

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITATS: THE PLANTS AND CRITTERS YOU'LL FIND IN YOUR WEEDY BACKYARD

Verl Emrick

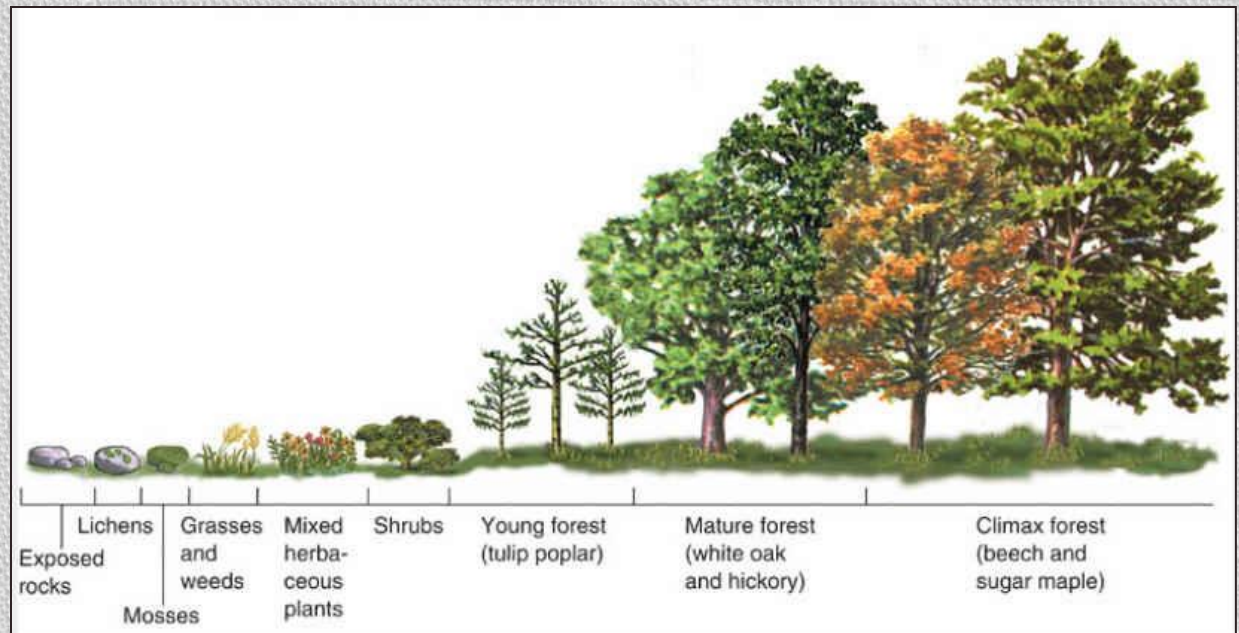
Research Scientist-Ecologist

Virginia Tech-Conservation
Management Institute



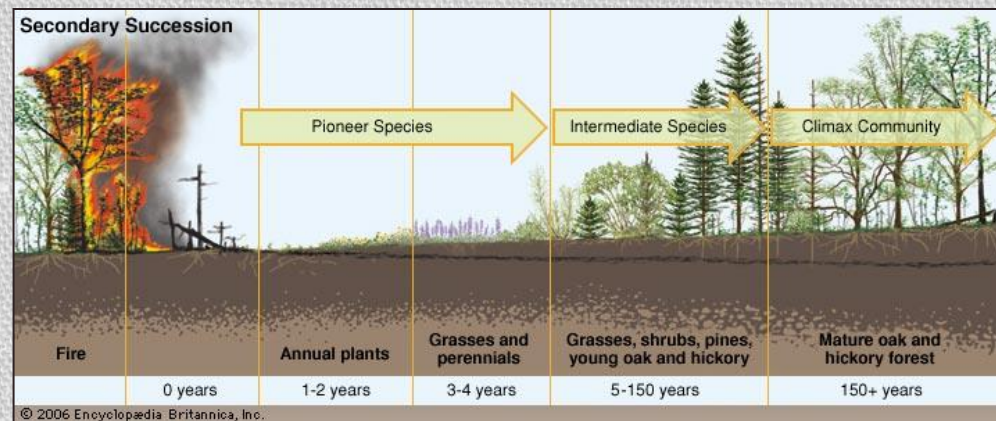
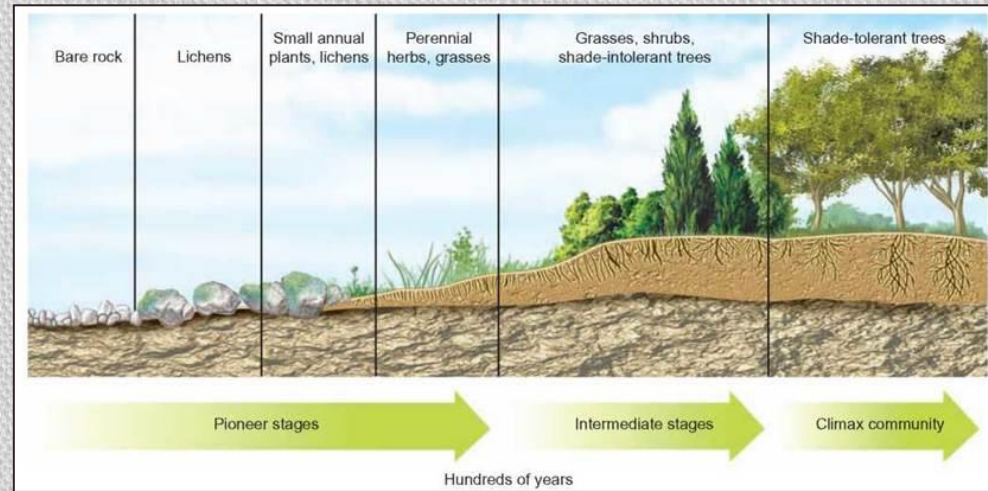
What is “succession” in ecological terms?

- The change in plant communities (species composition and structure) at a site over time.
- At each stage of succession, the plant community alters the soil and microclimate thus facilitating the establishment of the next group of plant species.



Two Types of Succession

- **Primary:** Establishment and development of plant communities occurs in a barren habitat with little or no soil at the beginning.
- **Secondary:** Development of biotic communities in a disturbed area where topsoil has been retained.



Primary Succession ?

- Glaciation ...
- Volcanic eruptions...



Secondary Succession ?

- Old-field Abandonment...
- Fire... (wildland or prescribed)
- Mechanical clearing...

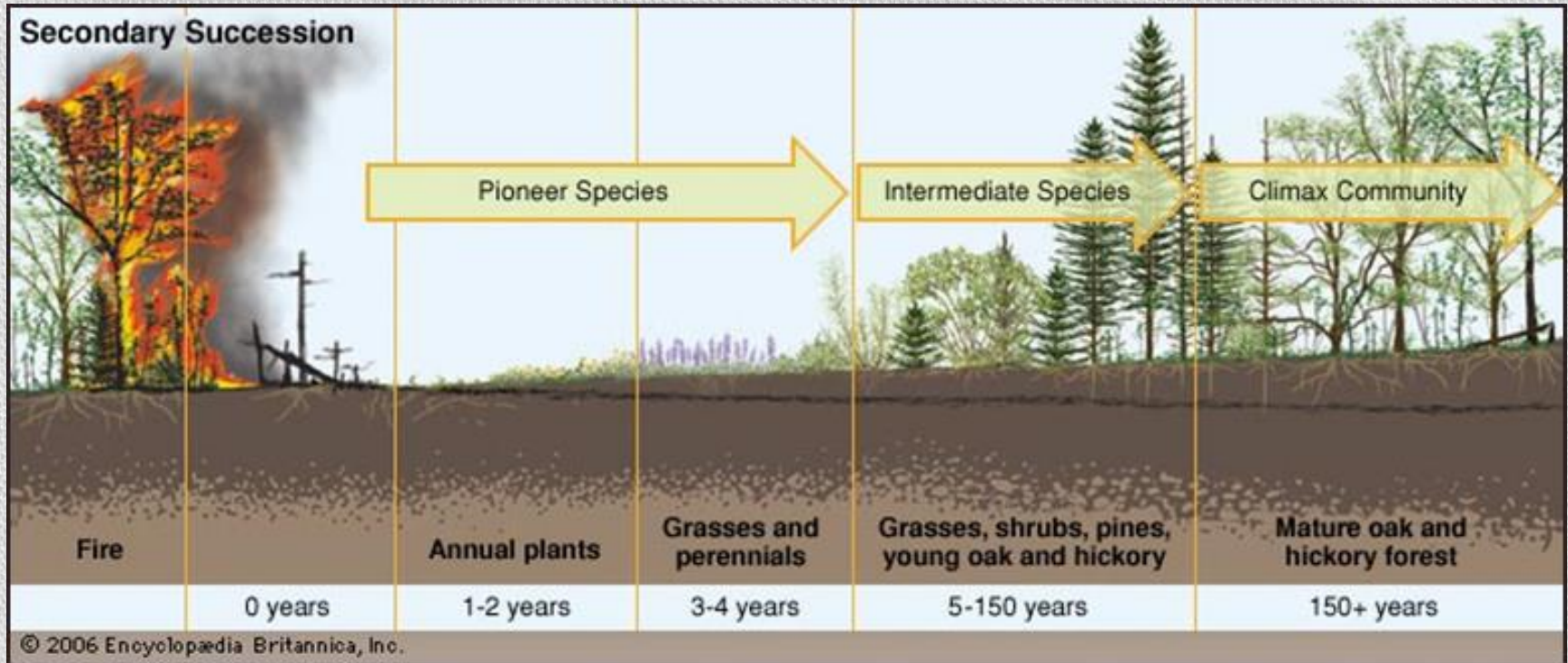


What is early successional habitat?

- Habitat with vigorously growing grasses, forbs, shrubs.
- Provides food and cover for specific types of wildlife.
- Requires disturbance to be maintained.



Early Successional Habitat

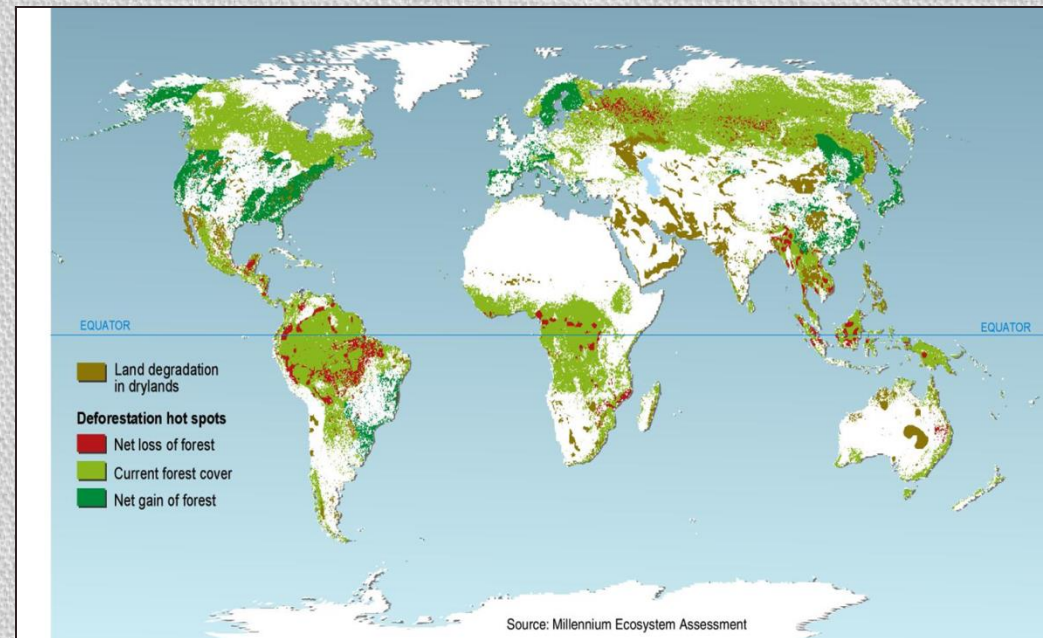


Range of Early Successional Habitat in Virginia



Why is early successional habitat important?

- Represents and is comprised of remnant prairie flora and fauna.
- Increases regional biodiversity
- Important for Pollinators
- High quality early successional habitat is one of the rarest habitats in Virginia.
- Why?



How to create early successional habitat?



Active Habitat Creation



Cast of Characters?



Non-native Grasses

Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)



Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*)



Non-Native Grasses

Timothy (*Phleum pratense*)



Orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*)



Broomsedge- *Andropogon virginicus*



Native “prairie” grassses

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)



Herbaceous Species

Daisy Fleabanes (*Erigeron* spp.)



White Clover (*Trifolium repens*)



Herbaceous Species

Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*)



Golden Ragwort (*Senecio aureus*)



Herbaceous Species

Blackeyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)



Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Herbaceous Species

Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.)



Woody Species

Sumacs (*Rhus spp.*)



Shrubby St. Johns Wort (*Hypericum prolificum*)



Rare Woody Species

- Michaux's Sumac (*Rhus michauxii*)



Insects-Pollinators

Butterflies (Monarch)



Bees



Swallowtails

- Large Butterfly
- Long Tail
- Slow graceful flight



Whites & Yellows

- Wide range in size
- Rapid, low flight
- Constantly on the move



Bees

Honey Bees



Bumble Bees



Bees

Carpenter Bees



Mason Bees



Reptiles

Black Rat Snake



Common Garter Snake



Reptiles

Box Turtle



Fence Lizard



Birds

Indigo Bunting



American Goldfinch



Birds

Carolina Wren



Towhee



Grassland Sparrows

Chipping Sparrow



Song Sparrow



Grassland Sparrows

Field Sparrow



Grasshopper Sparrow



Mammals-Small Fossorial

Meadow Vole



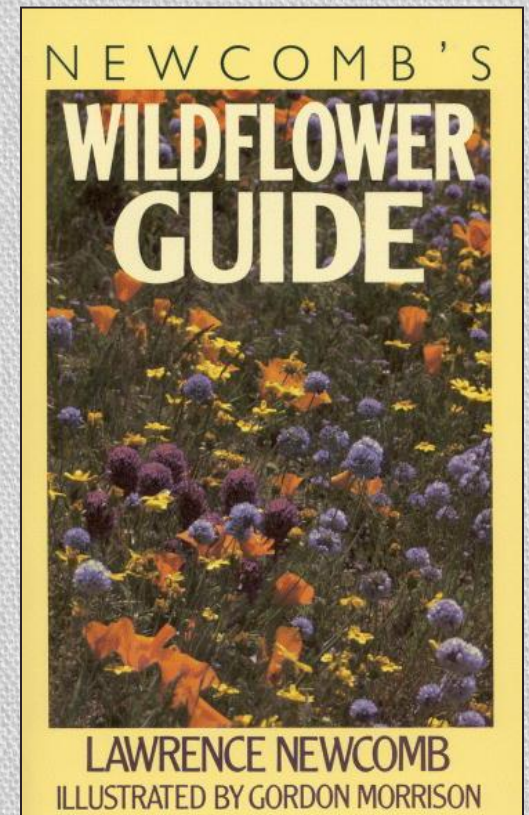
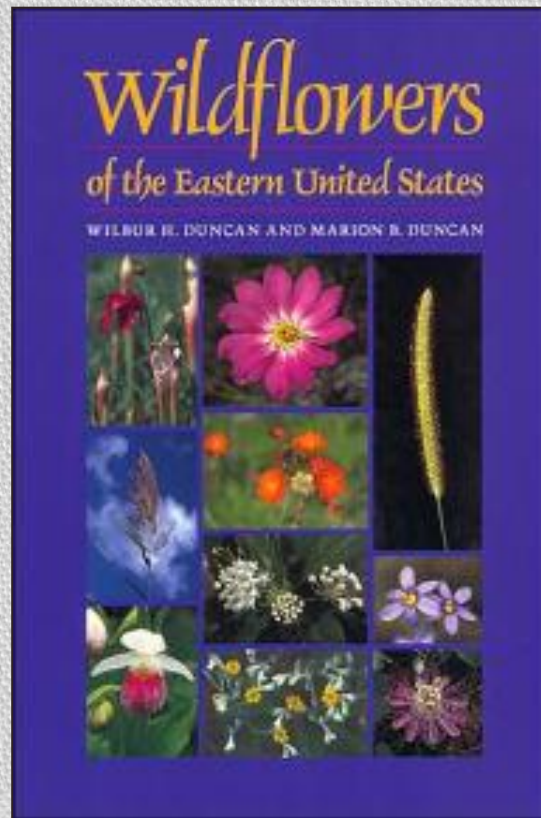
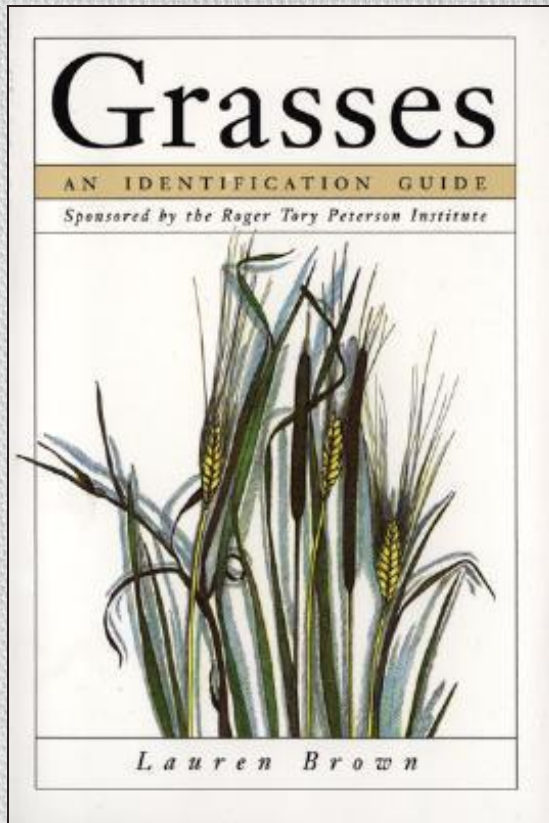
Short Tailed Shrew



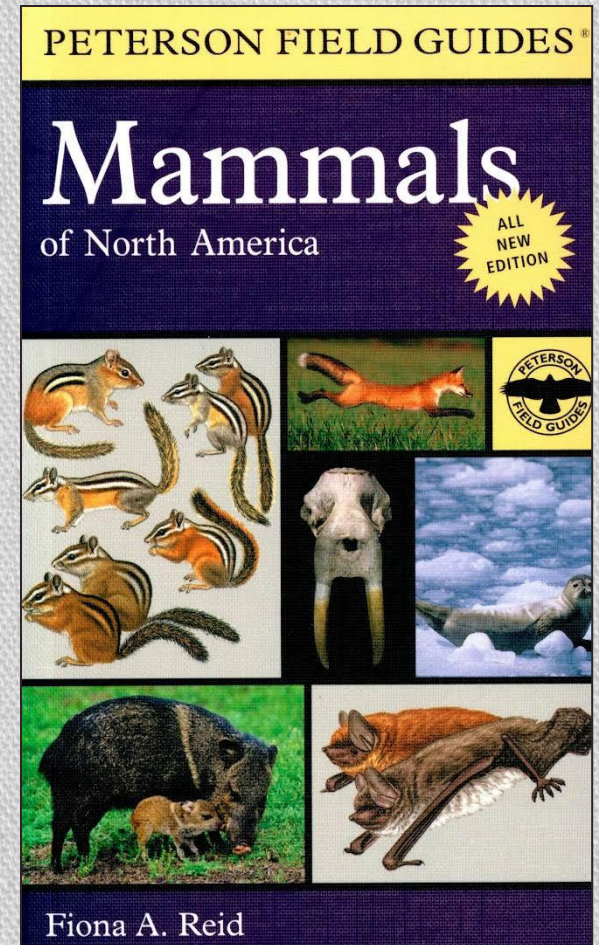
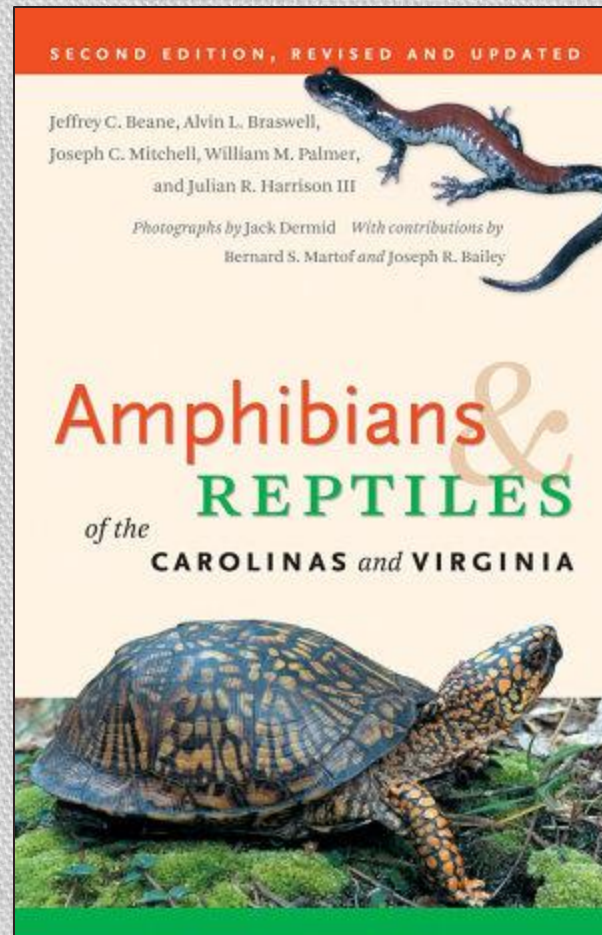
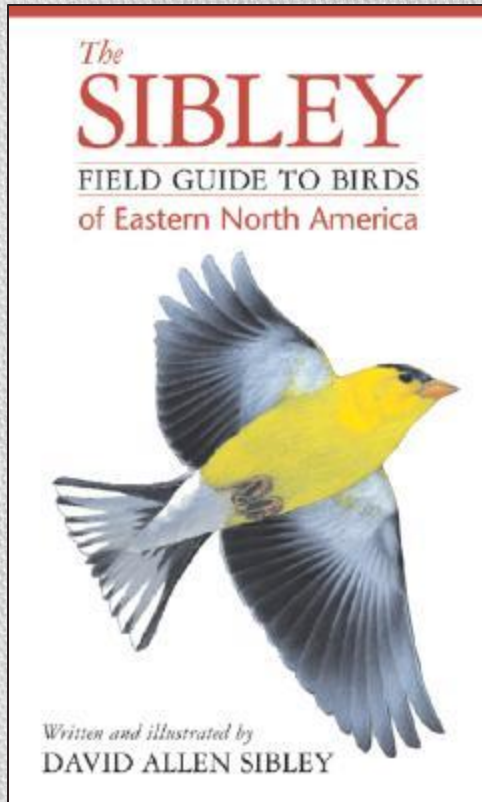
Common Mammals



Resources-Field guides



Resources-Field Guides



Selected Web Links

- Virginia Native Plant Society (<http://vnps.org/>)
- National Wildlife Federation Garden for Wildlife (<http://www.nwf.org/Garden-For-Wildlife.aspx>)
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/habitat/>)
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/nativeplants>)

Questions?



Contact Information

Verl Emrick Ph.D.
Research Scientist-Ecologist
Conservation Management Institute
Virginia Tech College of Natural
Resources and Environment
1900 Kraft Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-8851
cmi.vt.edu

