



Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program

Sponsored by Potomac Valley Audubon Society &
WV Master Naturalist Program

What is the Master Naturalist Program?

The Master Naturalist program is patterned after the Master Gardener Program that has been offered for many years by local extension agents. Volunteer education programs have become increasingly important for state agencies in order to maximize scarce resources and reach out to new constituencies, particularly growing urban populations. The basic approach is to combine education with public service.

The West Virginia Master Naturalist Program is one of the first in the nation. It was developed in 2003 by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and is administered by that agency.

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society partnered with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources in 2006 to establish the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Chapter in the Eastern Panhandle.

To become a certified Master Naturalist, program participants must complete 64 hours of in-depth training in local wildlife and natural resource management taught by state and local experts in both the classroom and the field.

Core topics include Amphibians and Reptiles; Aquatic Habitats; Birds; General Ecology; Insects and Spiders; Mammals; Names, Classifications and ID; Nature Interpretation and Teaching; Recording, Sharing and Preserving; Terrestrial Habitats; Trees; Shrubs and Woody Vines; Wetland Habitats; Wildflowers and Weeds; and Wildlife Habitat Improvement. Elective topics range from Astronomy to Butterflies, Nature Readings, Weather and Climate and many more.

Master Naturalist program participants must also provide their community with a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer service in the form of educational or scientific activities to become fully certified. To remain certified, Master Naturalists must participate in 8 hours of training and 16 hours of volunteer service every year.

If you are interested in participating in a volunteer training program for adults that emphasizes natural resource education and community-based service, we hope you will learn more about the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program and participate in the local Master Naturalist program.

Cost for the program is \$300 which covers all classes and instruction. Partial scholarships are available. Full payment is expected before beginning the first session.

To become involved and apply, complete the application and send it to PVMN Application, P.O. Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443. Each year a separate deadline date in January is established, but you can apply anytime during the prior year. Participants for each class are selected as a group so you will not hear about your final status until February 1 of each year.

Course dates and locations: Sessions usually alternate between Cacapon State Park in Morgan County, CraftWorks at Cool Spring Farm in Jefferson County, and the US Fish and Wildlife Center's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Jefferson County. Occasionally, classes are held at another site. The first classes in March are usually on a Saturday and Sunday. Sessions after the first one usually involve only one Saturday a month.

The complete schedule with specific classes and dates will be provided to those selected for the current class. To learn more about the local Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@PotomacAudubon.org