



SAVE THE DATE

**WEST VIRGINIA
MASTER NATURALISTS
2025 STATE
CONFERENCE**

June 27 - 29
**AT BLACKWATER FALLS STATE PARK
Davis, WV**

Conservation Begins with Education

As Master Naturalists we are passionate and eager to learn about the environment and then use our knowledge to inspire and teach others to notice, understand, and appreciate the natural world around us. By teaching and inspiring people to understand nature, we hope to protect and conserve our natural resources for generations to come.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY Rosalie Haizlett
AUTHOR OF "Tiny Worlds"**

REGISTRATION OPENS APRIL 1, 2025

**www.mnofwv.org
info@mnofwv.org**



MEET THE SPEAKER

Rosalie Haizlett
Author of “Tiny Worlds”

Rosalie Haizlett is an illustrator who creates captivating paintings that celebrate the hidden wonders of the natural world. Haizlett has been an artist-in-residence at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with the National Audubon Society at Hog Island, and at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History. In 2022, she was awarded the Eckelberry Fellowship for distinguished wildlife illustrators.

Rosalie also teaches workshops in person and online, and so far she has taught more than 60,000 students how to paint the natural world as a Top Teacher on Skillshare. The author of *Watercolor in Nature: Paint Woodland Wildlife and Botanicals with 20 Beginner-Friendly Projects* and *Tiny Worlds of the Appalachian Mountains: An Artist's Journey*, she lives on the edge of Monongahela National Forest in Elkins, West Virginia.

Find more out about Rosalie here —> www.rosaliehaizlett.com

CONFERENCE FEES

Conference Only:

\$99 per person (through 5/25)

\$115 per person (starting 5/26)

Conference with Friday and Saturday evening meals:

\$130 per person (through 5/25)

\$150 per person (starting 5/26)

Add on Meals:

Box Lunch: \$12

Friday Dinner: \$18.95

Saturday Banquet: \$25

Conference Cancellation Policy: If you have to cancel after May 25, we can only refund half of your registration fee. If you cancel after June 14, there will be no refund.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2025 WV Master Naturalist Conference will open online on April 1, 2025 at 12 p.m. If you are unable to register online, please contact: **conferencewvmn@gmail.com**.

Meals:

- When registering, you will have the option between the conference with or without the Friday / Saturday evening meals.
- Box lunches will be available for an add on cost for Friday & Saturday.
- Breakfast is not included. Dining options are available in-house at the Smokehouse Restaurant.

Class Selection:

- Classes must be selected at time of registration
- Please review the schedule & time before selecting classes.
- Unfortunately, classes may have a limited number of spaces. If a class is not available to register, it is full.
- If you need to change a class after registering, please contact conferencewvmn@gmail.com.

MEAL OPTIONS & PRICING

Boxed Lunches *(Not included in registration – available for \$12 per day)*

Each boxed lunch includes:

✓ Bag of chips

✓ Fruit

✓ Cookies

⊘ No bottled water provided – please bring your own!

Meal Choices: Turkey, Ham, or Veggie Wrap **Gluten-free option available*

Friday Evening Barbecue Buffet *(Available separately for \$18.95)*

Entrées: Hamburgers | Hotdogs (*Gluten-free buns available*)

Sides: Baked beans | Coleslaw | Potato salad | Macaroni salad | Chips

Includes: Dessert and Beverage

Saturday Evening Plated Banquet *(Available separately for \$25)*

Entrée Choices: Salmon, Chicken, or Stuffed Portobello Mushroom

Includes: Salad | Dessert | Beverage

**Cash bar available*

Meal Selection Required

You will receive a link to select your **Boxed Lunch** and **Saturday Banquet** meal choices, as well as any **Gluten-Free** preferences. If no selection is made, a meal may be assigned to you at random.

Please Bring Your Own Water Bottle

Water filling stations will be available throughout the Lodge.

LODGING

The group code at the Blackwater Lodge is “**Master Naturalist**” and will **NOT** work online. You need to reserve rooms by calling 304-259-5216 and ask for Reservations. Lodging reservations are **available 24/7**.

A group rate for the Conference has been secured at the Blackwater Falls Lodge at Blackwater Falls State Park at \$140 per night plus taxes.

Additional accommodations at Blackwater Falls State Park:

- Classic Cabins - 4 persons, 2 bedrooms, one bath \$198/night
- Deluxe Cabins - 8 persons, 4 bedrooms, two baths \$333/night
- Campground with bath house - \$50/night

The above rates for Lodge rooms and Cabins will only be available through May 25. Reservations after this date will NOT receive the discounted rate. Any room or cabin not reserved by May 25th will be released to the public.

OVERFLOW AREA LODGING:

Canaan Valley Resort, 230 Main Lodge Rd., Davis, WV	800-622-4121	\$210
The Inn at Canaan, 6526 Appalachian Hwy, Davis, WV	304-866-4166	\$129
Alpine Lodge, 850 Sawmill Lane, Davis, WV	304-259-5245	\$198-\$258
Laurel River Club BnB, 417 Jennings Farm Rd, Bowden, WV	304-402-7095	\$434 for 3 nights
The Billy Motel, 1080 William Ave, Davis, WV	304-851-6125	\$370 for 3 nights

Air BnB's – price varies

Elkins Hotels: 45 mile drive to Blackwater Falls State Park

Tygart Hotel, 206 Davis Ave.	304-924-4279	\$142
Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 50 Martin St.	304-630-2266	\$152
Hampton Inn, 480 Plantation Drive	304-630-7500	\$133
Isaac Jackson Hotel, 830 Harrison Ave.	304-636-1400	\$108
Super 8, 420 Beverly Pike	304-636-6500	\$86
Luxor Inn & Suites by Wyndham, 408 Allegheny Hwy	304-636-5311	\$84

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Registration Packet:

When you pick up your registration packet at the conference, you'll find everything you need inside the envelope:

- **Your Class Schedule**
- **Name Tag**
- **Meal Tickets** for Friday and Saturday evening dinners (if purchased) – *Be sure to bring your ticket to dinner!*
- **Door Prize Ticket** for a chance to win an exciting prize! There will be only ONE chance to win a Door Prize! *A gift from our WVDNR partners.*

Don't forget to check your packet and keep your tickets handy!

Silent Auction:

Browse and place bids on exclusive items during designated times on Friday and Saturday. The highest bidders will be announced after the Saturday evening banquet, where winners can pay for and collect their items immediately.

**If your Chapter is contributing a Silent Auction item, please drop it off at the Registration table upon arrival.*

Friday Night Music Jam:

After Friday evening classes, join us for a lively music jam featuring performances by our talented MN members and friends. Everyone is welcome to listen, play, and enjoy the music! Stay tuned for the location announcement.

Chapter Showcase & DNR Exhibits:

Visit the Harr Conference Room to explore unique displays created by each Chapter. Plus, stop by the DNR exhibit to learn about "Wild Yards" and other current environmental topics!

Door Prize Drawings:

Get ready for ten exciting door prize drawings—five during the Friday evening buffet and five at the Saturday evening banquet! Don't forget to bring your TICKETS for a chance to win.

FRIDAY SCHEDULE

9 am – 12 pm

Class Limit

Build a Bat house & Learn How to Attract Them	<i>Sam Muncy</i>	20
Save Our Streams Workshop	<i>Callie Cronin Sams</i>	20
Plan for the Worst & Hope for the Best	<i>Brian Potter</i>	25
Douglas Falls Interpretative Guided Hike	<i>Kacey Shiflett, Amanda Rexrode</i>	25

1 pm – 4 pm

Upland Coniferous Forests & Woodlands Hike	<i>Paulita Cousin, Kenny Noland</i>	25
West Virginia Natural Areas Program & Walk	<i>Krista Noe, Doug Wood</i>	20
Fern & Fern Allies Hike	<i>John Burkhart</i>	20
Nature Photography	<i>Alan Tucker</i>	30
Medicinal Plants	<i>Dr. Rebecca Linger</i>	20

6-7 pm Picnic Dinner

7:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Meet Some of West Virginia Reptiles	<i>Paulita Cousin, Kenny Noland</i>	25
Night Sounds of the Appalachians	<i>Kevin Dodge</i>	N/A

9:00 pm – ??

Music Jam	<i>Jane Birdsong, MN members & friends</i>
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SATURDAY SCHEDULE

6:30 am – 7:30 am

Class Limit

Early Morning Bird Walk	<i>Herb Myers</i>	15
Sunrise Yoga	<i>Jamie Chambers</i>	30

9 am – 4 pm

Geology of the Canaan Valley Tour	<i>Dr. James VanGundy</i>	20
Dolly Sods Wilderness Tour	<i>Alyssa Hanna</i>	18

9 am – 12 pm

Allegheny Trail: Nature & History Inter. Hike	<i>Doug Wood</i>	18
Nature Journaling by Sensing the Natural World	<i>Linda Durrett</i>	22
Back to Basics: Compass & Topo Maps	<i>Sheldon Owen, Ben Spong</i>	28

1 pm – 4 pm

Back to Basics 2.0: GPS & UTM's	<i>Sheldon Owen, Ben Spong</i>	20
Learning the Ropes: Intro. to Ropes & Knots	<i>Brian Potter</i>	25
WV Mammals Pelts, Skulls, Tracks, & Scat	<i>Kacey Shiflett</i>	30

6 pm – 9 pm

Banquet & Keynote Speaker	<i>Rosalie Haizlett</i>
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SUNDAY SCHEDULE

6:30 am – 7:30 am

Class Limit

Early Morning Bird Walk	<i>Herb Myers</i>	15
Sunrise Yoga	<i>Jamie Chambers</i>	30

9 am – 12 pm

The Mysterious World of Orchids	<i>Dr. Katharine Gregg</i>	35
Let's Draw & Paint the Brook Trout	<i>Sarah Ferguson</i>	25
Discover the Wonder Within: A Mindful Nature Experience with Wonder & Grow	<i>Kate Reed & Valerie Hart</i>	30

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

Allegheny Trail: Nature & History Interpretative Hike

Instructor: Doug Wood

Last year, the West Virginia Scenic Trails Association (WVSTA) proudly celebrated 50 years of dedication to long-distance trail development! Our flagship project, the Allegheny Trail (ALT), was originally designed to stretch from the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Monroe County, WV/Giles County, VA, to Blackwater Falls State Park. Over time, the trail expanded northward, reaching all the way to the Mason-Dixon Line. Thanks to the unwavering support of park staff and the Monongahela National Forest, WVSTA volunteers have worked tirelessly to develop, protect, and enhance this incredible trail. Alongside landowning partners, we've also contributed to vital flora and fauna research and conservation efforts over the past five decades.

Join us on this scenic hike as we explore the rich history of the ALT and discover how trail development and environmental conservation go hand in hand. Experience firsthand the beauty and biodiversity that make this trail a true West Virginia treasure! **3 mile walk on uneven terrain (1.5 mi. uphill and 1.5 mi. downhill). Please wear appropriate footwear and rain gear. Bring your own drink, snack, and any medications/epi-pens needed.*

Back to Basics: Compass & Topographic Maps

Instructor: Dr. Sheldon Owen & Ben Spong

Whether you are wandering, searching, or just plain lost, a map and compass can be your best friends. This course will cover the basics of how to use a compass with in-the-field activities where we hope you don't get lost. Then we will be back in the classroom to introduce participants to topographic maps. We will discuss the information found on the map itself, how to use it, and finish up putting the map and compass together so you can start your path orienteering with a map and compass. Maps and a compass will be provided but feel free to bring your own. **Short walks on even terrain.*

Back to Basics 2.0: GPS & UTM's

Instructor: Dr. Sheldon Owen & Ben Spong

Map and compass is fun but let's bring some technology into the mix. Get ready for an afternoon of alphabet soup using a GPS and UTM coordinates. This course will introduce you to the basics of using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) to mark waypoints, find waypoints, and determine your location on the earth's surface. We will then be back in the classroom to use the information gathered from the GPS to determine our location on a topographic map. We will also dive a little deeper into using UTM coordinates to navigate around a topographic map. GPS units and maps will be provided but feel free to bring your own. **Short walks on even terrain.*

Build a Bat House & Learn How to Attract Bats

Instructor: Charles H. "Sam" Muncy, Jr

Join us for a fun and interactive workshop where you'll build your very own bat house nesting box from a pre-cut kit—perfect for attracting these incredible nighttime pollinators to your yard! With guidance from our expert instructor (and assistant David Hart), you'll use a screwdriver to assemble your bat house, ensuring it's sturdy and ready for use. You'll also receive a template and step-by-step instructions to make even more boxes at home. Learn fascinating facts about bats, their role in the ecosystem, and how to create a bat-friendly environment. Dive into an engaging PowerPoint presentation about bats and the impact of white-nose syndrome.

Have bat photos? Send them digitally to the instructor before the workshop, and be ready to briefly share your images and stories with the group.

Discover the Wonder Within:

A Mindful Nature Experience with Wonder & Grow

Instructors: Kate Reed & Valerie Hart

Immerse yourself in the tranquility of nature and discover its power to transform and inspire! Join Wonder & Grow for a unique Mindful Nature Experience that combines guided sensory meditations, gentle movement, and immersive exploration. This class is your invitation to slow down, awaken your senses, and reconnect with the natural world around you. You'll learn practical techniques to deepen your presence, quiet the mind, and cultivate a profound sense of connection to the earth's rhythms—all while nurturing your own well-being. Whether you're a seasoned naturalist or simply nature-curious, this experience will leave you feeling inspired, rejuvenated, and more attuned to the wonders of the wild. Let the world fade away as you journey into the heart of mindfulness and nature! **Slow moving walk on nearby trail. Possible uneven terrain. Please bring water and dress to be outside.*

Douglas Falls Interpretative Guided Hike

Instructors: Kacey Shiflett & Amanda Rexrode

Join us for an engaging guided hike through Douglas, where history, ecology, and stunning waterfalls come together! Once a bustling coal town, Douglas is rich in history and natural beauty. As we drive in, we'll stop to explore the remnants of the old coke ovens before setting off on our journey. Along the trail, we'll take in breathtaking waterfalls while learning about the diverse flora and fauna that call this area home. Don't miss this opportunity to step back in time and experience the wonders of Douglas firsthand! **Long walk on flat terrain.*

Early Morning Bird Walks (Saturday & Sunday mornings)

Instructor: Herb Myers

What better way to wake up than strolling through hemlocks and birches to the sights and sounds of warblers, thrushes and wrens? Blackwater Falls State Park in June is dripping with both nesting residents and also migrants. Possible sightings or at least hearings include Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Vireos, Common Ravens, Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Hermit Thrushes, Winter Wrens, Purple Finches, Red Crossbills, and Dark-eyed Juncos. It is also warbler time and may include Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia and Canada Warblers among others? Join me and see who we see and/or hear!

**Meet at 6:30 AM in the lobby of the lodge on Saturday and in the parking lot at the sled run on Sunday. We will do an easy stroll on the pavement and be back in time for breakfast. All levels of birding experience/abilities are welcome. Dress for the weather, grab your binoculars and a field guide (if you use one). You may use the Merlin app but not to call birds.*

Ferns & Fern Allies of the WV High Country

Instructor: John Burkhart

Blackwater Falls has a great assortment of ferns and fern allies. We'll be able to find ferns from fields, several different forest types, cliffs and boulders, epiphytes growing on trees, and wetlands. We'll also be able to identify numerous clubmosses, which are diverse in the high elevations of West Virginia. During the class, we will take time to discuss and practice aspects of fern morphology, ecology, life-history, and reproduction, so that participants are well-equipped to study ferns after the class. **We will take one field trip from the lodge to Ekalala Falls to find ferns growing on boulders and in the spray of the falls (uneven terrain). We'll then field trip in the Park to pick up as many different fern and clubmoss species and habitats as possible.*

Geology of Canaan Valley and its Surroundings

Instructor: Dr. James Van Gundy

This will be a driving tour to some of the significant geological sites in the Tucker-Grant-Pendleton County area. The geological events and processes that have contributed to the creation of each site will be explained and discussed. A detailed fieldtrip handout will be provided. Some previous knowledge of geology is useful but not required.

Learning the Ropes: An Introduction to Ropes & Knots

Instructor: Brian Potter

Ropes and knots have been widely used in a variety of outdoor applications throughout history. In fact, probably just about everyone has used a rope and a knot or two for some purpose or another. This session will expose participants to different types of rope and their uses. Participants will learn to tie some common knots, bends, and hitches, as well as some practical uses/applications for each. Practical applications demonstrated and practiced will include things like establishing a handline for walking assistance up or down a hillside, lashing a tripod for campsite uses, raising or lowering a piece of equipment with rope, tensioning a rope line as a clothesline, and securing an item like a kayak into a truck. **This session will take place outdoors at the pavilion, and will be largely hands-on as participants add a few new tools to their outdoor skills toolbox.*

Let's Draw & Paint the Brook Trout

Instructor: Sarah Ferguson

Get to know the West Virginia state Fish, the brook trout, better, through creative observation. Students will use photo references to create study sketches. Students will then choose their favorite sketch and will do a final drawing and add color with watercolor paints. Join West Virginia native artist/art instructor Sarah Ferguson for this creative, joyful, educational, hands-on experience.

Medicinal Plants

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Linger

Discover the power of nature! Join Dr. Linger for a fascinating look into the medicinal properties of plants during a short, engaging lecture. Then, step into the wild on a guided nature walk to identify the hidden healing plants growing throughout Blackwater Falls State Park. Don't miss this hands-on exploration of nature's own pharmacy! **Easy, slow walk.*

Meet Some WV Reptiles (Friday evening)

Instructor: Paulita Cousin & Kenny Noland

Join the Blackwater Falls naturalists for an exciting up-close encounter with some of West Virginia's fascinating native reptiles! After the presentation, we'll hit the trails near the nature center for a guided nature walk, exploring local habitats where these incredible creatures live. Don't miss this adventure into the world of reptiles and their natural surroundings! **Meet at the Nature Center. Expect to walk up to 3 miles at a leisurely pace while spotting wildlife along the way.*

The Mysterious World of Orchids

Instructor: Dr. Katharine Gregg

West Virginia is rich in biodiversity, with over 40 species of orchids. This class will describe what makes an orchid an orchid, along with some of the history that explains the mysteriousness of the orchid family. For most orchids, reproduction by seed depends on the presence of appropriate pollinators, which may not be abundant. Pollinators and pollination of many of West Virginia's orchids will be illustrated. Life is a challenge, as we all know. Adaptive strategies of selected orchid species will be described. I'll also be bringing some of my orchids, hopefully in flower, to give you a first-hand view of some of their distinctive characteristics.

Nature Journaling by Sensing the Natural World

Instructor: Linda Durrett

Mother Nature has stories to tell and you can learn to listen. Explore how to record what you observe in the natural world. Join Linda Durrett and practice using all your senses, creating a journal, taking notes and sketching what you experience at Blackwater Falls State Park. Using your body's innate ability to gather information through smell, touch, sound, taste, and sight, we will discover how to navigate and capture those messages, turning them into words and drawings that will document your walk. **Short walks.*

Nature Photography

Instructor: Alan Tucker

Ever wish you could take better photos consistently? For years, I was just an average picture taker—snapping vacation shots, sunsets, and flowers without really understanding what made an image stand out. I thought buying an expensive camera would make the difference—but it didn't. Everything changed in 2012 when I took a professional photography workshop. Suddenly, the light bulbs went off, and I finally understood what it takes to capture something truly special.

In this workshop, I'll take you on that journey, sharing the key techniques and thought processes behind creating compelling images. We'll focus on what happens before you press the shutter—how to compose a shot, work with lighting, and make creative choices that transform an ordinary scene into an extraordinary one. Whether you use a DSLR, mirrorless camera, or a smartphone, these principles apply to all photography. We'll also touch on equipment and post-processing to enhance your final image. If time allows, we'll step outside to explore different scenes and apply what we've discussed. Join me to start seeing the world through a photographer's eye and take your photography to the next level! **Short walks on even terrain.*

Night Sounds of the Appalachians (Friday evening)

Instructor: Kevin Dodge

Night Sounds of the Appalachians is an entertaining and educational introduction to the different hoots, toots, peents, and peeps heard after sunset in the Central Appalachians. Weaving together facts, stories, and sounds, Kevin will recreate a night in the mountains of West Virginia.

Plan for the Worst & Hope for the Best

Instructor: Brian Potter

Emergency situations can happen at any time, and at any location. Emergencies don't discriminate based upon age, sex, race, financial status, or any other demographic. When these events occur, a successful outcome for the victim is largely contingent upon the degree of preparedness of those with the victim, and those that first respond to the situation. This session will look broadly at emergencies outdoors, and ways everyone can be a little more prepared. Topics covered will include pre-trip emergency planning, injury/emergency prevention strategies, tips in preparing an individual first aid kit for outings, first aid care of some common emergencies (including improvisation) and interaction/communication with emergency responders. **Come prepared with the gear you'd take on a typical outdoor day trip. This hands-on, interactive session will be held outdoors so please dress accordingly.*

Save Our Streams Workshop

Instructor: Callie C. Sams

Join us for a fun, educational class in and around the stream! During the Save Our Streams workshop, you will learn how to evaluate the water quality of wadeable rivers and streams by examining the stream habitat, conducting chemical analysis, and studying the biodiversity of benthic macroinvertebrate communities. Share your data in the online Volunteer Assessment Database and contribute to our knowledge of the health of our state's watersheds. **Be sure to wear clothing appropriate for a day outdoors in and around the water, including muck boots or waders, bug spray, and fast-drying clothing. Please spend some time before the workshop looking over the study materials.*

Sunrise Yoga (Saturday & Sunday mornings)

Instructor: Jamie Chambers

Greet the day and awaken your body and mind with a gentle morning yoga session. This class is designed to energize and prepare you for the day ahead. Breathe in the fresh morning air. Move through mindful stretches. Connect with the natural world as the sun rises.

This all-levels class offers a chance to move, breathe, and find balance. Set a positive tone for the day – whether you're awakening your body for exploration, sharpening your mind for learning, seeking a peaceful start, or a combination of all the above. **Bring a yoga mat or blanket and wear comfortable, flexible clothing.*

Upland Coniferous Forests & Woodlands

Instructor: Paulita Cousin & Kenny Noland

Join the Blackwater Falls naturalists to explore the upland coniferous forest and climatic associations of plants and animals. These forests once dominated the Allegheny Mountains but were decimated by logging and fire but once again expanding into parts of their previous range but still vulnerable. **Meet at the Nature Center. Wear sturdy shoes (no sandals), and consider bringing a hiking stick for added support. Be sure to carry water and a snack in a sealed bag. Expect to walk up to 3 miles on nearby trails with uneven terrain.*

Wilderness Mosaic: Discovering the Treasures of Dolly Sods

Instructor: Alyssa Hanna

Step into a landscape that defies its West Virginia coordinates—the iconic Dolly Sods Wilderness Area presents a captivating tapestry of ecosystems typically found hundreds of miles north in Canada. This walk along the Allegheny Front will weave through a patchwork of acidic sphagnum bogs, fens, windswept heath barrens, alder swamps, red pine stands, and spruce-eastern hemlock forests that are home to many rare species of plants and animals.

Our journey will stop at several locations in the Sods: We will observe delicate bog ecosystems that are home to rare plant species, stand atop ancient rock outcroppings where wind-sculpted "flag trees" tell tales of persistent mountain weather, walk through heath barrens with tasty blueberries and huckleberries, and visit the well-known Allegheny Front Migration Observatory. While they will not be banding birds during our visit, we will discuss this vital research station and the winged travelers that navigate this unique corridor.

**This hike should be considered moderate exertion level. We will hike two or three miles, and while the elevation change will be mild to moderate, there will be areas that are very rocky with uneven ground. Sturdy ankle-supporting hiking boots are essential (in addition to rocks, trails are often wet/muddy), and trekking poles are recommended for stability on rock barrens. Come prepared for windy weather with a jacket and consider bringing knee-high wading boots for possible bog exploration. Due to limited parking and the rough gravel access road, we will carpool, ideally in higher-clearance vehicles.*

WV Mammals: Pelts, Skulls, Tracks, & Scat

Instructor: Kacey Shiflett

Join Kacey Shiflett, WVDNR Wildlife Education Technician, to learn about WV Mammals. WV is home to over 70 different mammal species. In this class you'll get a chance to see examples of pelts, skulls, tracks, and scat for some of our state's mammals. Do you know which WV mammals are native, non-native, naturalized, or extirpated? Or which WV mammal is a marsupial? Or the difference between horns and antlers? How about which mammals are herbivorous, carnivorous, or omnivorous? Come learn fun facts about our state's mammals.

WV Natural Areas Program

Instructor: Krista Noe & Doug Wood

The West Virginia Natural Area program is fairly new to our state and is important for protecting rare organisms and biodiverse places throughout the state. If you have visited Natural Areas in other states, you may be wondering: how is this different from the program in WV? Well, you will find out! You will also learn what it takes to be a Natural Area in the state, the value of such places, and what we are doing with this program to protect them.

Conveniently, the conference is held at Blackwater Falls State Park this year, where there are three officially designated Natural Areas! Come join us to talk about our state Natural Area program and the unique features we protect throughout the state and here at Blackwater!

**Please dress to be on long walks on trails with uneven terrain.*

INSTRUCTOR BIOS

John Q. Burkhardt is the Botany Program Leader for the Wildlife Diversity Unit of the West Virginia DNR. He leads the DNR's plant conservation activities, including recovery of endangered species, inventory and monitoring of rare plants, and advancing the use of native plants in horticulture and restoration. He lives in Elkins, WV with his family and enjoys skiing, biking, fishing, and playing the piano.

Jamie Chambers is a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT 200) and licensed Zumba instructor who believes movement should be fun and accessible for all. She completed her yoga training at Yoga Power School and currently teaches at Yoga Power, LLC in Charleston, WV. Off the mat, Jamie is a Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) and Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM) with over 20 years of experience in accounting and auditing for the State of West Virginia. She joined the Kanawha Valley Master Naturalist Program in 2022 and now serves as Volunteer Coordinator and Chapter Treasurer. An outdoor enthusiast, she enjoys hiking, kayaking, gardening, and learning about plants while sharing her love of nature with others.

Paulita Cousin received her degree from Garrett College in 1993. She worked for Maryland Environmental Service following graduation. Her career at Blackwater Falls began on May 1, 1994, as a summer naturalist under the direction of Patricia Hissom. Paulita worked throughout the years mostly as a naturalist but wore many hats and received her dream job as a park activities coordinator/naturalist in December 2009. She is the former BSA Scoutmaster for Troop 673 out of Parsons, WV. She is an American Heart Association instructor through the Shirley Kimble Training Center and a certified interpretive guide with the National Association for Interpretation. Paulita and the Blackwater Falls State Park Foundation are actively working to fulfill the goal of Blackwater Falls State Park becoming a certified dark sky park to bring attention to protecting and preserving the natural resource of dark skies associated with the area.

Callie Cronin Sams has served as the WVDEP's Save Our Streams (SOS) program coordinator since February of 2021. Cronin Sams brings with her six years of prior experience working with the WVDEP's Youth Environmental Program (2011-2017), three years of grant writing and program development experience with the City of Buckhannon and Buckhannon Volunteer Center (2017-2021), volunteer time with the Buckhannon River Watershed Association, and a Master of Arts in Teaching in Biological Sciences from Miami University of Ohio and Project Dragonfly. She lives in Elkins, WV with her husband, Nathan, and daughter, Willow, where she loves spending time with family, camping, trail running, hiking, biking, and playing in the streams and rivers. To learn more about the Save Our Streams program, visit the Save Our Streams website or email Callie at callie.c.sams@wv.gov.

Kevin Dodge earned his B.S. in Biology from Southwest Missouri State University and his M.S. in Biology from Michigan Technological University, and pursued further studies in Wildlife Biology at West Virginia University. He has worked since 1987 at Garrett College, in far western Maryland, where he is Professor of Wildlife and Biology and Director of the Natural Resources and Wildlife Technology program. Kevin teaches various courses in natural history and ecology. Many of his classes include field trips to other parts of the mid-Atlantic/Central Appalachian region. Kevin and his students have studied the breeding biology, habitat use, and fall migration of northern saw-whet owls since 1991. He has presented his “Night Sounds of the Appalachians” program to many groups throughout the region.

Linda Durrett is a WV Master Naturalist, NC Master Gardener, a Certified Beekeeper and a Reiki Master/Teacher. With two art degrees and a journalism degree, she is also a master storyteller, traveling across the USA sharing her adventures as an Appalachian girl child; trout fishing, hiking, turkey hunting, stalking night crawlers and foraging for mushrooms. When living in North Carolina, she served a term as president of The Charlotte Art League, wrote a gardening column for the Charlotte Observer and retired from the City of Charlotte as a Public Relations and Media Relations Manager. Now a member of the WV Tygart Valley Master Naturalist Chapter, the West Virginia Storytelling Guild and the West Virginia Mushroom Club, her WV roots go back over 200 years and include fond memories of her Barbour County family farm. Linda’s motto is “IMAGINATION TRANSCENDS REALITY.”

Sarah Ferguson is a West Virginia native artist and art instructor with a degree in Art Education from West Liberty State College. Specializing in watercolor, she teaches at the Arts Center in Elkins, offers private lessons, and leads online Zoom workshops. Passionate about creativity and education, she brings a joyful, hands-on approach to her teaching.

Dr. Katharine Gregg is Professor Emerita of Biology, having taught at West Virginia Wesleyan College for 37 years. She is currently Curator of the George B. Rossbach Herbarium and Director of the Greenhouse at Wesleyan. She earned her B.A. degree from Emory University and a Ph. D. in Biology from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL. Her course specialties were Plant Systematics, Microbiology, and Experimental Biology. She has published over 20 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals and has presented her work at international, national, and regional meetings. Her orchid research in reproductive and population biology of orchids has contributed to the management of orchid populations on the Monongahela National Forest and at Canaan Valley State Park. She volunteers as Curator of Buckhannon’s Nature Park and Learning Trail, where signage describes both native and invasive plants.

Alyssa Hanna's life-long love of plants and the natural world has taken many forms. From her fascination with native flowers as a child to her degree and graduate work in botany focusing on plant ecology to working on stream and wetland restoration and environmental monitoring with Canaan Valley Institute and Downstream Strategies, the natural world has always been a critical part of Alyssa's life. She now draws on her twenty-three years of experience as a formal and non-formal science educator to teach Biology, Environmental Science, dual credit College Biology, and Earth and Space Science at Tucker County High School. Alyssa is a Certified Interpretive Guide, a Canaan Valley Master Naturalist, and a Master Naturalist instructor who teaches a variety of core and elective classes.

Valerie Hart, a lifelong nature enthusiast, grew up exploring the wild woods of West Virginia. She earned a B.A. in Chemistry from WV Wesleyan College and an M.S. in Forensic Science from George Washington University, spending 14 years in forensic science before returning to her roots. Now the COO and Co-Founder of Wonder & Grow, Valerie is a Level 2 Certified Kripalu Mindful Outdoor Guide, NAI Certified Interpretive Guide, Mindful Communication Facilitator, Kidding Around Yoga instructor, and West Virginia Master Naturalist. She finds joy in sharing her curiosity and love of nature, whether climbing trees, backpacking, fossil hunting, or simply savoring coffee on her front porch.

Rebecca Linger received her Ph.D. in Medicinal Chemistry from the department of Medicinal Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology at the Purdue University School of Pharmacy. In 2006, she began teaching at the University of Charleston School of Pharmacy where she began her studies into the biological and pharmacological effects of Appalachian plants, fungi and microorganisms by understanding the ways that these natural products were used by the peoples of Appalachia.

Early settlers of Appalachia confronted with illness and disease discovered a wealth of useful therapeutic herbals. The empirical knowledge of these medicinal substances and their toxic potential was passed on by oral tradition and sometimes recorded in herbals and other texts on *Materia medica*.

Dr. Linger has mined these sources along with the scientific record to publish a book, "A Guide to the Toxicology of Select Medicinal Plants and Herbs of Eastern North America." She has published 14 peer-reviewed articles on topics related to medicinal chemistry and has given talks on medicinal and edible plants throughout West Virginia for the past 16 years. She is a certified West Virginia Master Naturalist (WVMN), coordinator of the Kanawha Valley chapter, and state President of the WVMN Program.

Charles H. “Sam” Muncy, Jr. graduated from West Virginia University with a Master of Science in Civil Engineering and is a retired but still 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 ridge tops 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 Cottrill, and many other wonderful volunteers and Scouts tend several orchards 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”.

Herb Myers is a retired physician. His primary avocation is birding which he took up when he turned 60. He now has a North American life list of 605 birds. He volunteers at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the Wildlife Center of Virginia, and is a WV Master Naturalist. He resides in Virginia.

Krista Noe is the Vegetation Ecologist for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program. Her work involves classifying vegetation community types across the wild and wonderful landscapes of West Virginia and leading the state's Natural Area Program, among other responsibilities. In addition to her expertise in plant communities, she has a passion for discovering and documenting the fireflies of West Virginia, creating resources to help others learn about them as well. She holds an M.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Resources from West Virginia University and a B.S. from the University of Rhode Island. This is her first Master Naturalist conference, and she is excited to be a part of it.

Kenny Noland started working at Blackwater Falls as a Seasonal Naturalist in April 2022. Prior to this position, he spent several years working in sustainable agriculture. He has attended classes and completed course work with Tillers International and The Savory Institute. When not sharing his love for all aspects of the natural world, you can find him at home carving spoons.

Dr. Sheldon Owen is the Wildlife Extension Specialist for the WVU Extension Service where he conducts outreach and educational programming along with applied research related to wildlife habitat management and wildlife damage management.

Brian Potter completed his Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training at West Virginia Wesleyan College in 2003, and his Master of Science in Health and Physical Education at Marshall University in 2005. He is currently employed in emergency services education as a Specialist with West Virginia Public Service Training. In addition to several emergency care instructor certifications, Brian holds certifications as an athletic trainer, emergency medical technician, fire fighter, rope rescue technician, and has earned the FEMA professional development series certificate. Brian has over 20 years' experience in sports medicine and prehospital emergency services, and remains active as an emergency responder volunteering as a firefighter/EMT/Chaplain with the Buckhannon Fire Department. Brian has always been active in the outdoors, attained the rank of Eagle Scout through the Boy Scouts of America as a youth, and has continued to adhere to the scouting principle of "Be Prepared" throughout life.

Kate Reed (CEO & Co-Founder of Wonder & Grow) is a leader in personal development, blending mindfulness and nature to foster well-being and self-discovery. As a Level 2 Certified Kripalu Mindful Outdoor Guide, NLP Practitioner, Clinical Hypnotherapist, and EFT Tapping Specialist, she integrates nature's wisdom into transformative experiences.

With a B.A. from WV Wesleyan and an M.P.S. from George Washington University, Kate's expertise spans yoga, mindfulness-based resiliency coaching, and addiction recovery facilitation. Whether guiding others or enjoying the serenity of West Virginia with her family, she remains dedicated to mindful living and connection.

Kacey Shiflett is a Wildlife Education Technician with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR). She is dedicated to educating and inspiring the public about West Virginia's diverse wildlife through outreach programs at schools, summer camps, career fairs, and public events. Passionate about conservation and environmental education, she helps connect youth and communities with the natural world. Kacey holds a B.S. in Sustainability Studies, Biology, and Environmental Science from Davis & Elkins College.

Amanda Rexrode is a Maintenance Worker for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Stonewall Jackson Lake. A passionate nature enthusiast and photographer, she enjoys capturing the beauty of the outdoors through her lens. She became a West Virginia Master Naturalist in November 2024, further deepening her connection to the natural world.

Ben Spong is the Forest Operations Extension Specialist for the WVU Extension Service where he conducts outreach and educational programming along with applied research related to forest management and harvesting operations.

Alan Tucker is a retired career Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. Retiring out of the Pentagon, he stayed in the Washington D.C. area for fifteen years where he worked in the information technology area, including co-owning Artesia Technologies, a leader in digital information storage technology. He and his wife Liva returned home to WV in 2005 and settled in Buckhannon where he developed his passion for photography, which he calls Revealing God's Glory. His other passion is helping disadvantaged kids which he does primarily through a Christian Men's group called Band of Brothers who for the past ten years have blessed underprivileged children locally, nationally and internationally via a program called "Help Us Help Kids." Each year, he creates a WV Scenic Calendar that the brothers use to raise money for their program. The program reach is far beyond anything ever imagined. This past year, they raised \$60,000.

Dr. James Van Gundy holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Biology from the University of Utah. He taught Biology and Environmental Science at Davis & Elkins College for nearly 30 years. He has been involved with West Virginia's Master Naturalist program since its inception, serving as a member of the advisory committee that designed the original program. He is the author of *The Nature and Scenery of the West Virginia Highlands* and has contributed to many chapters of the WVMN Training Manual.

Doug Wood graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1977 from WVU with a B.S. in Wildlife Management. Retired from 33 years of service as an aquatic ecologist with the WV Water Resources Agency. Currently employed by the WV Dept. of Natural Resources' Division of Parks as a writer of State-designated Natural Area management plans. Member of the WVSTA since 1976, two years after the association's incorporation. Coordinator of the WVSTA's Mary Ingles Trail Blazers Chapter, developing the trail in honor of frontier heroine Mary (nee Draper) Ingles. Also currently serving on the Ward Hollow Wildlife Habitat Team of a DOW property in South Charleston, WV and the Kanawha State Forest Foundation near Charleston, WV. My wife Dianne and I have developed and currently maintain many wildlife habitat enhancement projects on our 143-acre farm in Putnam County, WV, including enhancements for the Teays Blue Mudbug, the Cerulean Warbler, and several amphibian species. We also are educators in subjects of Natural History and Cultural History, and the bonds between them: www.appalachianlivinghistory.com .