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## President’s Message

*By Susan Sims*

Fall is here and our chapter is showing no signs of slowing down. We were excited to host our annual meeting in mid-November highlighting the many achievements of chapter volunteers. In 2019, volunteers have contributed 4,000+ hours to the management and conservation of Virginia’s natural resources. Our time is spread across the 4 pillars: Stewardship, Education/Outreach, Citizen Science and Administration, with the most hours being contributed in the Citizen Science and Education arenas through projects that include Audubon at Home, Bat Monitoring, Bluebird Monitoring, Butterfly Counts and more. We can’t wait to see what our final numbers will be, so please make an effort to log your hours if you haven’t already.

An additional highlight for this year was the great success of the Summer Picnic in August. Half of the active chapter members attended and brought lots of delicious food to share. The raffle raised enough funds that we can offer a scholarship to a student next year, helping to expand our community reach, and commitment to environmental education. Thank you to everyone who attended and donated raffle prizes - you are the spirit that makes the chapter a fun place to volunteer!

We also welcomed our new Chapter Advisor, Jordan Green, this season. Jordan is a bear biologist originally from Roanoke, VA, but has lived across the country going where the bears take him. We’re excited to have him join the team and look forward to developing new educational programs with his guidance and expertise. If you see him, say “Hi!”

As always, if you have something to share about a project you’re working on, please let us know. We want to recognize all the great work being done in our community by our talented volunteers. Please stay tuned for new upcoming events and save the date for the Holiday Potluck and Open House on

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Let’s Jingle All the Way!**  
**VMN Holiday Potluck and Open House**  
**Saturday, December 14**  
**4:30 – 8:30 pm**

**Brookcliffe Farm**  
**21301 Foxcroft Rd.**  
**Middleburg, VA**

**Please bring a dish to share**

Saturday, December 14 - Special thanks to Carol Beckman and Jim Torrens for opening their home to us for the event! Jingle all the way...

## Banshee Reeks Hours

Banshee Reeks added more open days to the schedule. They are now open on the weekend and Tuesday through Thursday during the week and the visitors center will be staffed on all 5 days from one hour after the preserve opens until one hour before it closes. Preserve hours will be seasonal.



## Donate to VMN Banshee Reeks

*Barbara Erlandson*

Is Amazon one of your go-to-sources for all things under the sun?? It certainly is mine! There is a way to continue to shop on Amazon and they will donate .05% to VMN Banshee Reeks. Simply go to their site by using the following URL: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) – it looks and works the same as the Amazon that you are familiar with. Simply designate VMN Banshee Reeks as the recipient of the donation and we will collect the donation.

## VMN'ers Receive Behind-The-Scene Tour of the Museum of Natural History's Entomological Division.

*Paul Kreingold*

On October 20<sup>th</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup>, about twenty VMN'ers and guests enjoyed a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History's entomological division. The tour, led by Dr. David Adamski and Dana DeRoche, gave us a peek at the ninety percent of the Museum not open to the public which houses immense collections and laboratories. Dr. Adamski, popularly known as "Moth-Man", is a retired entomologist

and the world's leading expert on micro-moths. Dana DeRoche is a curator of the institutions' huge spider collection and is happy to be called "The Spider Lady."



A view of only a small part of the insect collection. There are row and rows of cabinets containing tens of thousands of specimens on multiple floors in the museum.



Moth Man, Dr. David Adamski displays Morphini butterflies. The blue color is not a pigment but a structural color.



Spider Lady, Dana DeRoche, shows off some of her favorite specimens.

## Bles Park “Improvements”

*Bryan Henson*

Bles Park is an amazing natural area and park in eastern Loudoun county. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy typically holds a dragonfly walk during the summer because of the fantastic variety of Odonata to be found in the fields, marsh, pond, mature forest and river habitat. Individual and group bird walks have identified more than 175 species of birds. In the last year, several rare birds have been found at the park, including Sora, Common Gallinule, American Bitterns, Marsh Wren, and Mourning Warbler.

Loudoun County has developed a plan to change the park. Some details of the plan can be found online at

<https://www.loudoun.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Bles-Park-22> . The plan impacts many of the natural areas of the park. One change would be to put a road along the edge of the marshy wetlands. Another would fragment the wetlands and encourage visitors and visibility into the most hidden/protective areas of the marsh. Yet another change would replace shrubs/trees near the pond with a pavilion and lawn. Also in the plan, is additional parking that will mostly be situated on a small marshy area.

There currently is no place to provide feedback on this plan besides by emailing your county supervisor or contacting [prcs@loudoun.gov](mailto:prcs@loudoun.gov) .



A Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) at Bles Park

## Leading Nature Walks

*Bryan Henson*

Have you ever thought about leading a nature walk? Are you afraid that you aren't qualified enough? Not sure how it would go?

To be qualified to lead a walk, you just need to have some information/knowledge/enthusiasm to share. This can be identification of plants, birds, insects, landscape features, or any other natural element. There is really nothing to fear about not being knowledgeable enough. A wise leader once explained to me that you typically end up with two different groups that come on walks that interest them: those that know nothing about a topic and are excited to learn anything and those that already know a good bit about a subject and can help you educate the others and will contribute to the walk.

Further, it is perfectly okay on a walk to say “I don't know” as long as you walk the participants through the challenge using field guides or help them understand what resources are available to answer their questions. You'll find that most novice participants are very happy if you can just teach them one or two things about the subject. Finding one or two beautiful subjects (trees, dragonflies, butterflies, etc) can provide a lasting positive memory.



Eastern Ratsnake (*Pantherophis alleghaniensis*) at IWLA during a nature walk

If you still uncomfortable, there are interpretation classes and even educational walks on how to give nature walks.

The need for nature walk leaders is quite high; organizations such as Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Willowsford Conservancy and many of the local communities are all looking for leaders on topics of all kinds. If you'd like to get your feet wet trying your hand at leading a walk, then your best bet is to be a co-leader. On most walks, you want to have two or more leaders in case of emergency and to help keep the leader to participant role lower. So, you can be teamed up with an experienced leader and just assist; this can be a great way to learn even more information to share on future walks.

If you are interested in leading walks or co-leading walks, please reach out and I'll help you get started.

## COMMITTEE CORNER

### Historian

If you have good photos, please send them to the chapter at [ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com](mailto:ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com) or post them on our [Facebook](#) page.

### Communications/Newsletter Committee

*Chair: Bryan Henson*

We're always looking for article contributions to the website, so remember that writing and research time count as VMN Volunteer Hours!

### Outreach Committee

*Chair: Brian Meyerriecks*

A big thank you to all of you who contributed to our outreach events, they are definitely increasing our exposure and recruitment. We increased our presence at numerous community events which directly contributed to new members. Our outreach season is spring through fall. And next year we are planning to further increase our event participation. So stay tuned for next season's schedule. I will send it out in early spring so you can pick the events you want to volunteer at. [Brian@meyerriecks.com](mailto:Brian@meyerriecks.com)

### Host Committee

The Host Committee is being reinvigorated by several new folks helping in planning upcoming events. If you would like to help, please contact [ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com](mailto:ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com).

### Membership Committee

*Chair: Barbara Erlandson*

As members, please reach out to your friends, family and neighbors and talk about the important work we do. One of the reasons new members give for joining the organization is to find like-minded friends. Let's find those new friends.

### Continuing Education Committee

*Chair: Open*

If you have a class that you would like to offer for the chapter, or you see an event that you think would be a CE opportunity, or there is a topic on which you would like the chapter to present a class, email the chapter ( [ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com](mailto:ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com) ).

### About Banshee Reeks VMN

The Banshee Reeks chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist program is a volunteer corps focused on education, outreach, conservation, and management of the natural resources in Virginia. The chapter was founded in 2006 and focuses on Loudoun

County and hosts many events at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. We are always looking for new members and like-minded organizations.

Visit our website at <http://www.vmnbansheereeks.org/> or email us at [vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com](mailto:vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com).  
And join our Facebook group:  
[Virginia Master Naturalist-Banshee Reeks Chapter](#)