



## What do Master Naturalists Do?

**Here is a sample of Old Rag chapter projects:**

**Adopt-an-Outcrop.** Shenandoah National Park contains more than 3,000 rock outcrops, many home to rare, threatened or endangered species. Most outcrops are remote, but a few are popular sites for day hikers and rock-climbers. Rather than restrict public access to these majestic places, Master Naturalist volunteers are carefully monitoring them to ensure survival of their rare species. Volunteers, working in pairs, visit their assigned outcrop on a regular basis to: (a) record the flora in the habitat; (b) observe whether the habitat is being degraded by human traffic or invasive species and report any issues to Park staff; (c) interact with visitors to explain the unique features of the outcrop; and (d) pick up litter and make minor repairs to signs as needed.

**Rappahannock Elementary Junior Naturalist Program.** Old Rag and a partner organization, Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection, established an after-school, outdoor program for children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades at Rappahannock Elementary. Master naturalist volunteers develop activities for the students and serve as teacher/counselors. We pick a theme each week to focus the children's attention, but in large measure the purpose is to let them explore nature on their own, with an adult volunteer to interpret their findings. The participants and their parents' reviews of the program are wildly enthusiastic.

**Buck Hollow Alluvial Forest Restoration.** Master Naturalist volunteers are assisting Shenandoah National Park restore an unusual alluvial forest habitat in a hidden valley. We are removing invasive plants and growing natives to replant in the areas that were overtaken.

**Montpelier Old Growth Forest Preservation.** The chapter has a stewardship commitment to James Madison's home Montpelier. Volunteers pull garlic mustard within the old growth forest at the site. Long-term monitoring is planned to help sustain the health of this special forest that happens to be part of the historic landmark.

**Whitney State Forest Herbaceous Plant Survey.** Chapter volunteers conduct careful surveys of the plants other than trees growing in Whitney State Forest near Warrenton. The forest has a range of habitats--from open to closed, wet to dry, recently disturbed to undisturbed. As a result, there is a huge range of plants growing in the forest, and the surveys help the County Forester manage the property to preserve its diversity.

**Bluebird Trail.** Master Naturalists, working with the Monticello bird club, are monitoring bluebird boxes weekly in season to check for nesting and predation and record the number of eggs, nestlings, and fledglings. If boxes are damaged, we repair or replace them. Then we remove nests after babies have fledged or died, or if nest has been abandoned.

**This is just a sample of the many kinds of projects Master Naturalists enjoy!**