations and at the State level.
- Administrative activities help you gain deep knowledge of Chapter activities. Participating on the Chapter’s Board of Directors enables you to keep abreast of Chapter projects as well as other program opportunities.

This fall, we will elect a new slate of officers. Our current President (Kelly Macoy), Vice President (Alex Newhart) and Treasurer (Janet Rigoni) have served the Chapter wonderfully, **but they cannot serve another term. Consider stepping up to keep our Chapter going** – it is rewarding and essential work. If you are interested in serving on a committee or on the Board, please contact Kelly Macoy or Alex Newhart for additional information.

## **THE BOW-WOOD TREE**

By Paul Guay



French fur traders called the Osage Orange tree “bois d’ arc,” the wood of the bow. Native Americans would travel hundreds of miles to trade for a stave of bow-wood, prized for making the finest bows. Osage bows were traded for as far as 2,000 miles from where they were made, the going price said to be a pony and a blanket. It could shoot an arrow at higher velocity than a bow made from any other native wood. Faster even than an English Longbow made from Yew. It was the ‘super weapon’ of the day, and the favored bow wood of the feared Comanche. It was so strong and heavy that war clubs and tomahawk handles were made from it. The wood was so valuable that wars were fought over the lands where they grew. So, it’s no coincidence that the native range of the Osage Orange tree coincided exactly with the homeland of the Caddoan people, the most advanced Native Americans of the Southwest.

The first European colonist found it as a single species (*Maclura pomifera*) in an area just the size of New Jersey, in the Red River Valley region of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. But the fossil record shows that seven different species of *Maclura* once grew from coast to coast and as far north as Ontario.

What forces caused such a drastic reduction in its distribution? Osage produce TRUE fruits; fleshy grapefruit sized spheres known as Hedge Apples containing about two hundred small seeds. Fruits like these evolved to be eaten by large animals, like North America’s now extinct giant MEGAFUNA of the Pleistocene Epoch. Animals like the Giant Ground Sloth, Mastodon, and Woolly Mammoth may have eaten the fruits of the Hedge Apple and deposited the seeds in their scat far from the parent tree. They were the trees’ primary seed dispersers, spreading them throughout Temperate North America. These trees and animals evolved in concert, with the Hedge Apple becoming totally dependent on the mega-fauna for its seed dispersal.

Then came the last Ice Age, human hunters, and the extinction of the Pleistocene Megafauna. The advancing glaciers pushed the Hedge Apple population into the deep south. Eventually, the glaciers retreated, but with the trees primary seed dispersers gone, the population was doomed to permanent exile in its last sanctuary: the Red River Valley.

In the early 1800’s several Hedge Apple cuttings collected by Meriwether Lewis made their way to pioneer nurseryman Bernard McMahon in Philadelphia. He noted the trees formidable thorns, ability to root from the branch tips and sprout new trees from lateral roots; all attributes of trees that make effective impenetrable living fences and windbreaks. By the 1840’s, he and other American Nurserymen were selling thousands of seedlings to farmers nationwide for use as living fences. A well pruned and maintained hedge apple fence was said to be “horse high, bull strong and pig tight”.

The invention of barbed wire in 1874 ended the reign of the Hedge Apple living fence, but many of the MILLIONS of farm-raised Hedge Apple trees remained across the country. So, after millennia of the absence of the tree’s Megafaunal seed dispersers, America’s farmers took over the role, and in the space of 50 years re-introduced *Maclura pomifera* to most of its pre ice age native range.

All of the many Hedge Apples growing along this trail are descended from those old farm fence rows, the trees still offering their fallen fruits to long departed evolutionary partners.

Many current nature guides refer to *Maclura pomifera* as an introduced, non-native species in Virginia. But, along with the Giant Ground Sloths, Mastodons and Woolly Mammoths, it was here eons ago. Touch one, and whisper “Welcome Home”.

## 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.

### SENSORY EXPLORERS TRAIL AWARDED BRONZE MEDAL!

On March 25<sup>th</sup> at the virtual Environment Virginia Symposium, Governor Ralph Northam announced our Sensory Explorers' Trail as a **Bronze Medal winner** of the 2021 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards. Winners were recognized for innovative projects that improve Virginia's environment. Awardees represent businesses, industry, higher education as well as state, local and federal government that successfully implemented projects that achieved considerable environment results.

Pictured below are Kevin Bowman, Kelly Macoy, and Laure Wallace. Congratulations to all who have contributed to this vitally important Shenandoah Chapter VMN project!



*"With these awards, we celebrate the tremendous efforts of leaders and innovators across Virginia who are tackling our greatest environmental challenges,"* said Governor Northam.

*"Their vision, advocacy and commitment set a standard to which we can all aspire, and I look forward to continuing our work together to address the impacts of climate change, protect our natural resources and advance environmental justice."*

### CHAPTER PROJECTS OF NOTE

Sky Meadows: Sensory Trail, Outdoor Lab, Pollinator Plot and Bluebird Trails

Bluebird Trail at Blandy Experimental Farm

Lake Frederick Educational Outdoor Lab

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center Volunteering

The Trails at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley

*If interested in helping, please reach out to any of our chapter officers or committee chairs.*

## **DWR Statement on Sick and Dying Birds in Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia**

*By Dr. Megan Kirchgessner, DWR*

*Photos by Belinda Burwell, DVM*

In late May, wildlife managers in Washington D.C., Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia began receiving reports of sick and dying birds with eye swelling and crusty discharge, as well as neurological signs. No definitive cause of death is identified at this time.

The District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and National Park Service are continuing to work with diagnostic laboratories to investigate the cause of mortality. Those laboratories include the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, the University of Georgia Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, and the University of Pennsylvania Wildlife Futures Program.

Birds congregating at feeders and baths can transmit disease to one another. Therefore, the state and District agencies recommend that the public in the outbreak area:

- Cease feeding birds until this wildlife mortality event has concluded;
- Clean feeders and bird baths with a 10% bleach solution;
- Avoid handling birds, but wear disposable gloves if handling is necessary; and
- Keep pets away from sick or dead birds as a standard precaution.

If you encounter sick or dead birds in Virginia, please submit an event report. If you must remove dead birds, place them in a sealable plastic bag to dispose with household trash. Additional information will be shared as diagnostic results are received.



A sick blue jay found in the Washington, D.C., area.

## SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK BECOMES AN INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK

At last, a long-time goal of staff and volunteers at Sky Meadows State Park has been achieved after years of work and preparation. It is with great pride that we announce our official designation by the International Dark-Sky Association as a certified IDA Dark Sky Park. This prestigious recognition is one that has been achieved by 5 parks in Virginia, including 4 other Virginia State Parks. We are proud to join this group of International Dark Sky Places which meet specific criteria for promoting conservation of the night sky and educating the public on responsible lighting practices and the effects of light pollution.

When you think of pollution, you may think of smog in the air or litter on the ground and floating in a waterway. But have you considered that artificial light is also a form of pollution? Animals (including humans) rely on darkness at night for their health. The widespread use of artificial lighting at night disrupts the delicate ecosystems that wildlife and humans rely on for survival. Often without realizing it, humans contribute to climate change and the reduction of safe habitats for many wildlife species by forgetting to turn off lights.

The benefits of a natural dark sky are enjoyed by both the wildlife and the human visitors to Sky Meadows. We are uniquely situated just outside of the urban DC metro area, making the park an ideal destination for stargazers looking to escape the effects of light pollution in that area. However, keeping these night skies dark for generations to come, will take a continued concerted effort. Sky Meadows and other Dark Sky Places will face the challenge of protecting their beautiful dark skies from the impact of urban sprawl. Educational outreach to surrounding communities must continue, so that we can help each other keep Sky Meadows State Park and other Dark Sky Places as havens where we can still look to the sky and experience the beauty of our universe.

“Though a major milestone, this marks more a beginning than an end to our work in maintaining the dark skies that we and our visitors enjoy,” said Sky Meadows Park Manager Kevin Bowman. “It demonstrates that much of what visitors enjoy about Sky Meadows hinges on resources and factors beyond our boundaries and is a sobering reminder that the designation's longevity must not be taken for granted. We hope it will inspire others to consider the impact that outdoor lighting choices at home and in their communities make on the conservation and enjoyment of our valued resources.”

Have you attended one of our Dark Sky programs such as the “Astronomy for Everyone?” Continuing to offer educational programs like these, is one of the ways Sky Meadows promotes dark sky conservation. Be sure to keep an eye on our online calendar of events, for future astronomy programs. We ask our visitors to “know before you go” and keep in mind that the park closes to the public at dusk, except for instances of these planned park programs.

As an IDA designated park, we are excited to continue our commitment to keeping the park as free from artificial light pollution as we can. You can be a part of that mission by taking steps to preserve the dark night sky, both here and at home. In the words of Laura Greenleaf, IDA volunteer representative for Virginia: “I hope that all of Virginia’s Dark Sky Parks will inspire their surrounding communities to make responsible, quality outdoor lighting a priority so that Virginia can halt and reverse the decades’ long trend of growing light pollution.”

*Article by **Laura Schliesske** originally published on the [I Love Virginia](#) blog and reprinted here with permission.*

## FLORA & FAUNA CALENDAR

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

Time of Year	Event
Mid-June to Mid-July	Fireflies! See video below by former advisor Steve Carroll: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRlpggPw8yo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRlpggPw8yo</a>
Late August	Bird Migrations begin at Kiptopeke State Park on Virginia's Eastern Shore.
Mid-Sept to Early-Oct	Hawk Migrations at Snicker's Gap

### Other Resources

**WILDFLOWER CALENDAR** - Shenandoah National 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/)

**PHENOLOGY VISUALIZATION TOOLS** – From USA National Phenology Network:  
<https://data.usanpn.org/vis-tool/#/>

"Nature does not give to those who will not spend; her gifts are loaned to those who will use them. Empty your lungs and breathe. Run, climb, work, and laugh; the more you give out the more you shall receive. *Participate.*

People do not really live for honors or for pay; their happiness is not in the taking and holding, but in the doing, the striving, the building, the serving."

*Harry Marsh, Bits & Pieces, Vol. 20, # 10, p. 8*

## 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, VA

**SUBJECT SPECIES:**  
Praying Mantis  
(*Mantodea*)

**CAMERA:**  
i-Phone 11

**NOTES:**  
Praying Mantis nymph on  
egg casing.



**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Alex Newhart

**LOCATION:** White Post, VA

**SUBJECT SPECIES:** Brood X cicadas (*Magicicada cassini*)

**CAMERA:** Nikon Z6 II with 105mm lens

**NOTES:** These Brood X cicadas are preparing for the next Brood X that will emerge in 2038.

## **FALL 2021 NEW MEMBERS TRAINING COURSE**

It has been two years since we held a training class for new members (2019), so the Education Committee has started the application process for a fall training class. This is the first time our chapter has held the class in the fall. Adjustments had to be made to the order of the classes based on the change of seasons. The application process is also different this year as the application is now found within the Better Impact system. Applicants were mailed a link to the online form on June 7th. The application period will be open until July 16th.

The fall class will be limited to twenty trainees as we are not yet sure where the class will be held and if there will be any Covid related restrictions in place at that time. As in past years, we are looking for members to help with the classes. Each class will need two to four members to assist with the class. If you are interested in helping, keep an eye on the Opportunity List/Calendar to sign up for this activity.

If you know of anyone that is interested in joining our chapter, they should contact Alex and Rebecca at [vmnshenandoah@gmail.com](mailto:vmnshenandoah@gmail.com).

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY HELP SAVE THE CHESAPEAKE BAY**

The Virginia Department of Forestry needs volunteer project inspectors to verify tree plantings which are part of the "**My Trees Count**" project. The project promotes the idea that every tree planted makes a difference to the health of our communities and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. To learn more about the program, please watch the My Trees Count continuing education webinar found on the VMN statewide website or simply search "My Trees Count" and look for the ArcGIS website.

If interested in volunteering, please contact Lara Johnson ([Lara.Johnson@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Lara.Johnson@dof.virginia.gov)).

## PLACES OF NOTE

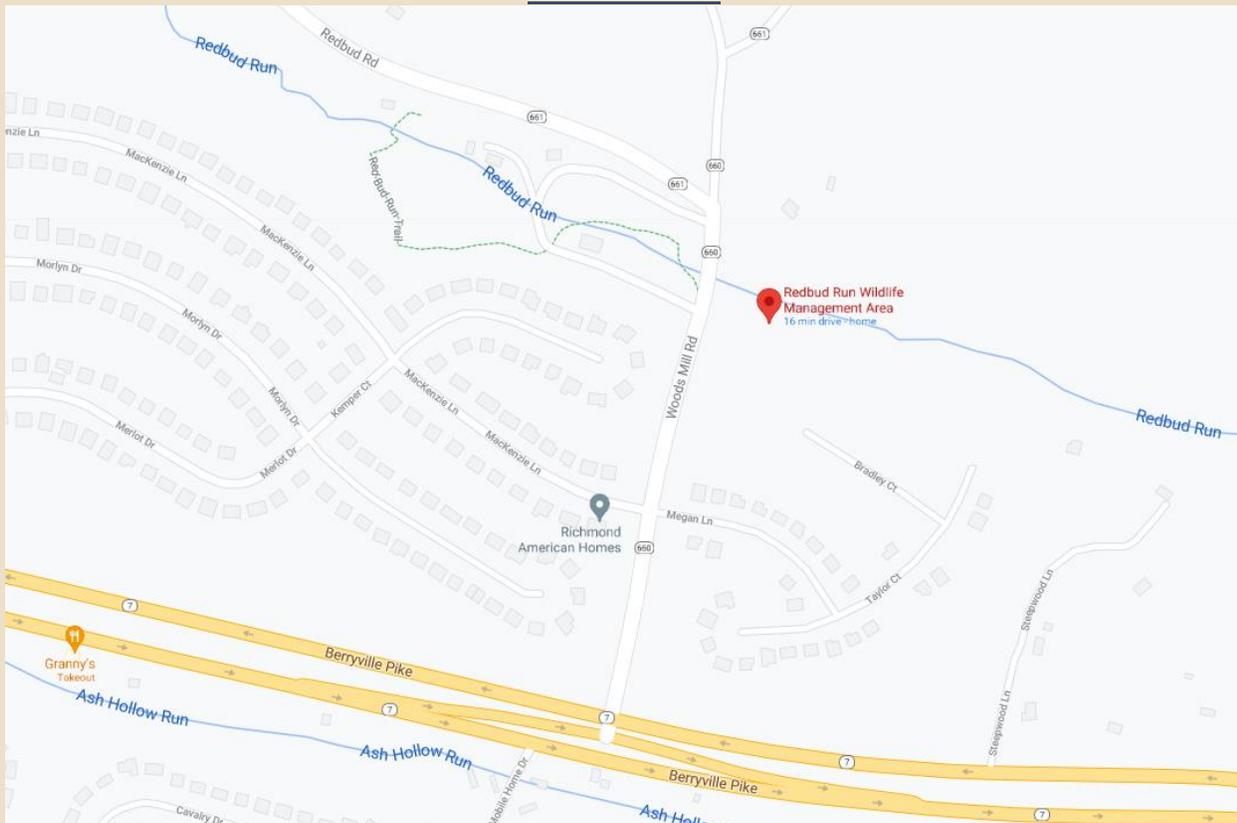
INTERESTING LOCATIONS TO VISIT IN OUR SHENANDOAH CHAPTER TERRITORY

# REDBUD RUN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

### Overview

A 36-acre area (including several historic structures) which the state owns and Trout Unlimited maintains. Short trails lead in both directions from the parking lot and follow Redbud Run - a small creek which originates from springs adjacent to I-81 and flows 3.7 miles before emptying into Opequon Creek. Redbud Run is a rare creek with limestone and marl stream bottom which is continually changing and supports a naturally reproducing rainbow trout population.

### 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: Alex Newhart**

**Secretary: Ellen Schwalenstocker**

**Treasurer: Janet Rigoni**

Education Committee Co-Chair: *Rebecca Harriett*

Membership Committee: *Janet Rigoni*

Volunteer Opportunities: *Michelle Fontaine*

Outreach Committee: *Tim Koppenhaver*

Program Committee: *Alex Newhart*

Sky Meadows Outdoor Lab: *Ed Tobias*