

Upstate Master Naturalist Association General Meeting

January 23, 2025

10:00–11:40 p.m.

Central-Clemson Library

105 Commons Way, Central, SC 29630

1. Call to order: Carson Johnson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
2. Amethysts: Cindy Robinson not present today, but if a member has earned an amethyst, Carson will collect name tags for Cindy to take care of.
3. Approval of minutes from November general meeting. Steve Lewis explained that minutes have been posted to the website, and that in the future, all draft minutes will be posted under the Reference Materials directory on the website until approved by the membership. November minutes were approved by a voice vote.

Reports from Officers and Committees

1. Report from Cindy Hekking, 1st VP for programs. The next general meeting in March will feature Dr. Bill Ranson, speaking on geology, scheduled to be at the Easley library. In May, Dr. Julia Kerrigan from the South Carolina Upstate Mycological Society (SCUMS) will present the program. In July, the new director of the SC Master Naturalist program, Mallory Maher is planning to speak about her vision for the program.
2. Report from Jennifer Randle, 2nd VP for membership. Jennifer was not able to attend, but Carson shared the following: At this time, we have 107 paid memberships, and 6 honorary members. There are currently 105 unpaid members. Members have until Jan 23 to renew at the \$20 rate. Then the fee will be \$25, until March 31, at which time individuals will be considered inactive, and will not receive emails or invitations to UMNA events.
3. Report from treasurer, Dave Redden. We have about \$12,000 in the bank, but it changes everyday because membership dues are coming in. No expenses in January of this year. The books for 2024 are closed, and have been audited by Craig Williams. It is too early to file with the IRS for this year.
4. Grants committee. Polly Powell, committee chair was absent, but Carson shared a report from Conestee Nature Preserve, which received a grant for binoculars and compasses.
5. GO committee. Betsy Lewis reported on the following outings. Notification and sign-up will take place about 3 weeks before each event. On February 8, Dan Whitten will lead a winter tree ID hike at Conestee. On April 23, Dr. Bill Ranson will lead a geology hike starting at Beasley Gap on the Palmetto Trail. If there is interest in a visit to the Museum of York County, Dr. Steve Fields has agreed to lead a program. We need to have at least 15 participants. Possible dates are May 6, 13, 14, 15 or 20. Members will receive a survey via email in order to gauge interest and choose a date. Carson added that anyone who was interested in spending the night could also visit 40 Acre Rock and/or Landsford Canal the next day.
6. Newsletter report. Laura Godfrey not present, but if you have a submission, contact Laura before February 1.

7. Social committee. Manella Calhoun reported via Zoom. Carson highlighted the features of the Facebook page and the UMNA website.
8. Volunteer Update. Cindy Robinson was not present, but Carson shared the following report. In 2024, 39 members earned an amethyst, which was fewer than the previous year, but about 5% more hours were recorded on the volunteer database.
9. Bald Rock report. Bill Hollingsworth shared information about the new parking area. A contract has been approved for the new parking area off of Persimmon Ridge, and it is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2025. Once that happens, SCDOT can begin removing access to the former roadside parking area, as well as other pull-offs on 276. When that is complete, Friends of Bald Rock have plans to plant native plants in the former parking area. At this time, there are no scheduled litter pick-ups due to the reduced volume of litter in the area.

Old Business

1. The Zoom committee is still looking for volunteers to assist with Zoom meetings.

New Business

1. Mallory Maher has plans to reach out to all Master Naturalist associations in the state in an effort to facilitate sharing their offerings with each other.
2. Friends of Jocassee are working to bring a Motus tower to the area. There will be a meeting on February 21 at Jocassee Valley Brewing. Jennifer Tyrrell of SC Audubon will speak about Motus and migration. Gathering begins at 5:30.
3. Blue Wall Birding Festival will be held April 24-27 at Table Rock State Park. Limited to 50 participants. Register on SC State Parks website.
4. BellFest is March 15 at Devils Fork State Park. Contact Tony or Cam to volunteer.

Cindy Hekking introduced today's speaker, Jordan Gray of the Turtle Survival Alliance. Jordan joined us via Zoom due to icy weather and unsafe driving conditions at the coast where he is based.

After the presentation Carson Johnson adjourned the meeting