

Goals and Expectations

While the basic training course of VMN is enjoyed by many for the additional knowledge in a variety of topics of the natural world, it is primarily intended to prepare participants for volunteering as Master Naturalists. It seeks to give volunteers the background knowledge and skills they need to be effective in their service projects. Hence it is important to highlight the mission and core training objectives of the program. These are:

MISSION: The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of well informed volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

CORE OBJECTIVES: A Virginia Master Naturalist should know...

- All aspects of their role as a Virginia Master Naturalist, the mission and objectives of the program, and the guidelines for participation, including risk management guidelines
- What a naturalist is and does and the significance of naturalists and natural history
- The biogeography of Virginia, including the physiographic regions and the geological and ecological aspects that make them distinct
- Basic concepts of ecology
- Basic concepts of geology
- Basic resource management principles
- Some native flora and fauna in the region
- The general process of science
- The roles of Virginia state agencies in the management and conservation of natural resources

A Virginia Master Naturalist should be able to...

- Use a key to identify organisms
- Use a field guide
- Share knowledge with others (verbally and/or in writing)
- 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

EVALUATIONS--As part of the requirements of the VMN program your understanding and performance in the areas covered by the basic training program will be evaluated through a variety of means.

1. **AMERICAN NATURALIST**--Each trainee will identify an American naturalist of their choice and briefly summarize why they consider him/her to be a naturalist and describe some contributions they have made. A form will be given to use for this, and all written naturalist summaries will be given out to the whole class. **These summaries are due by April 10.**
2. **FURTHER TOPIC EXPLORATION (FTE)** --Each participant will be provided with a notebook to enter their "Further Topic Exploration" (FTE) after each class at home. To prepare a FTE each participant will pick a portion of the content from the presentations they have just heard and expand on it in their journal on their own time. FTE's can include additional information on the topic, and/or pictures, drawings, graphs drawn from personal research from any resource they choose. For example, participants may want to know more about migration patterns of their favorite birds or consider how they can be more environmentally responsible as a result. **Bring your FTE notebook to every class. They will be reviewed periodically.**
3. **SCAVENGER HUNT**--Each participant will have opportunity to identify various flora and fauna in our environment over the course of the term. Look for specific plants/animals on the Scavenger Hunt List as you go on field trips or in your neighborhood or wherever you go. **This is due at the last class, May 8.**
4. **PROJECT INVOLVEMENT**--During the course of the term, each participant should **volunteer at least 1 hour** in an environmentally oriented project which links them to others in the community. Specific opportunities will be announced during the term.
5. **FINAL ASSESSMENT**--This component will be a group based experience in which participants will draw from what they have learned over the term and build on it. It will be a fun and great learning experience. What a capstone to the basic training course! For those who miss this experience, a substitute final exam will be given. More details will be given as the time approaches.