



A Note from the Editor....



Happy Spring!

If you're anything like me, the recent warmer temperatures have been very welcome, and a harbinger of herps to come. On a weekend hike recently I was treated to only a toad (probably Fowler's but couldn't catch it to be sure) and we saw the tail of some kind of water snake as it fled into the rip rap at the shores of the Potomac River. It was only about 60 F that day, so seeing any snake at all was exciting!

Of course, with the warmer weather and herps emerging, our VHS email box for snake identification starts getting busier. It is clear that most people do NOT have any clue about the herpetofauna in their own areas! If you can, do your part to educate your area. Post links to our VHS website on places like NextDoor, Craigslist, and your social media accounts. Remind people to be kind to our scaly friends, and offer to help out neighbors when they have a critter in their yard that they would rather not be there. (If you are able to do that, of course.)

The more we educate the public, the less fear they will have. It's really that simple. I've been a professional science educator since 1993, and it's always my goal to help anyone and everyone learn

just a LITTLE BIT MORE than what they already knew. Just one encounter with a knowledgeable person can really open the door for folks to become interested and informed.

The picture above was from someone in Springfield that was concerned about their cat. I assured them that the snake had more to fear that the ginger kitty. LOL

Don't forget - you can always send me items you think would be food for this newsletter. Send them to me at

newsletter@vaherpsociety.com

Sincerely,

Bonnie Keller
Newsletter Editor

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2019 Spring Meeting and Survey

Location: [Sky Meadows State Park, Fauquier County](#)

When:

- Friday, May 17th - Business Meeting and Survey Coordination (6:30 pm - 9:00 pm)
- Saturday, May 18th - Main Survey (8:00 am - 3:00 pm), Night Survey (8:00 pm - 9:30 pm)
- Sunday, May 19th - Secondary Survey, **VHS Members only** (8:00 am to 12:00 pm)

Registration is required, so make sure you sign up for the survey [here](#).

The Saturday survey is open to the public. The Sunday survey is for VHS members only.

Become a member:

<http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/vhs-membership/membership.html>

*Participation in all events is not required. Come and go as needed.

A confirmation email will be sent to you within a week of the survey. We will provide details on the meeting location in the confirmation email.

We look forward to seeing you!

- [List of documented herps for Fauquier County](#)

Any questions email Matt Neff:

president@vaherpsociety.com



2019 Surveys

Virginia Herpetological Society - Conservation Committee

Amelia Wildlife Management Area

VHS MEMBERS ONLY Sunday April 28 and Sunday May 5, 2019

The VHS Conservation Committee is planning to survey [Amelia Wildlife Management Area \(AWMA\)](#) on Sunday April 28 and Sunday May 5 from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM (Sunday dates are necessary to avoid potential safety conflicts with the spring turkey hunting season). AWMA is located on the Appomattox River in the community of Genito in Amelia County about 25 miles southwest of Richmond. AWMA contains more than 2200 acres of mixed hardwood and pine forest, extensive wetlands and open fields. AWMA has not previously been surveyed by VHS. It is of interest to the Conservative Committee as 9 amphibian and reptile species with VDGIF tiered conservation status have been documented for Amelia County, several of which might be present in AWMA.

These surveys are VHS members-only events, with each member entitled to invite one additional guest participant. Participants can attend on either or both survey dates. If you plan to attend please provide your (and your guest) contact details on the registration form that follows for the date(s) you plan to attend.

For the surveys, please come prepared for a harsh woodland and wetland environment. Suitable boots (waterproof if possible), insect and tick repellent, lunch or snacks and plenty of water are strongly recommended.

Directions: Take State Route 13 and turn south on Route 609. Turn left on 616/609 and follow 616 until Rte 652/Kennons Lane. Turn left and follow Rte 652 for about 2 miles to the entrance of AWMA and park there.

Registration is required, so make sure you sign up for the surveys: [Sunday April 28th](#) and/or [Sunday May 5th](#)

Become a VHS member: <http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/vhs-membership/membership.html>

- [List of documented herps for Amelia County](#)

Bioblitz 2019 - Richmond National Battlefield Park

Saturday, June 8th from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Join [Richmond National Battlefield Park](#) in our second Bioblitz EVER at Gaines Mill! A Bioblitz is an all-day event of biological surveying to record all living species within a designated area. We will be surveying birds, mammals, amphibians/reptiles, bugs, plants, and fish. Each participant will join a team led by a local expert and spend a few hours in the park looking for living species.

Registration is required

<https://www.handsonva.org/opportunity/a0C1J00000HgxfZUAR?layoutViewMode=tablet>

- [List of documented herps for Hanover County.](#)

2019 14th Annual HerpBlitz Announcement

Location: Featherfin Wildlife Management Area (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma/featherfin/>)

When:

- Saturday, June 15th - Main Survey (8:00 am - 3:00 pm)
- Sunday, June 16th - Secondary Survey (8:00 am to 12:00 pm)

Registration is required, please email Jason Gibson (froman31@mail.com) to register.

A confirmation email will be sent to you within a week of the survey. We will provide details on the meeting location in the confirmation email.

For the surveys, please come prepared for a harsh woodland and wetland environment. Suitable boots (waterproof if possible), insect and tick repellent, lunch or snacks and plenty of water are strongly recommended.

Holliday Lake State Park (http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/holliday-lake#general_information) is the place where many people attending the survey will be camping.

We look forward to seeing you!

- [List of documented herps for Appomattox County](#)
- [List of documented herps for Buckingham County](#)
- [List of documented herps for Prince Edward County](#)

Sad update: Two headed snake sensation!

You may recall that a two-headed neonate Eastern Copperhead was found in Woodbridge, VA on Sep 16, 2018. The snake(s) became an instant sensation and were the focus of TV, newspaper, and internet site reports.



Unfortunately, the little snake passed away in November 2018.



Organization of Fish & Wildlife Information Managers

(OFWIM) Conference -- First Call For 2019 Abstracts

The Conference Planning Committee has issued a call for paper and poster presentations at the 2019 Annual OFWIM Conference, which will be held October 6-10, in Shepherdstown, WV. All submissions related to fish and wildlife information management are welcome, particularly those related to the conference theme *Knowledge is Power: Technology to Address Emerging Conservation Challenges*.

[Submit your abstract online](#) – Deadline August 23, 2019

[Download announcement flyer](#)

Anticipated sessions include:

- GIS Tools & Mapping
- Data Visualization
- Application Development
- Climate Change Effects on Fish and Wildlife Populations
- Data Sharing Conflicts
- Emerging Conservation Issues
- Communicating to Non-Scientific Audiences

INSSSSSSSIGHT

SECTION C • RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH • SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2019 • RICHMOND.COM

An Eastern Cottonmouth.
TIMES-DISPATCH



A Timber Rattlesnake.
TIMES-DISPATCH



ALL THAT SLITHERS

According to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Herpetological Society, there are 34 snakes native to Virginia. The good news is that only three of them are venomous.

VENOMOUS



Northern Copperhead
Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen



Description

Average length: 24-36 inches. **Record length:** 53 inches.
Characteristics: Copperheads get their name from their copper-red heads and have a dorsal pattern of dark, chestnut-brown or reddish-brown crossbands, each shaped like an hourglass, on a background of lighter brown, tan or pinkish tan.
Fun fact: Even just-hatched copperheads have fully functional fangs capable of injecting venom just as toxic as an adult.



Eastern Cottonmouth
Agkistrodon piscivorus



Description

Average length: 24-48 inches. **Record length:** 76 inches.
Characteristics: Also known as water moccasins, the semi-aquatic snakes have large, triangular heads. Coloration varies from yellowish olive to black with a series of black crossbands that darken posteriorly and are entirely black on tail.
Fun fact: The name "cottonmouth" comes from the white coloration of the inside of the snake's mouth.



Timber Rattlesnake
Crotalus horridus



Description

Average length: 30-60 inches. **Record length:** 74.5 inches.
Characteristics: Color ranges from pinkish to dark brown to nearly black with several dark zigzag-shaped crossbands or chevrons. Found in western Virginia and a small area of south-eastern Virginia, where they are called canebrake rattlesnakes.
Fun fact: The timber rattler is a state endangered species and is typically used by religions that practice snake handling.

PHOTOS ABOVE AND BELOW COURTESY OF THE VIRGINIA HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NONVENOMOUS

Eastern Wormsnake
Average length: 7.5-11 inches
Description: Brown on top, pink underneath. Strikingly resemble worms.

Northern Scarletsnake
Average length: 14-20 inches
Description: Red blotches outlined in black with white or yellow bands.

Northern Black Racer
Average length: 36-60 inches
Description: Uniformly black with brownish snout and white chin.

Northern Ring-Necked Snake
Average length: 10-15 inches
Description: Black, gray or brown. Usually has a complete cream collar.

Southern Ring-Necked Snake
Average length: 10-14 inches
Description: Black, gray or brown, with a cream collar that is broken.

Eastern Mole Snake
Average length: 40-54 inches
Description: Black with red and black blotches or bars underneath.

Common Rainbow Snake
Average length: 27-46 inches
Description: Iridescent with three red stripes on dark background, red and yellow stripe underneath.

Rough Earthsnake
Average length: 7-10 inches
Description: Uniformly dark brown to gray without pattern.

Eastern Hog-Nosed Snake
Average length: 20-33 inches
Description: Varies greatly in coloration but has a distinct upturned snout.

Northern Mole Kingsnake
Average length: 30-40 inches
Description: Tan to dark brown, a yellowish fringe may be present.

Eastern Kingsnake
Average length: 36-48 inches
Description: Black with white to yellow spots and crossbars.

Eastern Black Kingsnake
Average length: 36-45 inches
Description: Same as above, but crossbars are generally lacking.

Scarlet Kingsnake
Average length: 14-20 inches
Description: Reddish color with yellow or white and black bands.

Eastern Milksnake
Average length: 24-36 inches
Description: Tan or gray with reddish-brown, black-edged blotches.

Eastern Glossy Swampsnake
Average length: 14-24 inches
Description: Shiny brown with two thin black stripes and cream belly.

Plain-Bellied Watersnake
Average length: 30-48 inches
Description: Reddish-brown on top and orange underneath.

Northern Watersnake
Average length: 24-42 inches
Description: Dark and light bands with dorsal and lateral blotches.

Brown Watersnake
Average length: 30-60 inches
Description: Brown with square chocolate-brown to black blotches.

Northern Rough Greensnake
Average length: 22-32 inches
Description: Dull green with keeled scales (ridges down the center).

Smooth Greensnake
Average length: 11-20 inches
Description: Small and green with smooth scales (unlike Rough Greensnake).

Eastern Ratsnake
Average length: 42-72 inches
Description: Solid, shiny black with light checkerboard pattern on belly.

Red Cornsnake
Average length: 30-48 inches
Description: Brown to gray in color with orange blotches outlined in black.

Northern Pinesnake
Average length: 48-66 inches
Description: White or cream snake with a series of irregular black blotches.

Queensnake
Average length: 15-24 inches
Description: Brown with three dark stripes and two lateral cream stripes.

Dekay's Brownsnake
Average length: 9-13 inches
Description: Light brown to gray with a series of paired black spots.

Red-Bellied Snake
Average length: 8-10 inches
Description: Brown, gray or black with dark stripes and/or a light stripe on the back and bright red belly.

Southeastern Crowned Snake
Average length: 8-10 inches
Description: Tan to dark brown with a black cap and black collar at neck.

Common Ribbonsnake
Average length: 18-26 inches
Description: Very slender with three yellow stripes on dark background; belly is yellow or greenish-yellow.

Eastern Gartersnake
Average length: 18-26 inches
Description: Green, brown or black, with yellow or white stripe.

Mountain Earthsnake
Average length: 7-10 inches
Description: Reddish brown to dark gray; adults often have black flecks.

Eastern Smooth Earthsnake
Average length: 7-10 inches
Description: Same as above. Full species status due to their separate non-overlapping geographical area.

The smelly debate over our state snake

BY LAURA VOZZELLA
The Washington Post

It's kind of a chicken, as snakes go, high-tailing it whenever it smells danger. And then there's the odor. The Eastern Gartersnake became Virginia's official state snake in February 2016, fulfilling the wishes of then-11-year-old Aiden Coleman of Williamsburg. The bill sailed out of the

House of Delegates, but it was the subject of spirited debate in the Senate. Sen. Dick Black, R-Loudoun, whose long résumé includes snake handling, told the body his familiarity with snakes has bred contempt when it comes to garters. "The gartersnake is small. It's ordinary in every respect," Black said. "It's a very fearful creature. ... But that's not the worst of

it, according to Black. "There's a substance it excretes when it's afraid, and it smells something like a cross between a soiled diaper and a skunk," he said. Black made a motion to amend the bill to bestow state-snake honors to the Timber Rattlesnake instead with a few others in support. But in the end, 33 senators voted for the garter, with six opposed and one abstention.



Eastern Gartersnake
TIM PETERSON/WASHINGTON POST

Sources: Virginia Herpetological Society, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute, iReconscience.com, stateymbolsusa.org, Herps of NC

DAVE SAGER/TIMES-DISPATCH

The Richmond Times Dispatch had a nice large color page about snakes from Virginia. They used info and photos from the VHS as part of their reporting.

Thanks to the RTD for conveying accurate information about these animals.

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VHS member Larry Mendoza says: "This weekend I co-taught a class for the EMS community at the Central Virginia EMS Expo. The class was part of a yearly certification program for nurses, EMT's, paramedics, police, fire etc... all of the first responder community. I was able to recruit Dr. Ben Abo, medical director of Venom 1 and Venom 2 of the Florida Miami/Dade venom response units.

He taught the clinical aspects of the course and i gave a less on virginia snakes, how to distinguish venomous from non-venomous etc.

The class was so well received, we have been invited to give this course at the State Expo in Norfolk this november. We had to give two back to back classes due to the overwhelming demand.

I had no idea that media was filming us, but my leucistic rat snake got a head shot during my talk. :)

The quick video shot is included here:

https://www.wric.com/news/local-news/annual-central-virginia-ems-symposium-draws-hundreds-to-henrico/1823276806?fbclid=IwAR3GuFV_2BU-1tIHkvnT05jOe9At6-xB7-oD__bWvTef-AqamggVOsRcb3E

What is this?

The VHS has a team of folks dedicated to helping the public by identifying photos of various herps sent in. There is a link on our website where people can send their photos in to get proper identification and reassurance. Here are some of the many pictures already sent in this year. Can you name them? Use the VHS website to help you!





Native Herp Highlight: Northern Rough Green Snake



One of the most brightly colored native snakes we have in Virginia is this little jewel, the Northern Rough Green Snake.

These slender-bodied snakes are known for living an arboreal life, and depend on shrubs and low trees for their cover.

As insectivores, they are susceptible to the pesticides and herbicides that affect their prey. This is believed to be one cause of their general decline in numbers over the last half-century.

Unlike their cousins, the Smooth Green Snake, these pretty serpents have a slightly rougher feel due to the keeling of their scales. In addition, they are found over a much larger portion of the state than the Smooth variety.

This species is known for being very placid, rarely offering to bite. However, they will musk at times, like many other snakes. Most often, though, their only response to being captured is to try to flee. Gentle handling is possible, but expect these fast little snakes to take off as soon as they can. Once in a bush, it is hard to find them, as their green bodies blend in well with the leaves and vines they usually seek out.

Common Name:	Rough Green Snake
Scientific Name:	<i>Opheodrys aestivus</i>
Vernacular Names:	<i>Bush snake, grass snake, green summer snake, green tree snake, green whip snake, huckleberry snake, keel-scaled green snake, magnolia snake, vine snake.</i>
Etymology	<i>Opheodrys</i> is derived from the Greek words <i>ophios</i> which means "serpent" and <i>drys</i> meaning "tree".
Genus:	
Species:	<i>aestivus</i> is Latin for "summer".
Average Length:	22 - 32 in. (56 - 81 cm)
VA Record length:	37.3 in. (94.7 cm)

VHS page about this species:

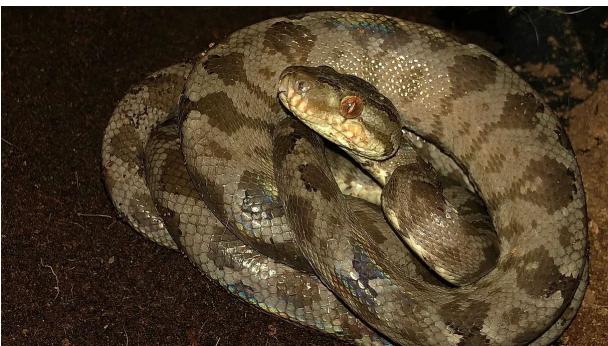
http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/reptiles/snakes/rough-green-snake/rough_greensnake.php

Save Our Scales!

Looking to adopt a pet reptile? Know of one that needs rehoming? Reptile rescues are often the best place to help with those issues. See the known, reputable rescues below:

Blue Ridge Reptile Rescue is located near Lexington. <https://www.blueridgereptilerescue.org/>

Some of the animals currently up for adoption on their website (41 animals needing a home as of the writing of this newsletter!):



BRR also has used equipment available for sale.

VA Reptile Rescue has closed their shelter, but are still available to help assist with finding new homes, removing unwanted snakes, etc. Contact [Bonnie Keller](#) for adoption information. VA Reptile Rescue will continue to be available to help with any other reptile issues that we can!

Virginia Reptile Expos 2019

	Dates	Admission Fee	Time	Location
<u>Northern VA Reptile Expo</u>	4/13, 6/22, 8/24, 10/12 & 12/14	\$8 / \$3 child	9 am to 3 pm	Prince William County Fairgrounds Dumfries Rd, Manassas, Virginia 20108
<u>Richmond Reptile Expo</u>	7/20 , 10/26 & 12/28	\$8 / \$3 child	9 am to 3 pm	Richmond International Raceway, Colonial Bldg, 602 E Laburnum Ave Richmond, VA 23322
<u>Repticon Norfolk</u>	8/17-18/2019	\$12 (Adult) \$5 (Ages 5-12)	see website	Renaissance Portsmouth-Norfolk 425 Water Street Portsmouth, VA 23704
<u>Repticon Chantilly</u>	TBD	\$12 (Adult) \$5 (Ages 5-12)	see website	Dulles Expo Center 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center Chantilly, VA 20153
<u>Repticon Roanoke</u>	9/28-29	\$12 (Adult) \$5 (Ages 5-12)	see website	Quality Inn Roanoke Airport 6626 Thirlane Rd. Roanoke, VA, 24019

PLEASE remember to research BEFORE your buy a new species. Just because you've kept other reptiles doesn't mean that you know how to keep ALL of them. There are numerous places online with caresheets and info about nearly every species. Learn what you have the time, space, and money for. Learn if the species is legal in your area. Learn if you have the experience to work with that species. If not, DON'T bring it home! The reptile rescues don't need more business.

Don't mind traveling to other locations for expos? There are many others - just search online!

Reminders!

HELP SUPPORT THE VHS!

Throughout the year, please consider ways to help support VHS, when shopping! Also, don't forget to take advantage of one of the great benefits of being a VHS member; you can save a bit of the money you need for shopping when going on outings with family and friends this time of year to nearby zoos and similar facilities where VHS members get great discounts.



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. [Please use this link](#) to set up Smile donations on your Amazon account, and remember to shop using smile.amazon.com or install a plugin like Smile Always to redirect your browser each time you shop Amazon. VHS thanks you for your support!

Click [here](#) to go to **VHS Cafe Press Store** to find an assortment of high quality merchandise intended to celebrate the diversity of amphibians and reptiles native to Virginia. This includes the new **2016 VHS Wall Calendar!** Check it out!



You search &/or shop! They give, give, give!

GoodShop.com is an online shopping mall featuring hundreds of great stores including Amazon, Best Buy, Target, Macy's, and many more. GoodShop will donate up to 30 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause

[The GoodSearch – Virginia --Herpetological Society](#) will earn VHS money every time you shop and search online - even if you forget to go to GoodShop or GoodSearch first!

MEMBERS GET DISCOUNTS AT ZOOS!

Admission Discounts		Membership Discounts	
Leesburg Animal Park	\$2 off	Virginia Aquarium	25% off Crab, Otter, or Hedgehog membership
Luray Zoo	50% off entry		
Mill Mountain Zoo	\$1 off	Booking Discounts	
Virginia Living Museum	\$1 off	Reptiles Alive! LLC Northern Virginia	\$20 off any live animal show
Virginia Zoo	\$2 off		

VHS is pleased to offer, as a membership benefit, **discounts to select zoos and aquariums in Virginia.** We hope that having an admission or membership discount will give you incentive to visit these facilities and give them your business. Although a dollar or two off of the price of admission does not sound like much, most zoos, aquariums, and museums are expensive to maintain, so it does represent a generous offer by the participating facilities. In order to facilitate these discounts, a VHS member must have proof of a current membership. We e-mail membership cards in PDF format. Please have these cards handy when visiting. Click [here](#) for more info.

MEMBERSHIP!

Of course, the second reminder should remind us all to start or renew our VHS membership! If you need to start or renew your membership, please click [here](#).

Zoo and Educational Programming Info

[Reptiles Alive LLC](#) has been presenting educational, fun, and safe live animal shows since 1996. They are one of the DC metro area's most experienced and trustworthy live animal outreach education organizations. The staff are experts in delighting audiences of all ages and handling live animals safely in public settings. They are the only live animal show company in the DC area employing professional wildlife educators covered by Workers Compensation insurance. No "independent contractors" perform their programs.

Always check for the many upcoming public events at the following link:
<http://www.reptilesalive.com/publicevents/publicevents.htm>



World of Reptiles, opening Summer 2018 is the slithering, creeping, crawling and curious adventure you've been waiting for. Come face to face with reptile giants, watch hatching and newborn reptiles being nurtured and raised and immerse yourself in a floor to ceiling marsh habitat of the Siamese crocodile.

This state-of-the-art overhaul of the Virginia Zoo's reptile building is full of "Defining Moment" opportunities for children and adults alike.

We invite you to support, follow and share this project that is sure to delight visitors and inhabitants, and provide the next frontier of learning and stewardship for this spectacular collection of animals.

[The Virginia Zoo](#) is located in Norfolk, VA.

Last words for this issue....

Now that warm weather is here, I hope you'll join me in spending more time outside. It's always a treat to see our native herps, so I always try to attend the surveys and BioBlitzes whenever possible. I hope you and your family will come on out. Don't be worried about not having tried this before - we all have to start somewhere. There are plenty of people at these events that will help teach you what to do, where to look, etc. The most important thing is that you're there. Before you know it, you'll be off on your own looking in your own neighborhood and finding some really cool things. Pick a survey, sign up, and come on out! And make sure you ask for me to say hi.

Sincerely, ---Bonnie