



Virginia Museum of
NATURAL HISTORY

EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDE

2026-2027



Sleepovers



Join us after hours for an exciting night of exploration! We offer programs for audiences of all ages! Cost is \$50 per participant. One chaperone is required for every five children. \$25 for each additional chaperone.

www.vmnh.net/plan-your-visit/sleepovers

Planning Your Visit

Groups may request an engaging educational program led by a museum educator to highlight key elements relevant to your group's needs. Homeschool groups are welcomed. Please note, school group visits and programs are available Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Upper level students have the option of participating in a program with either our education department or museum scientists. Please call **276-403-8501** for scheduling.

Reservations

Reservations are required and must be made at least two weeks in advance. For information or to schedule a visit, please call **276-403-8501** or e-mail discover@vmnh.virginia.gov.

Group Rates

Groups of 10 or more will receive discounted admission. One chaperone is required for every 10 students. Admission for teachers, required chaperones, and bus drivers is complimentary. Additional chaperones are \$6 each. Because groups enjoy a discounted admission rate, membership passes and other discounts/coupons are not valid toward group admission fees.

Group rates are found on the following page. Added programs are \$5 per student.

Thanks to the support of Martinsville City and Henry County, education fees are discounted for public schools within these districts.

Homeschool Science & Engineering Academy



VMNH offers engaging educational programs for homeschool students. Held on the first and third Wednesday (September – May) from 10 to 11:15 a.m. and repeated at 1:00 to 2:15 p.m., programs are geared towards ages 6-8, 9-11, and 12 & up. Cost is \$10 per participant. www.vmnh.net/education/homeschool-education



Scouts

Working on badge requirements? VMNH can assist with a wide variety of scout programs including sleepovers.

www.vmnh.net/plan-your-visit/scouts

Birthday Parties

Planning a birthday party? The museum is the perfect place to have a Dino-mite celebration!

www.vmnh.net/plan-your-visit/birthday-parties

Doodle Bugs!



VMNH's Doodle Bugs! program provides children ages 3–5 and their caregiver the opportunity to experience science firsthand! They will learn and grow together with this hour-long program. Programs are held on second Wednesdays (September – May) at 10 a.m. Cost is \$10 per participant.

Museum Store

The Museum Store offers a variety of fun and educational items for your students. Student souvenir bags are available when requested in advance.





AT-THE-MUSEUM PROGRAMS

Enhance your museum visit by adding a hands-on program. Programs presented at the museum are 20 to 60 minutes depending on what other group activities are requested. A minimum of 8 participants is required.

Programs are correlated to SOLs. Added programs are \$5 per student.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Outreach programs bring museum educators to you! SOL-correlated programs are designed to be presented in a school environment, at a community center, or at other off-site locations. Programs are best suited for classes of up to 30 students or participants. Programs are 45 minutes to 1 hour. One program can be delivered for up to four sessions in the same day. In the event additional programs or staff are needed, an additional fee may apply. Programs are offered year-round and can be customized. A new program can be created upon request.

1 Session	\$100
2 Sessions	\$150
3 Sessions	\$200
4 Sessions	\$250

Thanks to the support of Martinsville City and Henry County, education fees are discounted for public schools within these districts. A nominal mileage fee will be added for programs outside of Henry County. For more information, please call 276-403-8501.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Virtual programs bring your students to the museum without ever having to leave their seats! Through the use of two-way video, your class will join museum educators as we explore Virginia's natural heritage and uncover its rich biological and geological history. Together, with the use of videoconferencing and interactive activities, we will spark imagination, enhance curricula, and support Virginia and national educational standards. Distance learning programs can be developed and adjusted to meet your needs. Education staff will work with you to establish your videoconferencing connection in advance. Let us know how we can connect with you!

Visit www.vmnh.net/education/virtual-education or call 276-403-8501 to find out more.



ADMISSION RATES

	Adults (ages 18-59)	Children (ages 3-17), Seniors (60+), & Military	Members & Children Under 3
Standard Rates			
Per Person	\$12	\$6	FREE
Group Rates			
Per Person (10 or more)	\$6	\$4	FREE



PROGRAM TOPICS

Grades Pre-K-1

The 5 Senses

**NATURE
OF SCIENCE**

Students will sharpen their scientific skills by using their senses to investigate the physical properties of various objects such as shape, color, texture, and weight.

Grades K-12

Microscope Lab Investigations

**NATURE
OF SCIENCE**

Elevate your students' hands-on learning experience with the use of microscopes. Students will have the opportunity to visit the museum's microscope lab to view and investigate specimens under magnification. Topics include, but are not limited to:

CELLS

FOSSILS

BOTANY

GEOLOGY

PREDATOR/PREY RELATIONSHIPS

INSECTS



Grades K-12

Pollution Prints

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Water is a valuable natural resource. In this program, students will learn about the importance of water, evaluate their water footprint, and look at what causes water pollution and prevention.

Grades 4, 6, ES

We're All in a Watershed

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

This program incorporates an interactive watershed model to illustrate the basic properties and characteristics of watersheds, as well as human impact.

Grades 2, 3, 5

Digging In

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Students will explore the causes and results of weathering and erosion, the landforms that are affected and what part plants and animals play. Let's get a little dirty as we examine the components of soil, its origin and its importance as a Virginia natural resource. Please choose one:

WEATHERING/EROSION/DEPOSITION

SOIL

Grade 4

Space Voyage

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Students will journey through space as they create scale models exploring planet sizes, distance, and characteristics that are out-of-this world.

Grade 3

Water Cycle Voyage

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Students will learn about the water cycle as they "become" water droplets through highly interactive games. *Additional fee of \$3 per student.*



Grades 5-6

Renewable or Not?

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Students will explore sources, transformations, and uses of renewable and nonrenewable energy through grade appropriate activities such as creating a wind turbine. *Additional fee of \$3 per student.*

Grades 3-5, LS, BIO, ES

Early Birds

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Travel back in time at the museum and explore the evidence of how populations adapt over time. Follow the evolutionary transition of theropod dinosaurs to modern day birds with hands-on activities and comparisons. This program also examines the adaptations of one of the largest birds to ever soar across Virginia!

Grades 4, 5, ES

Rocks and Minerals Uncovered

**EARTH
SCIENCES**

Students will explore the bountiful resources of the earth through rock and mineral samples.

Grades 4, 6, ES

Exploring Oceans

LIFE
SCIENCES

This program offers students a grade level specific, hands-on experience in exploring the ocean, its importance, and its many features and characteristics.

Grades K-2

Trees for the Future

LIFE
SCIENCES

We all need trees! During this hands-on program, learn about types of habitats, seasons, plant parts, life cycles, and the role that trees play in an ecosystem.

Grades 3, 5, LS, BIO

Let's Make A Fossil!

LIFE
SCIENCES

Students will explore what makes a fossil a fossil, make observations to determine what we can learn from fossils, and explore the processes of how fossils form. Students will even make a fossil of their very own to keep! *There is an extra \$3 charge per student for this program.*

Grades Pre-K-2

Bears in the Forest

LIFE
SCIENCES

Have fun learning about habitats, seasons, and the life needs and characteristics of bears in this active role-play program adapted from Project WILD®.

Grades 3-4, LS, BIO

Fantastic Food Webs!

LIFE
SCIENCES

Explore food web basics and the connections between organisms and the environment. Please choose one:

LIVE ANIMALS

Students will learn about food webs while getting up close and personal with a variety of live animals!

OWL PELLETS

Students will explore the predator/prey relationship as they dissect owl pellets. *There is an extra \$3 charge per student for this option.*



Grades 1-4, LS, BIO

Animal Needs

LIFE
SCIENCES

Meet the museum's live animals! Students will explore life characteristics needs, adaptations, and habitats as they interact with our friendly critters.

Grades K, 1, 4, LS, BIO

Cultivating Classification

LIFE
SCIENCES

With a focus on the many ways that biological organisms can be classified, this program highlights the basics of how animals are classified. This program is applicable to a variety of grade levels, ranging from taxonomic sorting based on physical characteristics to utilizing a dichotomous key to identify and classify various organisms.

Grades Pre-K-1

Dino Dig

LIFE
SCIENCES

Students will think like paleontologists during a mock dig for dinosaur "bones," touch fossils from different geological periods, and learn how fossils are formed.



Grades Pre-K-K

Grow As We Go

LIFE
SCIENCES

Does the baby look like its parents? Life processes are illustrated as students investigate the basic needs and life cycles of living things through observing animals' physical characteristics. Please choose one:

PLANTS

ANIMALS

Grades K-12

Exploring Nature in Community

LIFE
SCIENCES

Enjoy a unique experience in an outdoor, natural laboratory exploring terrestrial or aquatic ecology. These hands-on, highly interactive programs can be customized.



PROGRAM TOPICS (CONTINUED)

Grades K, 1, 5

Light Science

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Students will explore the science of light, shadows, night, and day, and learn about waves, reflection, refraction, and the color spectrum using hands-on activities!

Grades K-2

I Like to Movie It, Move It!

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Students will work together to explore the many ways objects move and the forces that cause movement in this highly interactive program.

Grades 1, 5

Sound Detectives

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Students will investigate the world of sound by experiencing vibrations using various objects. Concepts include: motion of objects, vibration frequency, waves, and wavelength.

Grade 5

What a Shock!

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Working together, students will test objects for conductivity and experiment with open and closed circuits. Classes will explore conductors, insulators, circuits, electrical energy, static and current electricity.



Grade 2

Marvelous Magnets

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Students conduct simple experiments involving magnetic fields, poles, attractions, and the uses of magnets.

Grades 2-3, 5

The Nature of Matter

PHYSICAL
SCIENCES

Solids, liquids, and gases, oh my! Students will explore the distinguishing properties of matter, including atoms, elements, compounds, mixtures, and everything in between using hands-on experiments!

Grades 2-5

Engineering Workshop

MATH &
ENGINEERING

Students will gain an introduction into the world of engineering by discussing the engineering design process, while completing an engineering challenge of their own. Engineering design process step vocabulary and engineering challenge will differ by grade level.

Grades 3, 5

Speedy Building

MATH &
ENGINEERING

Students will use LEGO® bricks, axles, and wheels to build cars to race to explore motion, friction, energy, and simple machines. They will measure distance and time traveled, and will construct a graph.

Grade 3

Link to the Past

HISTORY &
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Students will get a choice to explore either ancient Egypt and China or ancient Greece and Rome (please choose one) through comparison of cultures. Student led inquiry will be followed by a craft reinforcing important cultural topics.

EGYPT & CHINA

GREECE & ROME

Grades 6-12

Historical Climate Change

HISTORY &
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Explore past climates and their effects on historical populations within North America. Students will be able to map climate change and discuss its impact on how people interacted with their environment.

Grades K-5

Virginia's Indigenous People

HISTORY &
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Students will learn about the natural resources that indigenous tribes of the Eastern Woodland used in their daily activities. Students will examine artifacts and reproductions to get a glimpse of the lifestyles of indigenous people before colonization.



EXHIBITS

The museum offers innovative, award-winning exhibits highlighting the unique features of Virginia's natural history. All exhibits and displays are correlated to Virginia education standards. The following is an overview of the 2026–2027 exhibits.

The Harvest Foundation Hall of Ancient Life serves as an exciting gathering space that introduces the museum's research and collections. Displays include:

- Ice Age Exhibits
- *Allosaurus*
- *Eobalaenoptera*
- *Pteranodon*
- Stromatolite
- *Acrocanthosaurus*
- **Stories from Skeletons** Column Case Exhibit
- Viewable working laboratories including the **Elster Foundation Vertebrate Paleontology Lab** and the **Archaeology Lab**.

Uncovering Virginia features representations of six research sites in Virginia where VMNH scientists and their colleagues have worked or are working.

Hahn Hall of Biodiversity features a variety of taxidermied African mammals including a lion, hyena, and several antelope.

Fossil Overlook is a prehistoric life exhibit located on the museum's upper-level and includes a variety of fossils, detailed models, and casts for visitors of all ages. An up-close and personal view of the flying reptile *Pteranodon* is available here, as well. The exhibit features new displays sponsored by the Hermes Family Foundation from prehistoric seas including a *Dunkleosteus* skull and *Mosasaur* fossils.



Lepidoptera explores over 700 species of butterflies and moths from all over the world.

Lee & George W. Lester, II How Nature Works demonstrates how energy from within the earth's crust and the sun have shaped the earth.

- **How Nature Works: Rocks** features dramatic landscape models that reveal how the world is shaped by geological forces.
- **How Nature Works: Life** teaches visitors that almost all living things on earth depend, directly or indirectly, on the sun as an energy source.

Farmers, Warriors, Builders: The Hidden Life of Ants is now open in the Suzanne M. Lacy Education Center. This Smithsonian exhibit features stunning macro photographs that tell incredible stories about the lives of ants. This exhibit was donated to VMNH for educational purposes by the Smithsonian Institution at the end of its national tour in 2016. The original tour ran from 2011 to 2016.

UPCOMING EXHIBITS

Mariels Young Explorers Center (Summer 2027) will serve as a hands-on education exhibit for children featuring STEM-focused stations that supports Virginia's science SOL initiatives and promotes open-ended exploration.

Special Exhibit Hall will feature back-to-back exhibitions in its new location including Smithsonian's **Water/Ways** (Fall 2026) followed by VMNH's **Birds of Virginia** (early 2027).

Hooker Furnishings Petra Exhibit (Fall 2027) will feature the amazingly preserved fossil remains of an ancient cat, affectionately named "Petra," which was found deep inside a cave in western Virginia.

MEMBERSHIPS

Become a VMNH Member today to receive FREE unlimited admission, invitations to receptions and events, discounts in the Museum Store, and FREE reciprocal admission to hundreds of museums and science centers nationwide. Learn more and join online at www.vmnh.net/membership/new.



Doodle Bugs!

Pre-registration for ages 3–5 is required one week prior to each event by contacting the museum at **276-403-8501** or discover@vmnh.virginia.gov. Programs are from 10–11 a.m.

September 9:	"River Critters"
October 14:	"Fantastic Fossils"
November 10:	"Fall Flowers"
December 9:	"Ocean Explorers"
2027	
January 13:	"Goggles, Lab Coats, Oh My!"
February 10:	"Backyard Animals"
March 10:	"Wild Weather"
April 14:	"Reptiles vs. Amphibians"
May 12:	"Incredible Insects"



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

2026

October 14:
October 24:

National Fossil Day

Bonez & Booz sponsored by Brightspeed, Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, Virginia Tourism Corporation, The Helen S. & Charles G. Patterson Jr. Charitable Foundation Trust, Renewal by Andersen of Roanoke, Bassett Furniture Industries

2027

January 23:
April 23–24:
May 6:
July 23–24:

Science Saturday: Bug Day sponsored by Brightspeed, Carter Bank

Reptile Festival sponsored by Bassett Furniture Industries, Brightspeed, Carter Bank

Teacher Appreciation Event (RSVP required)

Dino Festival sponsored by Bassett Furniture Industries, Carter Bank



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Martinsville, VA 24112
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