

## VHS EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT 2008-2009

Compiled by Mike Clifford (mjc4h@vt.edu), Education Committee Chairman. VHS members are encouraged to submit a brief report their herp educational activities (local, regional, or state) to the VHS Education Committee. We would like to compile an annual report that includes your educational efforts on the behalf of the Virginia Herpetological Society. Those interested in serving on the Education Committee are invited to contact the chairman.

- 11-06-09 Stinkpot photo for cover of American Museum of Natural History Bulletin - J. White
- 11-04-09 Mole salamander photo for Virginia Water Resources Research Center Newsletter - P. Sattler
- 10-28-09 - Photos provided to Mr. Rande Gallant, Assistant Vector Ecologist, Greater L.A. Vector Control District for field worker education. - J. White
- “Snake Identification and Management at Camps” was presented at the American Camping Association-Virginia Section Fall Conference on October 21, 2009 at Camp Friendship near Palmyra. Camp directors and staff from three states learned about snake identification; management & control around camp buildings & grounds; best species for camp nature centers; and the value of snakes in the camp ecosystem. Mike Clifford conducted the session.
- Mountain Cove Vineyard was the site of a “Reptiles and Amphibians of the Home and Garden” presentation sponsored by the Nelson County Garden Club on October 2, 2009. Thirty-three members and guests learned about the value and beauty of herps commonly found in the home landscape. Mike and Pat Clifford conducted the session.
- “Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of VA” was presented by Tim Christensen on September 17, 2009. This was a Virginia Master Naturalist training for new cohort group of the Peninsula Chapter, Newport News, VA.
- “Passport to Safety” Event for Families Living on Base at Fort Lee. On August 22, Susan Watson, in coordination with personnel from the Fort Lee Installation Safety Office, presented information about snakes that may be encountered on the Army base. Approximately 50 people attended this event. VDGIF’s live snakes, along with snake skins, photos of snakes, and handouts (including *A Guide to the Snakes of Virginia*) were presented at a table, or station, as part of the event, “Passport to Safety”. Children attending the event were given small paper passport books that were stamped when they completed each station. The presentation educated attendees about the snakes, what to expect to see on the base, and under what conditions they may be encountered.
- An hour-long “Snakes Alive!” show was given to 250 4-H members and volunteer leaders at Holiday Lake 4-H Center on August 5, 2009. The presentation focused

on the identification and natural history of common snakes native to Virginia. Mike Clifford conducted the session.

- A “Wildlife of Fort Eustis” workshop on wildlife occurring on the US Army, Fort Eustis installation given by Tim Christensen and Susan Watson on July 29, 2009. The workshop was for military families living on the installation. Topics included reptiles and amphibians. The VHS information booth was included amongst the exhibits.
- A “Snakes Alive!” program was presented to two dozen Amelia county 4-H youth on July 7 as part of the local 4-H Day Camp. Mike Clifford conducted the session, assisted by Holiday Lake 4-H Center personnel.
- A live, 2-hour, on-line, “Snake Identification In-service Training” involved approximately 80 Extension personnel from across Virginia on June 22, 2009. Mike Clifford and Dan Goerlich conducted the interactive audio-visual program which was designed to help Extension agents and Master Gardener volunteers to handle the numerous “snake problems” and questions that they receive in their localities. The program was also made available for later viewing as well.
- “Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of VA” was presented to the Peninsula Chapter (Newport News) of the Virginia Master Naturalists. The March 31, 2009, training was provided by Tim Christensen.
- Virginia Science Olympiad - Herpetology Category. On March 21, 2009 (all day), Susan Watson operated the herpetology contest (questions, specimens, & photos) for Divisions B and C (middle and high school levels) of the Virginia Science Olympiad (<http://www.virginiaso.com/>). Mike Clifford assisted with developing the tests, but could not attend. This statewide competition was held at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. More than 700 middle and high school students from 34 different schools competed in the entire Virginia Science Olympiad.
- “Reptiles and Amphibians” at the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Virginia Master Naturalists Program. Presented by Jason Gibson.
- “Turtles: Nature’s Shelled Warriors.” at the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Presented by Jason Gibson.
- “The Value of Reptiles and Amphibians.” Community Lecture. Presented by Jason Gibson
- “Snakes-What Do You Know About Them?” was provided on November 12, 2008 to the Grafton Middle School Environmental Club of Grafton, VA. Susan Watson and Tim Christensen gave the presentation.
- “Herpetology/Reptiles and Amphibians of VA” was presented on October 2, 2008 by Tim Christensen, as part of the Virginia Master Naturalist training for the Historic Rivers Chapter – Cohort 3, Williamsburg, VA
- A 3-hour workshop on Virginia reptiles was held on June 20, 2008, during the *ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp* at Virginia Tech. Forty-eight gifted students, primarily from southwest Virginia, participated in the 2-week science camp. Mike Clifford and Dr. Mike Ellerbrock conducted the herpetology session.

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) biologist Julie Hawkins contacted VHS about providing a Virginia herps training session for NRCS personnel and Soil & Water Conservation District personnel. We developed a PowerPoint side show based on the *PARC Habitat Management Guidelines for Amphibians & Reptiles of the Northeastern United States* in conjunction with range maps from the VHS website and representative herp photos from various sources. The program was presented by Mike Clifford on April 15, 2008 at the SunChase Cinema in Farmville.
- The Virginia Science Olympiad requested help from VHS in developing the herpetology section test for both the middle and high school divisions of the state tournament. Susan Watson, Mike Clifford, and Jason Gibson developed the questions, quiz photos, and answer keys for the April 26, 2008 competition, held in Burke, Virginia. For more about the Science Olympiad, see <http://www.soinc.org/>.
- A hands-on "Snakes Alive" show for a hundred kids and parents was presented by Mike Clifford at the 2008 Virginia 4-H Natural Resources Weekend. Herp programs featuring native species are a very popular at this statewide event, held every January at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Appomattox.

In addition to the formal presentations above, VHS officers and committee members responded to many dozens of email requests regarding Virginia reptiles and amphibians. Most were species identification questions, usually with digital photos attached.