

Blue Ridge Discovery Center

The Blue Ridge Discovery Center (BRDC) is dedicated to understanding, appreciating, and preserving the natural history, social history, and the interconnectedness of the Blue Ridge eco-social system.

Code of Ethics

General

Members of the **BRDC** are expected to obey all regulations and/or restrictions placed upon the site visit by the agency or individual who had a custodial responsibility for the site. This is in addition to obeying all state, national, and CITES regulations which pertain to the site.

Field Collection

Public Property

BRDC considers unauthorized collection of living specimens, geological specimens, or historical artifacts from public property to be unethical behavior as well as possibly unlawful. If field collection is required for the successful completion of a project, members must obtain prior written authorization from the appropriate agencies. All relevant laws and regulations must be obeyed when making these collections.

Private Property

BRDC members must obtain permission from the property owner or an individual with custodial responsibility over the property prior to all visitations unless freedom of access has been granted. In addition, members must obtain specific permission from an appropriate individual prior to collecting specimens or artifacts from private property. All relevant laws and regulations must be obeyed when making these collections.

General

When specimens or artifacts are collected, members are expected to collect all relevant field notes in addition to the site, date, time and collector data. The field notes must be recorded in such a manner as to be available to other interested parties and to facilitate future integration and/or interpretation.

Conservation and Stewardship

The **BRDC** believes that the destruction of habitat by humans is a major cause of the loss of habitat and the reduction of species diversity. The **BRDC** supports those organizations which seek to maintain important habitat in its natural condition and/or to restore it to its historical state.

To this end, the **BRDC** encourages members to landscape their property with native species and to especially those non-native species which have found to be invasive. The **BRDC** especially condemns the introduction of non-native species into sensitive environments. The **BRDC** encourages the removal of invasive, non-native species from these environments and supports the reintroduction of species which historically populated the site. Such remediation and restoration should only be undertaken with the permission of the owner/responsible agency and under the guidance of someone with expertise in habitat maintenance/restoration.

Personal Responsibility

BRDC members are expected to:

- Know the limitations of their knowledge and not represent themselves as having expertise which they do not possess.
- Not represent themselves as being a spokesperson for the **BRDC** without the prior specific authorization from the President of **BRDC**.
- Co-operate with and assist professional researchers in their research efforts.
- Not falsify or conceal information from others who have a legitimate need for it.
- Keep in confidence all sensitive information obtained as a **BRDC** member. This includes, but is not limited to: the location of rare or endangered species of plants and animals; the location of archeological sites which may be looted or otherwise damaged should their location become known.

In conclusion, the position of BRDC on ethical behavior can be summed up in two well-known admonitions:

The first, from Hippocrates: "First, do no harm."

And the second, from the forest service: "Take only members, leave only footprints."

Addendum

This document is intended as a general guideline to ethical behavior; for those who desire more detailed guidance in specific situations, the **BRDC** recommends the following organizations and their codes and standards:

Archeological Society of Virginia

<http://asv-archeology.org/Org/OrgEthics.html>

Virginia Native Plant Society

<http://www.vnps.org/node/10>

Virginia Society of Ornithology

http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO_PDFs/VSO_P_B_Ethcs_042009.pdf