

West Virginia Master Naturalist 2022 State Conference

Instructor Biographies

Steve Beckelhimer

Steve Beckelhimer is a retired science educator from Marshall University's June Harless Center and the West Virginia Department of Education. He is currently living in Central Kentucky and volunteers as a naturalist at McConnell Springs Nature Preserve in Lexington, Kentucky.

Doren Burrell

Doren Burrell is an attorney for the West Virginia Legislature. He earned his law degree at WVU and has been a practicing attorney for over 30 years. When he was a boy, his family would go hiking and camping in the Monongahela National Forest and this gave rise to a lifelong interest in the outdoors and biology. He has been a member of state and local bird clubs for several decades and only recently discovered the wonderful variety of moths that can easily be found here.

Laura Ceperley

Laura Ceperley started down the slippery slope of birding at her mom's feeders while growing up in Charleston WV, and then casually birded throughout her career, moving around the country with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, managing with one set of "bins" and the same "Golden" field guide. Until she retired in 2009 and returned to Charleston. Now she has several "bins", a bookcase full of bird books, and memories of many superb birding trips, both in the US and across "the pond." Birds have even flitted their way onto her knitting and quilting projects, several which have hung in the WV Cultural Center. She's a 2008 graduate of the Canaan Valley Master Naturalist program and occasionally leads bird walks in Canaan State Park where she takes great delight to see some old friends, "Marsh Hawks" and "Myrtle Warblers" (her mom's favorite).

Lauren Cole

Lauren Cole is a graduate of West Virginia University with a BS in Biology, focusing on paleontology, evolution, and natural history. Currently a Park Naturalist for WVDNR Parks at Chief Logan State Park. Certified Interpretive Guide with the National Association of Interpretation. Member of the West Virginia Entomological Society, the Turtle Survival Alliance, the Zoological Association of America, and the American Association of Zoo Keepers. Programming focuses include elk management in West Virginia, native insect conservation, box turtle conservation, wildlife safety, and native plants in a home garden setting.

Barry Curry

Barry Curry began his Naturalist career in his early teens through his membership in the Boy Scouts of America and working summers at Kanawha State Forest learning the fine art of the brush scythe and long handled shovel under the tutelage of Superintendent Osbra Eye. His formal education includes a degree in Biology from WV State College and Graduate studies in Environmental Science from Marshall University. He is a long-time member of the WV Wildwater Association and worked as a raft guide in northern West Virginia. He is an active member of the Kanawha Valley Master Naturalist Chapter

Mark Double

Mark Double worked with chestnut his entire adult life. In 2019, he retired from West Virginia University where he worked with the chestnut blight fungus and biological control for 41 years. He was secretary for the award-winning USDA multi-state project, "Biological Improvement of Chestnut". He has given presentations on chestnut state-wide, nationally, and internationally. He is the current president of the West Virginia chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, and he oversees the annual distribution of hundreds of chestnut seedlings state-wide. He was inducted into the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame in 2021. Mark, his wife, Mindy, and their daughter's family run a family farm in

Marion County where they raise hops, blueberries, strawberries and raspberries. They also have an apiary and inoculate oak logs for shiitake production. Since his retirement, Mark has been writing a book for his grandchildren on their ancestors, some of which can be traced back 70 generations.

Jim Fregonara

Jim Fregonara is a Wildlife Biologist with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Diversity Program. For more than twenty years he has been providing information along with giving presentations to educate the public on many of the State's lesser-known wildlife.

Jodi French-Burr

Jodi French-Burr is a Leave No Trace (LNT) Master Educator and an active member of the New River Gorge chapter of WV Master Naturalist. With a lifelong love of natural and cultural heritage, Jodi enjoys spending time outdoors and sharing that love of heritage with others.. Jodi is an active LNT Master Educator, conducting course and, leading LNT initiatives in the New River Gorge and region for over 25 years. Most of this work is done through her day job as an Interpretive Park Ranger at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. French-Burr has worked for the National Park Service for over 35 year. Jodi also often serves as an instructor

Karen Kish

Karen Kish graduated from WVU with a BS in Horticulture and an MS in Entomology. She works as an Environmental Scientist for Jacobs Engineering. She is a long-time member of the West Virginia Entomological Society and a native plant enthusiast.

Becky Linger

Becky Linger holds a Ph.D. in Medicinal Chemistry from the Purdue University School of Pharmacy. For over 15 years, she has taught and presented talks on the native plants of West Virginia, focusing on the medicinal uses of plants that many would consider simply weeds. She recently published a book on the toxicology of medicinal plants native to the Eastern United States.

Charles "Sam" Muncy, Jr.

Charles H. "Sam" Muncy, Jr. graduated from West Virginia University with a Master of Science in Civil Engineering and is a full time practicing Professional Civil Engineer and also holds registration as a Professional Surveyor. Sam likes exploring and discovering the hidden gems of West Virginia natural heritage as a Master Naturalist certified by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. Also, as treasurer of the West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation Sam is trying to bring back the legendary magnificent giant American chestnut trees that prior to the 1950's once resided in the Appalachian ridgetops so thick a person could not see through the forest. In spring when the white blooms of the American chestnut came out the mountains looked capped in snow! Along with his fiancée, Sharon, and many other wonderful volunteers and Scouts tend several orchard of special cross bred and native American chestnut trees in the Summit Bechtel Reserve Boy Scout camp near Beckley, West Virginia. In their spare time Sam and Sharon like to make things from free or found "stuff".

Danielle Nathanson

Danielle Nathanson works for the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, primarily conducting water quality monitoring and habitat assessment on lakes, Harmful Algal Blooms investigation, and continuous instream monitoring data analysis. She graduated from Marshall University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science with minors in biology and geology and a certificate in Geospatial Information Systems. Photography is one of her biggest passions, specifically macro and super macro photography – she loves being able to focus in on the small things that would ordinarily be overlooked and capture photos from a different perspective. Combining one of her other hobbies, 3D

printing, she's been able to design and print custom camera accessories including extension tubes and microscope mounts to further accentuate the “different perspective” aspect of her photography.

Sheldon Owen

Sheldon Owen is an Extension Wildlife Specialist with WVU. Prior to coming to WVU, he worked for USDA Wildlife Services as part of their Wildlife Disease Program. He is currently studying how applied management can limit the risk of Lyme disease, one of the more prevalent tickborne diseases in our country.

Joe Perdue

Joe is a Veteran of the USAF, graduate of Marshall University with a bachelors in Business Administration, minor in Communications, associates in Food Science and Culinary Arts, a ACF Certified Executive Chef and former Chef Educator. Joe works with the DNR State Parks as a Naturalist and has built exhibits for Pipestem and Kanawha Nature Centers. Joe has worked with Reptiles for over 20 years and has participated in conservation through captive breeding with species like the Diamond Backed Terrapin, an aquatic turtle native to the east coast and gulf coast where specific locale variations have almost disappeared due to habitat loss, but through the efforts of private breeders and zoos have been able to be repatriated. Joe is also an artist and Co-Owner of Wild & Weird West Virginia LLC and podcast host of Wild & Weird Radio exploring the unknowns in our world and applying the skills of a Master Naturalist to help explain some of these phenomena. On his free time, he enjoys long walks in the forest, field “herping” with his friends, and continuing the search for the legendary Sasquatch.

Tom Saielli

Tom Saielli joined TACF in 2012 and is based in Charlottesville, Virginia. Tom oversees TACF’s Mid-Atlantic region which includes the state chapters KY, MD, VA, and WV. He received his MS in Forest Sciences from the University of Vermont in Burlington after earning his BS in Biology and Environmental Science at the University of Colorado in 2007.

Julie Schaer

Julie Schaer majored in geology and Russian. Now, she is a farmer who last year ended up developing and teaching a class for veterans through West Virginia State University. About this change in status, she states, "Believe me, no one is more shocked than me." She is not a mycologist but, has spent a lot of time playing with gourmet mushroom growing and has had a lot of fun doing it. She is raising a couple of spoiled kids that wail and say things like “gourmet mushrooms again? Why don’t you ever let us have stuff like ramen noodles?” Then she will reply: “What are you whining about? Just last week we had a delicious homemade ramen with oyster mushrooms in a shiitake broth!” She claims to have too many hobbies; many of them are food related. Don’t ask her about spirograph or koji unless you have a lot of time to listen to her talk.

Anne Wakeford

Anne Wakeford has been a Coordination Biologist with the WV Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) for more than nine years. She is responsible for evaluating the impacts of highways projects to fish, wildlife, and their habitats and is currently writing a series of white papers examining the impacts of wildlife vehicle collisions on deer and large mammals, small and medium mammals and amphibians and reptiles. Anne has given presentations on invasive plant species to the West Virginia Conservation Agency, WVDNR, and West Virginia Division of Highways. Anne has also worked with a volunteer group of Potomac Valley Master Naturalists on controlling Oriental bittersweet at Cacapon State Park. Before working with the WVDNR Anne was a marine fisheries biologist and worked throughout the country on a variety of fish species. Her university education includes: a B.S. in Biology from the

University of Exeter in England, a M.S. in Marine Biology from the University of Wales, and a M.A. in Marine Affairs and Policy from the University of Miami, Florida.

Doug Wood

Doug Wood earned a B.S. in Wildlife Management from WVU 1977. He retired in 2011 from the WV Water Resources Agency after 33 years of public service in water quality research. Currently, he is the sole proprietor of a business dedicated to education assistance in historical and natural histories. He serves on the boards of the WV Scenic Trails Association, the Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council, the Kanawha State Forest Foundation, the Ward Hollow Wildlife Habitat, and the Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund. He has been teaching master naturalist classes for approximately 20 years. He portrays historical characters for the WV Humanities Council's History Alive Program. He is involved in many projects to mitigate climate change and protect and restore biodiversity, including the designation of old-growth forest tracts on WV public lands.