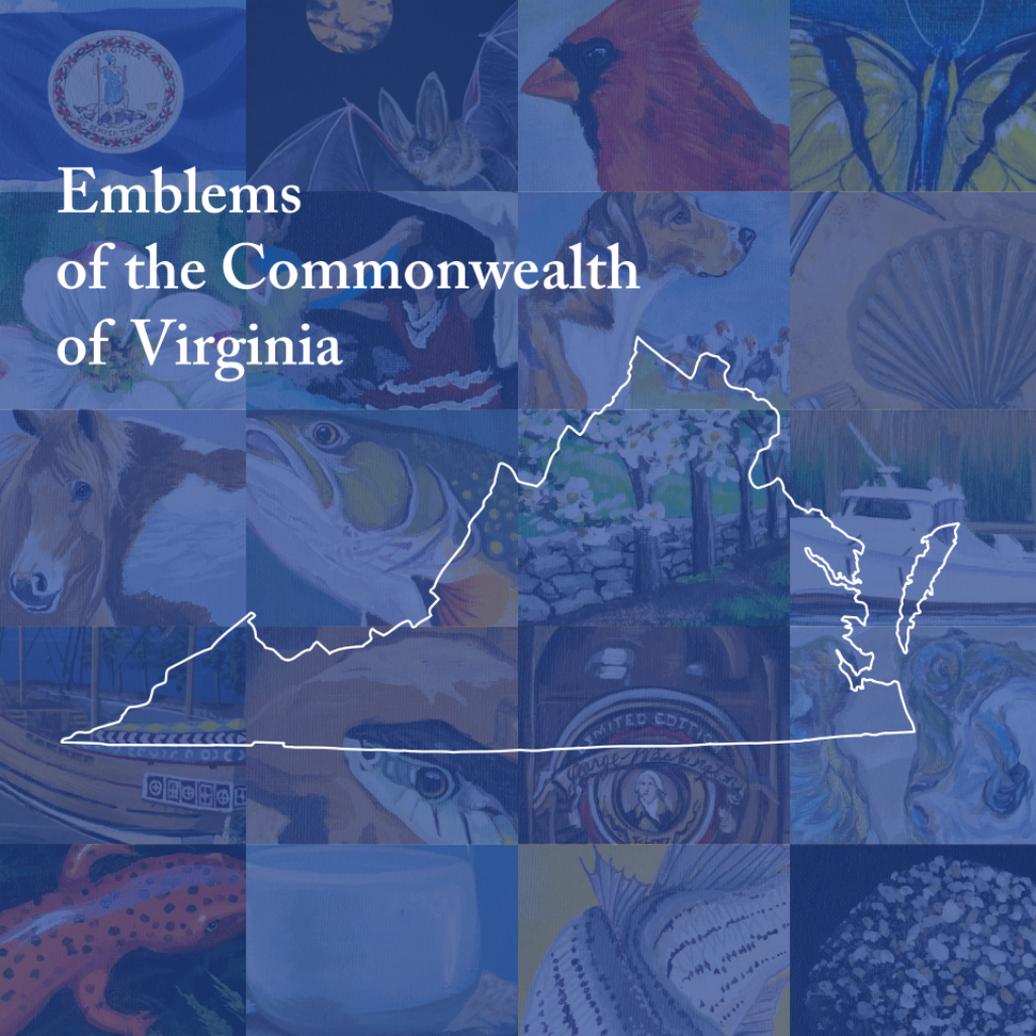




Emblems of the Commonwealth of Virginia



Virginia was founded at Jamestown
on May 13, 1607, and was named after
Queen Elizabeth I of England
(the Virgin Queen).

Virginia was called “The Old Dominion”
by King Charles II of England because of the
colony’s loyalty to the crown.

The title, “Commonwealth of Virginia”
was adopted June 29, 1776,
to signify the “common good”
of the people of Virginia.

In addition to Virginia’s rich history, Virginia has many Official State symbols that represent the cultural heritage & natural treasures of the Commonwealth. Some symbols have been adopted after a concerted effort by citizens to have a significant item recognized for its importance to the state. To that end, citizens, organizations, or school children often research a particular symbol and make a request for a bill, which may eventually be signed into law. The following are the symbols displayed in the order they were adopted.



Obverse



Reverse

The Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia—called for at the Convention of 1776 and designed by George Wythe—pictures on the front the Roman goddess of virtue, the word “Virginia,” and the Commonwealth’s motto, Sic Semper Tyrannis, or “thus always to tyrants.” On the reverse side are three more goddesses and the word Perseverando (“by persevering”). The seal has remained largely unchanged since 1779.

The Great Seal of the Commonwealth
Adopted 1776



The obverse of the seal is the official seal of Virginia and is used on all the official papers and documents of the Commonwealth's government, as well as on its flag. On this side, Virginia's Virtus is a figure of peace, standing in a pose which indicates a battle already won. She rests on her long spear, its point turned downward to the ground. Her other weapon, a parazonium, is sheathed; it is the sword of authority rather than that of combat.

Tyranny lies prostrate beneath the foot of Virtus, symbolizing Great Britain's defeat by Virginia. The royal crown which has fallen to the ground beside him symbolizes the new republic's release from the monarchical control of Great Britain; Maryland, Virginia and New York are the only U.S. states with a flag or seal displaying a crown.

The Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth
Adopted 1776

“Sic Semper Tyrannis”

The motto, “Sic Semper Tyrannis”
(Thus Always to Tyrants)

The motto was adopted in 1776, with the words symbolizing victory over tyranny. Virginia’s state motto was recommended by George Mason to be incorporated into the Seal of Virginia during the 1776 Virginia Convention.

Motto
Adopted 1776



Flag
Adopted 1861



Chosen for the beauty of its flowers and for its abundance throughout the state, the flowering dogwood is also known as the floral emblem of the Commonwealth of Virginia, acting as both the state's official tree and official flower.

Tree — American Dogwood (Cornus florida).
Adopted 1918



Thomas Jefferson grew American Dogwood on the grounds of his Virginia estate Monticello in the 1770s. It was this connection to Virginia's history that state lawmakers had in mind when they selected the American Dogwood as the Virginia state flower in 1956.

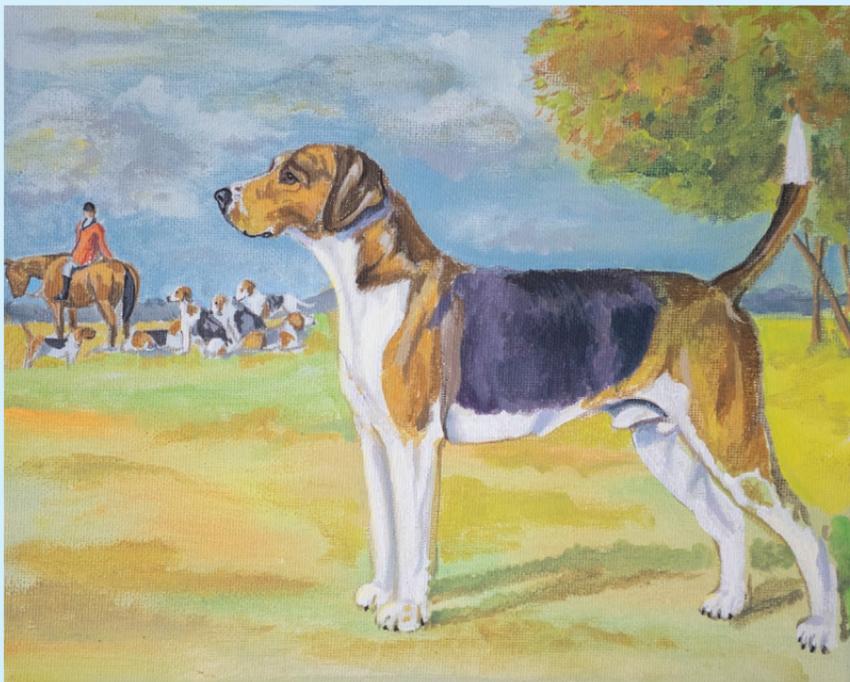
Flower — American Dogwood (Cornus florida).

Adopted 1956



The bird, a finch, also commonly gets called a redbird. A native species of Virginia, the state's European settlers noticed how the vibrant colors of the bird match the robes of the cardinals of the Catholic Church. Since colonial days, the state's residents have enjoyed the cheerful warble of the state bird.

Bird — Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*).
Adopted 1950



American foxhounds were developed in colonial times by landed gentry purely for the sport of hunting foxes. The American Kennel Club gives credit to George Washington as the Father of the American Foxhound.

Washington and his wife Martha were avid dog lovers and breeders.

Dog — American Foxhound.

Adopted 1966 - SB314, Chapter 547



A school group came up with the idea of adopting the oyster which was introduced in the legislature by Owen B. Pickett of Virginia Beach. Pickett thought an official oyster might help promote tourism.

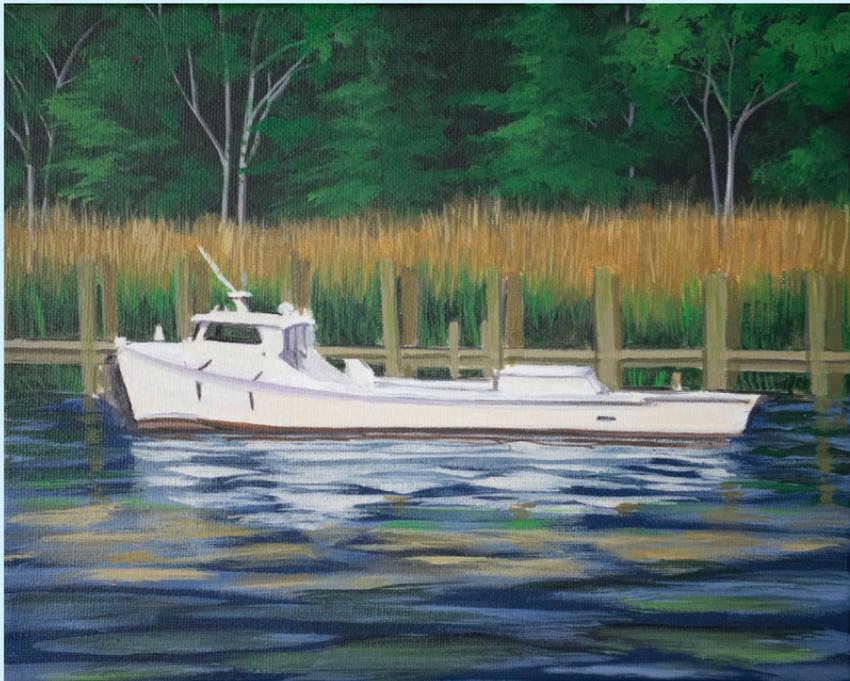
Shell — Oyster shell (Crassostrea virginica).
Adopted 1974 - Chapter 24, H599



According to Virginia Tech's 4-H Virtual Farm, "In 1998 Virginia ranked 19th in total milk production, 20th in the number of dairy cows, and 36th in milk produced per cow in the US. The average dairy cow in Virginia produces 1,860 gallons of milk per year. Virginia dairy farms produced 214 million gallons of milk in 1998."

Beverage — Milk.

Adopted 1982 - C191, S296



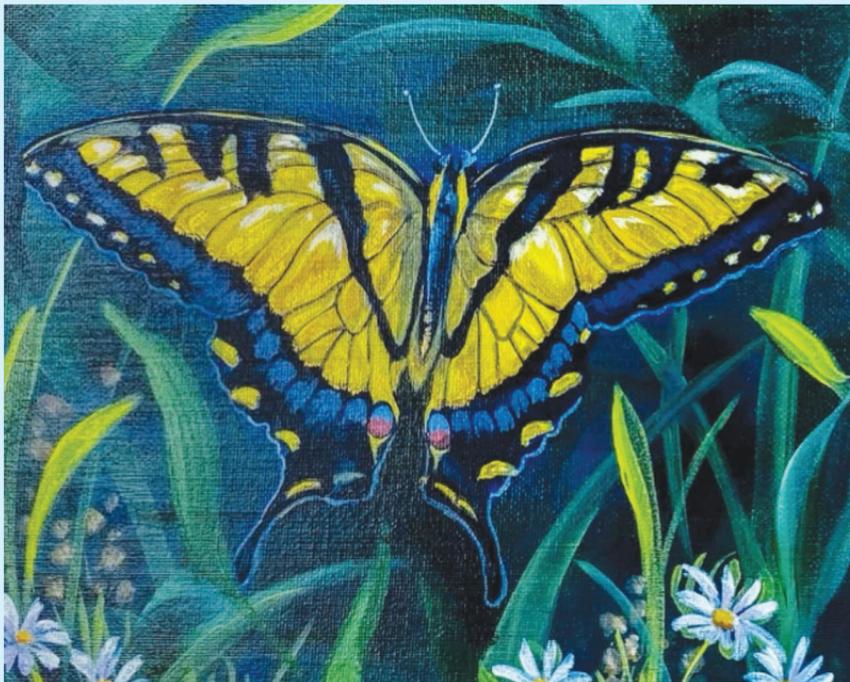
During the first half of the 20th Century, a fleet of Deadrise boats worked the Chesapeake Bay for oysters. Simple but elegant, the Chesapeake Bay Deadrise was built specifically to work the shallow, choppy waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers.

Boat — “Chesapeake Bay Deadrise.”
Adopted 1988 - C317, H153



The American folk dance that traces its ancestry to the English Country Dance and the French Ballroom Dance, and is called, cued, or prompted to the dancers, and includes squares, rounds, clogging, contra, line, the Virginia Reel, and heritage dances.

Folk dance — Square dancing.
Adopted 1991 - Chapter 71, H1247



In 1991, the swallowtail was selected as the state insect because it's the first North American insect to be described scientifically and those observations originate in Virginia; It's a flower pollinator; Active in Virginia from April to late October; And is colorful, harmless and graceful.

Insect — Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly (Papilio glaucus Linne).
Adopted 1991 - HB1519, Chapter 575



This distinctive scallop is the first fossil described from North America in 1687. *Chesapeakepecten jeffersonius* is the index fossil for the Lower Yorktown Formation, and is distinguished by the number of ribs (9 to 12), and a rather rounded shell edge. Immature scallops attach themselves to the sea floor, whereas adult individuals are free-swimming.

Fossil — Chesapeakepecten jeffersonius.

Adopted 1993 - c251, H1379; SB605, Chap 509



Replicas of the three ships, Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery, which comprised the Commonwealth's founding fleet that brought the first permanent English settlers to Jamestown in 1607, and which are exhibited at the Jamestown Settlement in Williamsburg.

Fleet — Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery.
Adopted 2001 - HB1728, SB1254



The endangered Virginia big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*) was designated the official state bat of Virginia in 2005; this symbol helps to educate Virginians about caves and the creatures that inhabit them.

Bat — Virginia Big-eared bat (Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus).
Adopted 2005 - HB2579

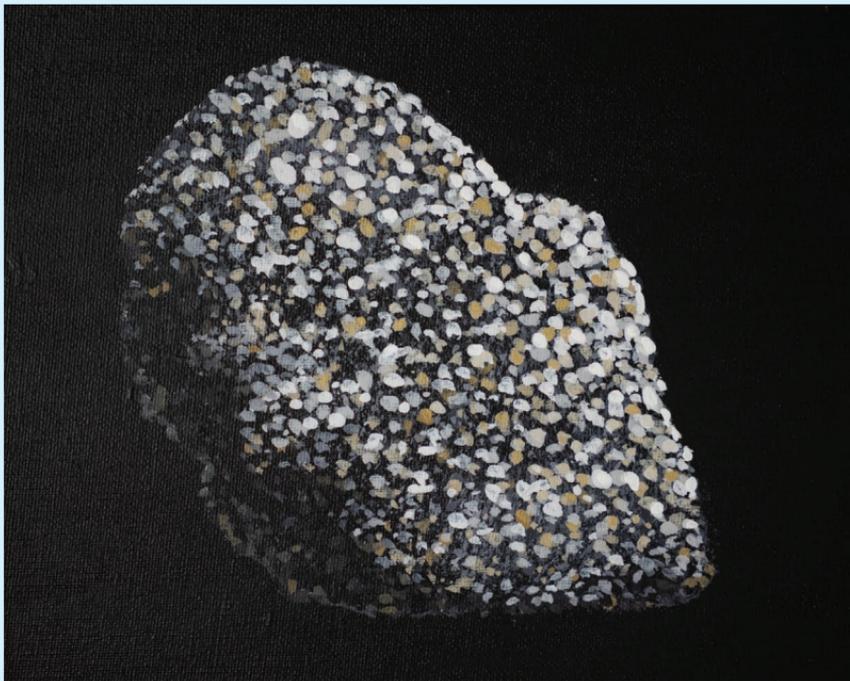


Virginia designated striped bass as the official state saltwater fish in 2011.

A Fourth Grade class from Spratley Gifted Center lobbied for this designation after a visit from the vice chairman of Coastal Conservation Association of Virginia, who told them about the rate of decline among the fish, which live in the Chesapeake Bay and along the East coast.

Fish (Saltwater) — Striped Bass.

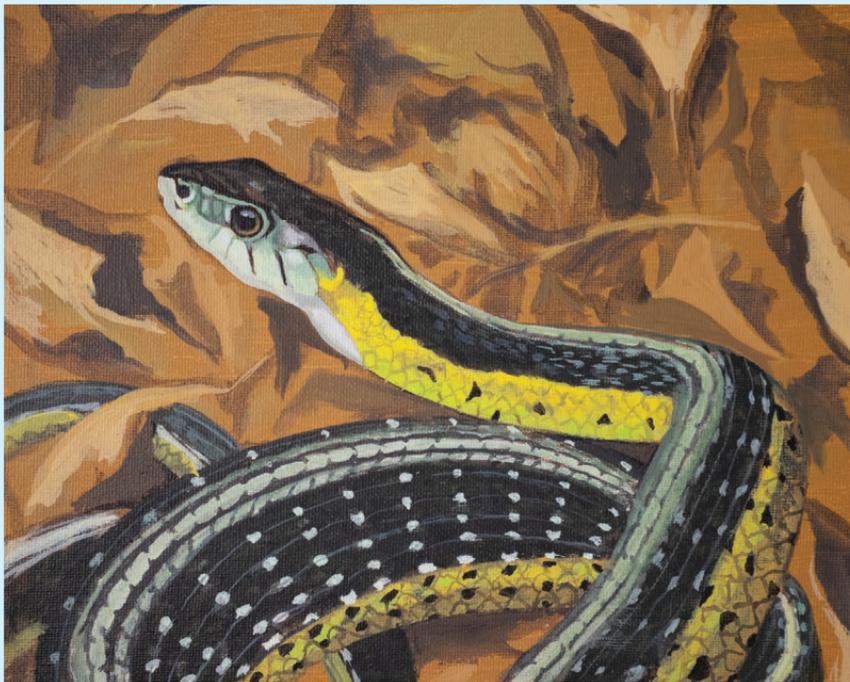
Adopted 2011 – SB940



Nelsonite was designated the official state rock of Virginia thanks to the efforts of Michelle Stanislaus and her classmates at Piedmont Virginia Community College, who convinced legislators to adopt the speckled rock as a project for their Political Science and Geology classes. Nelsonite is named for Nelson County, Virginia.

Rock — Nelsonite.

Adopted 2016 – SB352



Adopted in 2016 as the state snake, the idea was first suggested by an 11 year old student that met Delegate Pogge at a science camp. While they can give you a bit of a surprise, these snakes are actually a gardener's best friend. From slugs to small rodents, garter snakes eat many of your common garden pests. They are widely seen throughout Virginia.

State snake – Eastern Garter Snake

Adopted 2016 - HB335



George Washington's Rye Whiskey is distilled at His reconstructed distillery at Mount Vernon from a recipe discovered by examining the distillery ledgers for 1798 and 1799. It is distilled in limited quantities and staff continue to use Washington's original mash bill and 18th-century methods.

Spirit — George Washington's rye whiskey produced at Mount Vernon, Virginia.

Adopted 2017 – SB1261



Adopted in 2018, this species was selected as the State Salamander because of its beautiful coloration, widespread distribution in the Commonwealth. This designation was in collaboration between a group of young dedicated conservationists known as Salamander Savers, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn of Fairfax County.

Salamander — Red Salamander (*Pseudotriton ruber*).

Adopted 2018 — HB459



The Brook Trout was designated as the official fish of the Commonwealth in 1993. In 2011 Virginia changed designation of the Brook trout to State Freshwater Fish. Brook trout are relics of the last ice age, left behind when the glaciers receded. It survives only in clear, cold water and populates the mountain rivers and streams of Virginia.

Fish (Freshwater) — Brook Trout.

Adopted State fish in 2006 - HB1011; Changed to Freshwater fish in 2011



The Chincoteague pony was designated the official state horse in 2023, thanks to an Accomack County 4-H teen. Each year, tens of thousands visit Chincoteague Island to witness the annual pony swim across a channel, where some are sold to help control the herd population and raise funds for local fire departments and the animals' care.

Pony — Chincoteague Pony.
Adopted 2023 - HB1959, SB1478

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