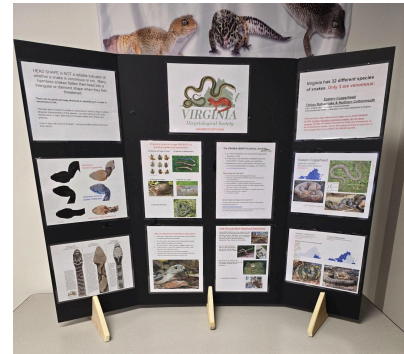


## 2024 Virginia Herpetological Society Education Committee Annual Report (Report covers October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024)



Report by Education Committee Chair Caroline Seitz  
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The Virginia Herpetological Society's (VHS) mission is to advance the conservation, education, and research of Virginia's native herpetofauna. Each year, the VHS performs a variety of education programs throughout Virginia and virtually online. No fees are charged for these programs and all VHS educators are volunteers. The VHS is a 501c3 non-profit organization and donations to support the VHS can be made at [Donate - Virginia Herpetological Society](#)

Number of education programs performed: 45  
Estimated number of people reached: 8335

Education Committee Member Highlights (there are currently 23 Education Committee Members):

Erin Anthony performed 3 events for 161 people

1. Herpetology lecture for students at Post Oak Middle School in Spotsylvania
2. Taught a full day of herpetology for a group of 6-10 year olds at a summer camp in James City County
3. 1.5 hrs 4 H Camp in Mineral VA. 14 children in grades 3-5.

Travis Anthony performed 8 events for approximately 340 people

1. A tabling with Larry Mendoza at Reynolds Community College STEM Fair, Richmond VA
2. Presented a herp talk for the Rivanna Master Naturalist Class using the frog call slideshow and a modified "An Introduction to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia - Northern Region."
3. Presented a general program on herpetology to about 15 middle school students at Swift Creek Middle School for their wildlife club. It was well received, the kids asked lots of great questions and had great participation.
4. Tabling at Richmond Pollinator Festival
5. Herp talk with slideshow and table display at Herndon Fortnightly Library
6. Herp hike at Dorey Park with Hike it Baby Richmond group

7. Herp talk at Hampton University summer bridge program for high school students
8. Frogs & Toads of Central Virginia slideshow talk at My Three Chambered Heart in Mineral VA

Marshall Boyd staffed a table display for 2 days and reached approximately 2200 people at the Virginia Living Museum's Reptile and Amphibian Weekend.

Barry Bushcow performed 6 events for approximately 440 people

1. Presented a herp talk for a St. James Episcopal School's after school class
2. Assisted Ana Sparks at a Boy Scout Herp Badge event in Prince William Co
3. Assisted Caroline Seitz at Lake Frederick Conservation Club with a "Amphib & Reptiles of NOVA" slideshow
4. Assisted Caroline Seitz with an educational snake walk at Ivy Creek Foundation Natural Area
5. Staffed a table display at the Virginia Black Bear Festival in Stanardsville

Mike Clifford performed 2 events for approximately 240 people:

1. May 4, 2024 Pocahontas VMN Herpetology Training and Herp Search

Mike Clifford, Kelly Geer, and Ana Sparks (and family) conducted the VMN event with about 30 trainees and staff participating. "The hour-long indoor session included a slide presentation and hands-on intro to herps using some of Ana's live specimens. Following that, we formed three groups for the 2-hour herp search. A cold front had put a damper on the herp activity, but the groups still had some success.

Among the species encountered were two Rough Earthsnakes, a Eastern Wormsnake, a Dekay's Brownsnake, five Little Brown Skinks, American Toads, Eastern Cricket Frogs, and a Red Eft."

2. "The outside VHS tabling exhibit at the September 14th **Family and Farm Day 2024** was a big success. This annual event was held at the Southern Piedmont Research Station near Blackstone. We had about 200 visitors to our table, mostly in family groups. We were situated between the Miniature Horses and the Alpacas stations, not far from the Angus Cattle ! Helping me were L.K. Mondrey and Mackenzie Gunn of Va Cooperative Extension, who provided live captive-bred snakes at our station (two corn snakes, a king snake, and a ball python). These very docile live snakes were the big attraction for the younger crowd, many of whom had never held or even touched a snake before. Our table exhibit focused on snakes of Virginia, and featured info and visuals that help with the identification of our native species. Our hand-out briefly described the Va Herpetological Society, our website, and our identification service. Also included was the one-page article "Safety Precautions in Copperhead Country":

Matt Close performed 5 events for approximately 3650 people

1. Presented a program on the reptiles and amphibians of Roanoke City and County to the Roanoke City & County Master Gardeners Club. They donated \$75 to the VHS.
2. Tabled at the McHarg Elementary One School, One Book Adventure Night on March 28th and had a display that featured information about local and Virginia frog species, facts about frog anatomy and development, and general Herpetology. A community member provided their Grey Tree Frog habitat to display and tree frog habitat was discussed. Overall there were 132 McHarg students (pre-K through 3rd grade) and 500 people total (including students, their families, staff and guests).
3. 2 Day event: Staffed a table at the Virginia Museum of Natural History's Reptile Festival
4. Zoom Turtle slideshow program for the Friends of Dyke Marsh who will make a \$250 donation to VHS

Kelly Geer performed 3 events for 47 people

1. Assisted Caroline Seitz, Ana Sparks, and Yohn Sutton with an informal survey of Widewater State Park in Stafford.
2. Assisted Mike Clifford and Ana Sparks with a herp talk and walk for the Virginia Master Naturalists at Pocahontas State Park.
3. Led a herp hike at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC for a group of Eco-Women DC with Caroline Seitz.

Mark Khosravi performed 1 event for approximately 200 people

1. Staffed a table with Caroline Seitz at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fairfax's Earth Day Festival.

Sophie Larson performed one event for approximately 260 people

1. Staffed a table at Herndon's Naturefest: "we had about 260 people come by. Had some nice conversations and reached out to families. Made a friend with a guy who did nature camps at the park we were at. and he walked over to a nearby set of rocks and found a Dekay's brown snake. We showed him to a couple of people and then put him back. People liked the copperhead quiz and information. and I think we gave away all the 3d printed frogs."

Larry Mendoza performed 1 event for approximately 150 people

1. A tabling with Travis Anthony at Reynolds Community College STEM Fair, Richmond VA

Caroline Seitz performed 8 events for approximately 420 people

1. Presented a new VHS slideshow "An Introduction to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia - Northern Region" to the Lake Frederick Conservation Club in Frederick County.
2. Conducted a Zoom interview with a high school student about careers in herpetology.
3. Assisted Ana Sparks, Kelly Geer, and Yohn Sutton with an informal survey of a section of Widewater State Park in Stafford.
4. Led an educational snake walk at Ivy Creek Foundation Natural Area in Charlottesville.
5. Presented another new VHS slideshow "An Introduction to the Snakes of Virginia - Central Region" at Ivy Creek Foundation Natural Area.
6. Staffed a table with Mark Khosravi at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fairfax's Earth Day Festival.
7. Assisted Ana Sparks with staffing a table at Mason Neck State Park's Eagle Festival.
8. Led a herp hike at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC for a group of Eco-Women DC with Kelly Geer.

Ana Sparks performed 4 events for approximately 110 people

1. Presented a Boy Scout Badge herp program in Prince William County.
2. Assisted Caroline Seitz, Kelly Geer, and Yohn Sutton with an informal survey of a section of Widewater State Park in Stafford.
3. Assisted Mike Clifford and Kelly Geer with a herp talk and walk for the Virginia Master Naturalists at Pocahontas State Park.
4. Staffed a table at Mason Neck State Park's Eagle Festival.
5. On July 8,9,10, taught Amphibians and Reptiles to Junior Rangers at Widewater State Park for 3 days, 1 hour and half each day. 12 Junior rangers.
6. Taught the Herpetology section for Merrimac Farm Master Naturalists chapter. Widewater Visitor Center served as our meeting place, and we had 27 master naturalists, plus a few more:) from my colleagues.

- On September 20th, volunteered to teach about amphibians and reptiles at Saunders Middle School, 7th grade Life Science , representing VHS. Five adults and 146 students were in my classes. ( they want at least two follow ups- dates to be determined)

Amanda Stinnet performed 1 table display for approximately 300 people at the Waynesboro Riverfest.

Lucien Wampler performed 1 event for 20 people: A Table Display at WEMCA Annual Spring Fling, Henrico

Susan Watson, representing both DWR and VHS, performed 5 events for approximately 109 people.

- Presented Herpetology to Riverine Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN), in Henrico County, on January 25.
4. Presented and trained VMN volunteers on vernal pool habitat and species identification and monitoring during three different sessions, in Charles City County, on March 9, 16, and 17.
5. Presented Herpetology to Historic Southside Chapter of VMN, in Isle of Wight County, on April 4.
6. Worked a DWR table and display (including general herpetological and VHS information) at the Crater Community Hospice Thrift Shop Open House, in Petersburg, on May 25.

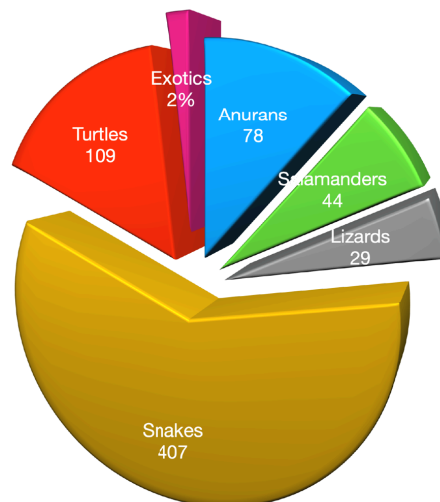
### VHS Media Mentions:

- A news article written about the VHS Fall Meeting in the Martinsville Bulletin "Society's meeting puts spotlight on natural history museum's herpetology department" on Nov 11, 2023 [https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/local/herpetology-vmnh-vhs-annual-meeting/article\\_1f332a44-74ee-11ee-8e4e-ffb3df7d2db.html](https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/local/herpetology-vmnh-vhs-annual-meeting/article_1f332a44-74ee-11ee-8e4e-ffb3df7d2db.html)
- Caroline Seitz was interviewed by Northern Virginia Magazine an article published in the June 2024 issue [Virginia's Turtles in Peril Due to Poaching \(northernvirginiamag.com\)](https://www.northernvirginiamag.com/article/virginias-turtles-in-peril-due-to-poaching)
- Caroline Seitz was interviewed by an author writing a childrens' book featuring a black racer.
- Caroline Seitz was interviewed by an author writing a novel whose protagonist is a female herpetologist.

## 2024 Email Identification Report

From 1 January 2024 to 31 October 2024, the ID team responded to 712 emails requesting information and/or animal identifications. During this period, we identified 667 native animals, consisting of 78 anurans, 44 salamanders, 29 lizards, 407 snakes, 109 turtles, and 12 exotics.

Special thanks to Mike Clifford, who, despite his retirement from the VHS, remains an invaluable asset to the identification team.



## Education Committee Goals Accomplished :

1. Created 3 new slideshows: "An Introduction to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Virginia - Northern Region"; "An Introduction to the Snakes of Virginia - Central Region"; and with the help of John White and Matt Close: "An Introduction to the Turtles of Virginia - Northern Region"
2. John White created a new slideshow "Northern Virginia Frog Calls"
3. John White created 3 new VHS coloring pages: copperhead, rat snake, barking treefrog, all of which are available on the VHS website and 2 of which have been printed and handed out at education events.
4. John White printed MANY native herp 3D models (including copperheads, rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, and so many more) and shipped them out to various VHS members for painting
5. VHS purchased 6 new duffle bags, various herp toy models, 6 plush kingsnake toys and paid for printing of 600 copies of copperhead coloring pages and 600 copies of rat snake coloring pages.
6. I purchased 6 tri-fold foam boards, glue, double sided tape, laminating pouches, clear sleeve pages, 6 three ring binders, 3 business card holders, and donated a few tablecloths.
7. Created 6 VHS tri fold foam board displays; 6 snake quiz books using the two snake quizzes from the VHS website; created multiple interpretive signs to go with the various herp toy models.
8. Put together 4 complete "to go" VHS table display kits in duffle bags and distributed them among various education committee members. Have 2 more kits that are almost complete.
9. Received a VHS credit card.
10. Added one new volunteer, Shefali Mehta, to the committee.
11. Ordered 3 folding wagon carts, 4 new clingy tablecloths, 4 logo table runners, plus more general tabling supplies
12. Sent out a survey form to all our education committee members and executive committee members for feedback on improving the education committee.

## Goals Moving Forward:

1. Establish guidelines and training for VHS education programs and tablings and criteria for joining the education committee.
2. Establish description of duties and responsibilities of the Education Chair.
3. As 3D herp models are completed, order protective display cases and stands
4. As 3D herp models are completed, create interpretive signs for each
5. Distribute completed herp models among the kits
6. Order a laminating machine
7. Create more slideshows
8. Plan to have 1-2 virtual meeting per year with Education team
9. Offer a list of education programs that folks can choose from on the VHS website