

Volunteer Opportunities for Central Blue Ridge Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalist

Some of the projects listed below can be done on your own, while other projects require you to work with a team. In all cases, you need to follow protocols set out by the organization that sponsors the project. Website links are provided in the title for each project listed.

Volunteer projects offered by all the state sponsoring agencies of the VMN program should be recorded on your Better Impact webpage according to the category under which the activity falls. The state agencies are Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Museum of Natural History, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Center for Coastal Resources Management. (Due to our location, it is unlikely that volunteer opportunities will be available in our area with the last agency listed.)

CBR's local partners are at the end of this list. In nearly all cases, hours spent on volunteer projects with one of our local partners may be recorded on your Better Impact webpage. Most volunteer work with one of the partners falls within the category of Stewardship. However, some projects may fall under Citizen Science or Service Education. Our CBR chapter often notifies all members about upcoming projects with our local partners.

Send additions and corrections to brulater@gmail.com

CATEGORY – CHAPTER ADMINISTRATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS AND OTHER WORK

All meetings and work related to administrating the chapter performed by members of the Central Blue Ridge Chapter Board of Directors.

CBR CHAPTER MEETING (2 HRS. CREDIT INCLUDES 1 HR. TRAVEL TIME.)

Log only contact time for Zoom meetings, no travel time.

ACTIVITY - HOST AND ASSIST WITH CBR-SPONSORED ADMIN ACTIVITIES.

Providing refreshments or otherwise assisting with the presentation of Central Blue Ridge chapter meetings and events. Include time spent organizing, hosting, or assisting a CBR-sponsored event such as a Basic Training class. If you perform such duties as an elected officer, record your hours under the activity, "Board of Directors meetings and other work" Check emails for announcements of activities.

CATEGORY – CITIZEN SCIENCE

Collecting data or otherwise assisting scientific studies, research, and other projects.

ACTIVITY – PROJECTS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

If you attend a meeting held as a planning session for a specific citizen science project by an organization, or if you participate in research or planning for such a project, you may record your hours under this heading. Please note that hours spent attending general membership or BOD meetings with other organizations do not qualify you to earn volunteer hours for CBR. The meeting must be specifically for the planning of a citizen science project.

An example of a citizen science project-oriented meeting might be a meeting held by The Nature Conservancy to determine which plants need to be studied because of a new insect pest.

In the description box, type the name of the organization and the intent of the project. Organizations that might plan citizen science projects include, but are not limited to, the American Chestnut Foundation, Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), Central VA Land Conservancy, Nature Camp, Nelson Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) Committee, Quarry Gardens, Rockfish Valley Foundation, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, Thomas Jefferson Soil Water Conservation District, U.S.G. Agencies (e.g. Park Service, Forest Service), VA Native Plant Society, Virginia State Sponsoring Agencies (DCR, DEQ, DGIF, DOF, VCE, VIMSC, VMNH), Wild Virginia, Wintergreen Nature Foundation.

[The Globe Observer](#)

The Globe Observer is a generalized citizen science project that offers a different set of observations that can be made. Cloud cover, mosquito habitats, land cover, trees, and eclipses are all possibilities. This website and app enable you to record the above observations into an open dataset that scientists can use to study these topics.

ACTIVITY - ANIMAL/PLANT INVENTORY & MONITORING

Included are wildlife inventories, censuses, and ongoing monitoring of plant and animal populations conducted by a state-sponsoring agency of the VMN program, a CBR local partner organization, or a national environmental organization authorized by CBR.

Examples of projects sponsored by VMN sponsoring agencies: Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) plant surveys and Rare Quest, Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Wildlife Mapping. If you record hours with a project offered by a VMN sponsoring agency, you must check the appropriate box in the drop-down feature for VMS sponsoring agencies.

Projects with other organizations include monitoring nest boxes on bluebird trails registered with the VA Bluebird Society, North American Butterfly Association annual butterfly count, National Audubon Society Backyard Bird Count and Christmas Bird Count, Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Frog Watch USA, VA Herpetological Society herp counts, organized Bio-blitz surveys, Firefly Atlas sponsored by Xerces Society,

You may include any time associated with compiling and submitting your report.

[City Nature Challenge](#)

This is a 4-day bio blitz (biological inventory or treasure hunt) at the end of April every year in which participants look for animals, plants, and fungi and record the observation in a mobile phone app called iNaturalist. Contact brulater@gmail.com Partner Organization – Nature Conservancy

Personal iNaturalist Inventory Session

Volunteers may commit at least 15 minutes to search out animals, plants, and fungi, photograph them, and record the observation in the iNaturalist smartphone app or at home on the website iNaturalist.org. In this way, you contribute to the largest public bio-database on the planet. Contact brulater@gmail.com

Virginia Herpetological Society

VHS hosts semi-annual herp surveys in various locations in VA where volunteers search for herps. Contact president@virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com

Bumble Bee Watch

Bumble Bee Watch is a collaborative effort to track and conserve North America's bumble bees. You need to be able to take digital photos, ID the species if possible, and email the photos for verification. Visit the website for information.

Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)

Each Christmas season from December 15 to January 5, birders in Virginia count all the birds they see in day-long Christmas Bird Counts within established count circles. There are nearly 60 CBCs in Virginia. The bird census information gathered on these counts is the world's longest-running ornithology database maintained by the National Audubon Society. To find a count circle in your area, visit: [121st Christmas Bird Count](#)

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count takes place every year for four days in February. To participate, you need to submit your bird sightings on a phone app or your desktop computer.

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch

The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) is committed to the scientific study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration. Use the link to contact the local group of birders who staff the annual fall migration observation and see how you can help.

Caterpillars Count!

Caterpillars Count! measures seasonal variation (phenology) and abundance of arthropods like caterpillars, beetles, and spiders found on the foliage of trees and shrubs. Online webinars teach how to conduct surveys and report data using the mobile app and website. Three identical webinars will be offered in April and recordings will be available.

North American Butterfly Count

NABA works to conserve butterfly habitat and sponsors monitoring projects throughout the U.S. 18 butterfly count circles in Virginia take place every July. The count circle in Nelson County is led by Susan McSwain, losthorseshoe3@gmail.com. The count circle in Albemarle is led by Terri Keffert, tkeffert@gmail.com. These

two counts take place on different dates, which allows VMN members to participate in both. Dates are advertised by our chapter in June.

[Frog Watch USA](#)

Frog Watch USA volunteers learn to identify local frog and toad species by their calls during the breeding season and how to report their findings accurately. By mastering these skills, volunteers gain increased experience and control over asking and answering scientific questions which, in turn, augments science literacy, facilitates conservation action and stewardship, and increases knowledge of amphibians. Contact Courtney Harlow-Humphreys courtney.harlow-humphreys@tjswcd.org

[Firefly Atlas](#)

The Firefly Atlas is a collaborative effort to better understand and conserve the diversity of fireflies in North America. The Atlas tracks all species described from the US and Canada. The mid-Atlantic and Southeast are current focus areas.

[Globe at Night](#)

Globe at Night is an international campaign to raise public awareness of the impact of light pollution by inviting citizen scientists to measure & submit their night sky brightness observations. You need a computer or smartphone to follow the six steps outlined on the website. You may contribute one observation per month.

[Litterati](#)

The Litterati movement is dedicated to documenting and removing all forms of litter and creating a database of types and locations of litter. This data can be used to analyze litter problems and address them. Removing litter is not only aesthetically pleasing but also environmentally helpful.

ACTIVITY - STREAM MONITORING & WETLANDS

Covered under this heading are projects on rivers such as the Rockfish, Tye James, and their tributaries, and projects on vernal pools and wetlands. Be sure and include any hours spent organizing volunteers and supplies.

Collection, recording, and submission of data must be conducted using the parameters put forth by the organization sponsoring the project. Hours spent at training workshops that are done specifically for a given stream project should be included as volunteer hours. However, training received for stream monitoring that is not associated with a specific project should be entered under Continuing Education.

[The James River Association](#)

JRA's vision is to achieve a fully healthy James River supporting thriving communities. Whether it's getting your hands dirty with one of our Watershed Restoration projects, acting as a voice for the river through our Advocacy efforts, or helping out with office tasks, there is a job for everyone to play a part in making a cleaner James River.

[The Rivanna Conservation Alliance](#)

The Rivanna Conservation Alliance (RCA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit watershed organization created to provide the community with a set of tools and programs specifically designed to help clean and protect the Rivanna River and its tributaries.

CATEGORY – CONTINUING EDUCATION

All approved Continuing Education Activities should go under this Continuing Education Category.

ACTIVITY - CBR CHAPTER MEETING

Each chapter meeting includes 1 hour of Continuing Education.

ACTIVITY - VMN CONTINUING EDUCATION (UNSCHEDULED GENERAL ACTIVITY)

This activity covers approved continuing education that is not otherwise scheduled and listed on the calendar.

[Quarry Gardens](#) Contact Devin Floyd devin.floyd@gmail.com

[Blue Ridge Prism](#) – various invasive plant videos and in-person events

ACTIVITY - VMN LIVE AND RECORDED WEBINARS

Use the following link to see a list of recorded and upcoming live webinars.

[Continuing Education Webinar Series - Virginia Master Naturalists](#)

CATEGORY – EDUCATION OUTREACH (SERVICE EDUCATION)

Activities to educate others about the natural world.

ACTIVITY – EVENT STAFFING AND PREPARATION

Included is any time spent staffing an educational table or display about nature or the environment. This could be at an Earth Day event, a VMN table at a farmer's market, a display at a local fair, etc. Hours spent putting together a display may be counted.

[Old Wintergreen Day](#) – Staff the VMN Information Table. Contact Linda Hughes lindahughes711@gmail.com

[Scottsville Center for Arts & the Natural Environment \(SCAN\)](#) Annual pollinator festival in June
SCAN has 13 acres in the town of Scottsville (less than 15 miles from Nelson Co) and is making it trail- and public-ready. Contact Getcurious@svilleartsandnature.org

[The James River Association](#) See the description above.

ACTIVITY – PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS (LECTURES, PUBLICATIONS, MEDIA)

This activity includes lectures that you present at meetings, school classrooms, and other venues. Hours spent preparing for the presentation, on research, and setting up the presentation may be counted. Also included in this heading is work done preparing educational newsletters, posters, and other media for the public. Topics

and efforts at educating the public must be related to the VMN mission of helping Virginia conserve and manage natural resources and public lands.

[The James River Association](#) See the description above.

ACTIVITY – FLORA OF VIRGINIA AMBASSADORS

The purpose of this activity is to engage VMN volunteers in helping to increase appreciation and understanding of Virginia’s plant species and communities by leading educational programs for the public using the Flora app. The Flora of Virginia and the Flora App are the definitive botanical catalog and reference manual for the state’s native, naturalized, and invasive plants. Contact Jennifer Norwood, flora@floraofvirginia.org

ACTIVITY - MUSEUM DOCENT

This activity includes staffing museum exhibits and assisting in the preparation of exhibits for display. Any training that you participate in to prepare for this activity can be logged here as volunteer hours or could be logged as Continuing Education hours.

Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Museum Contact contact@rockfishvalley.org

ACTIVITY – STAFF INFORMATION TABLE AT NELSON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

Volunteer your time staffing an information table at the Nelson County Farmers Market on a Saturday morning from May through October. With at least one other volunteer explain what Virginia Master Naturalists do, field any questions you can answer, and arrange for follow-up with other VMNs for questions you can't answer.

Nelson County Farmers Market Contact Linda Hughes linda.hughes711@gmail.com

ACTIVITY - TRAIL DOCENT OR GUIDE

Hours spent serving as a nature guide on trails for organizations such as TWNF, RVF, DGIF, and BRP qualify for volunteer hours under this heading. Hours spent researching and preparing materials for the hike may be counted. If you assist on a hike by serving in an official capacity as an aide to the trail leader, you may count your hours. However, going on a hike merely as a participant does not count.

[Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Museum](#) Contact contact@rockfishvalley.org

[The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen](#) TNFW fosters an understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Central Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia through conservation, research, and education. Among the volunteer opportunities with TNFW are work at the native plant nursery, leading trail walks, and assisting with educational programs. Contact Kathie Driscoll youth@tnfw.org

[Quarry Gardens](#) Contact Devin Floyd devin.floyd@gmail.com

CATEGORY – STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

Work with our sponsoring agencies, partner organizations, and other groups to care for natural areas.

ACTIVITY - AMERICAN CHESTNUT RESTORATION

A variety of programs operated by TNC, ACF, and DOF fall under this heading. On-going projects in Nelson are at Fortune's Cove (TNC ACF) and Lesesne (DOF). For work done at Lesesne, be sure to check the Virginia Department of Forestry in the drop-down box for VMN sponsoring agencies. ACF conducts the chestnut transect project along the Blue Ridge, and volunteers also serve at several ACF locations around the state. Work includes everything from weed removal, tree planting, mowing of orchards, tree inventory, program planning, to pollinating and processing seeds. Training received that is directly related to your participation in one of these projects should be included as volunteer hours for the project. (Do not double enter these hours under Advanced Training.)

[The American Chestnut Foundation](#) The mission of the Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation is to restore the American chestnut tree to Virginia's woodlands to benefit our environment, our wildlife, and our society. The local office is in the Rockfish Valley Community Center in Nelson, and they notify the CBR chapter about upcoming work projects in the area.

ACTIVITY - LITTER PICK-UP

This heading includes time spent helping organizations such as The Nature Conservancy organize and implement litter clean-ups. Clean-ups must be conducted on land or water open to the public. This includes privately-owned nature parks that are open to the public. Participation in litter clean-ups under the VDOT Adopt-a-Highway program is also included.

[James River Association](#) Contact person: Joey (Joseph) Shelton: jshelton@jamesriverassociation.org

[Adopt-a-Highway](#) Roadside litter, especially food and food wrappers are a key cause of vehicle strike for raptors attracted to rodents drawn by food smells.

ACTIVITY - STREAM RESTORATION

Activities to restore and/or protect streams, rivers, and water resources are included under this heading. Examples include planting stream buffers and participating in DEQ workshops on implementation plans to improve water quality in local rivers.

[Nature Conservancy](#) – ask about Rivanna River Resilience Partnership

ACTIVITY - TRAIL/NATURAL AREA MAINTENANCE

This heading covers maintenance and monitoring of trails and natural areas that are projects with one of the following:

VMN sponsoring agencies such as the VA Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) or Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR);

Local chapter partners such as Rockfish Valley Foundation; in natural areas that are maintained for the public such as Sturt Nature Preserve and Quarry Gardens.

CBR-approved organizations such as the VA Bluebird Society.

Trails that are part of the Thomas Jefferson loop of DWR Bird & Wildlife trail system can be found here: [Thomas Jefferson | Virginia DWR](#) Trails that are part of the James River DWR Bird & Wildlife trail system can be found here: [James River | Virginia DWR](#)

If you record hours on a trail project offered by DWR or other VMN sponsoring agency, you must check the appropriate box in the drop-down feature for VMS sponsoring agencies.

To be eligible for volunteer credit, bluebird trails must be registered with the local coordinator for the VA Bluebird Society: [Virginia Bluebird Society](#) You may include time spent building, installing, and repairing next boxes and any time spent submitting your annual report to the local coordinator.

[Nature Conservancy](#) – Fortune’s Cove Preserve, and other locations

[The Nature Camp](#) - Located in Vesuvius, Nature Camp provides educational opportunities and recruits people who can teach subjects. There are also stewardship opportunities on the campus, such as trail maintenance.

[Quarry Gardens](#) Contact Emma Stephens centerforurbanhabitats@gmail.com

[Wintergreen and Stoney Creek](#) – Josh Palumbo forestmanage@tnfw.org

[Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Museum](#) Contact contact@rockfishvalley.org

ACTIVITY - INVASIVES REMOVAL

Activities included are removal of invasive species such as Garlic Mustard and Ailanthus on public land, and at nature preserves that are privately owned but open to the public, such as Quarry Gardens and Boxerwood Nature Garden. All PRISM-sponsored projects are included.

[Blue Ridge PRISM Inc](#) Blue Ridge PRISM reduces the impact of invasive plants on the ecosystems of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains and surrounding areas through regional and statewide advocacy, landowner support, implementing control measures, and public education. PRISM offers webinars, workshops, pamphlets, and online information about invasive species, as well as opportunities to assist in projects to remove invasive species.

ACTIVITY – NATIVE PLANT PROPAGATION

This activity includes programs sponsored by organizations such as TWNF and the VA Native Plant Society that further the knowledge and use of native plants. Hours spent planting, propagating, and caring for plants may be counted, along with time spent assisting the success of project. Plant sale events may be counted only when the sale is part of a larger public education program. Training that is provided to volunteers so that they may properly assist in the project should be counted under this heading as volunteer hours. Do not double count the hours under Advanced Training.

[The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen](#) Kathie Driscoll youth@tnfw.org

ACTIVITY – PROJECT-ORIENTED WORK W/ OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

If you attend a meeting held as a planning session for a specific stewardship project by an organization, you may count your hours under this heading. (Please note that hours spent attending general membership or BOD meetings with other organizations do not qualify you to earn volunteer hours for CBR.) If you assist in the logistics for a stewardship program or its follow-up, you may also use this category.

An example of a stewardship project-oriented meeting might be a meeting held by DOF to identify privately-owned forests where logging can be carried out to restore oaks as a predominant species. An example of logistics might be addressing envelopes for a stewardship effort. In all cases, type the name of the project and the organization.

Organizations that sponsor stewardship activities include American Chestnut Foundation, Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, Central VA Land Conservancy, Keep Nelson Beautiful, Nature Camp of VA at Vesuvius, Nelson Ag/Forestry Committee, Rivanna Conservation Alliance, Rockfish Valley Foundation, Rockfish Wildlife Sanctuary, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen, Thomas Jefferson Soil & Water Conservation District, U.S.G. Agencies (e.g. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service), VA Native Plant Society, VMN State Sponsoring Agencies (DCR, DEQ, DOF, DWR, VCE, VIMS-CCRM, VMNH), Wild Virginia, Wildlife Center of VA)

If you do not see an organization on the list or if you have questions about an organization or a project, contact the project, membership, or training chair.

[James River Association](#) JRA helps communities benefit from the James River by increasing river access, supporting river-related events, and implementing volunteer projects through Environmental Education and Community Conservation programs. Plenty of volunteer opportunities are available!

[Central Virginia Land Conservancy](#) - This all-volunteer organization hosts educational workshops about land use and conservation and provides information to landowners on how to access programs to help with projects such as protection of streambanks. Volunteers also accompany qualified inspectors to monitor land under conservation easements to ensure environmental goals are being met. For more information, contact Wendy Kendrick at fancyhill.wk@aol.com

[Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District](#) The TJSWCD is one of the few districts in VA to hold easements to protect small properties with important water resources. The Water Resources Protection Foundation is a subsidiary of the TJSWCD governed by its own Board of Directors who are appointed by the governing bodies of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa and Nelson Counties, the City of Charlottesville and by the TJSWCD Board of Directors. Board positions rotate on a regular basis. If you are interested in serving on the board, contact Courtney Harlow-Humphreys: courtney.harlow-humphreys@tjswcd.org

[Scottsville Center for Arts & the Natural Environment \(SCAN\)](#) Making and Maintaining Trails
SCAN has 13 acres in the town of Scottsville (less than 15 miles from Nelson Co) and is in the process of making it trail- and public-ready. Contact Getcurious@svilleartsandnature.org

[Elisabeth A Nolting Charitable Foundation \(EANCF\) Bracketts Farm](#) is a 501(c)3 non-profit entity that maintains and makes available to the public at no cost a historic farm and nature destination. The Bracketts Farm Heritage Trail is a 1.8 loop trail listed in the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail network. Green Springs National Historic District – Bracketts Farm | Virginia Sponsoring Agency: Department of Wildlife Resources.

Contact EANCF board member Michael Lachance, (434) 906-6440, lachance22971@gmail.com or contact@bracketts.org

[Wild Virginia](#) The Virginia Non-Profit Dedicated to Protecting Our Wild Lands, Wild Virginia sponsors events and outings to educate the public about natural resources. For information on ways to assist in the programs, contact Bette Dzamba at BetteDaveYstone@gmail.com

[The Nature Conservancy](#) TNC has offices in all 50 states and works in 70 countries, but for our purposes, CBR members can volunteer with projects sponsored by the Virginia office. Nearly all their projects that take place in central Virginia are advertised by our chapter.

[The Quarry Gardens](#) – A landscape carved by industry and renewed by the power of nature to regenerate. Quarry Gardens provides education about native plants and the soapstone industry in Schuyler. Volunteer opportunities at Quarry Gardens include workdays (planting, weeding, etc.) and assisting with educational tours. The owners of Quarry Gardens are members of the CBR chapter, and they send volunteer opportunities to us as they arise.

[Sturt Park](#), owned by Nelson County is an eBird hotspot. Surveys of animal and plant species have been started, but more work is needed. The bird survey has not been active since 2020, so if you are a birder, you can add to the list of birds observed there. Workdays and help with educational programs will be available in the future. For more information, contact Susan McSwain losthorseshoe3@gmail.com.

ACTIVITY – VIRGINIA BIRD AND WILDLIFE TRAIL SITE VISITS (DWR)

The purpose of this project is to improve the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail (VBWT) by:

- regularly adding bird and wildlife observations to eBird and iNaturalist for each site
- reviewing VBWT loop pages to ensure they are relevant to the area
- documenting site accessibility
- collecting other site information on an as-needed basis.

Be sure to contact your chapter's liaison for this activity to coordinate your efforts. Contact Helen Kimball at (540) 456-1146 or email hkhelenkimble@gmail.com if you need additional assistance.

ACTIVITY - WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Assistance with organizations that rehabilitate wild animals. Currently, the two qualifying organizations are the [Rockfish Wildlife Sanctuary in Schuyler](#), and the [Wildlife Center of VA in Waynesboro](#). Both provide training for volunteers who carry out specific functions such as transport of injured animals. Volunteers with carpentry skills are also needed to build and maintain outdoor recovery structures.