



Valley Views

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President's Note

By Jim Cummins, PVAS President



As I write this note, COVID-19 is increasing, and along with it the impacts, restrictions, and hardships upon our lives and livelihoods. There are many uncertainties, and we feel much anxiety. These are times when our connections to nature and the outdoors are especially necessary, as they help to calm us and keep us healthy.

The importance of the PVAS mission, our properties, trails and programs, have perhaps never been greater. Many of us, along with other members of our communities, are getting out to enjoy those properties: hiking, observing birds and other wildlife, and the beautiful changes brought by Autumn. We are relaxing and recharging. Thank goodness, PVAS is doing its part to help birds, wildlife, and its members.

Sadly, COVID-19 will have major impacts upon the management of PVAS for the foreseeable future: our staff, the Board of Directors, and PVAS members have been under stress as we manage and cope. Wonderfully, with your support, the flexibility of our grant providers, and our successful securing of a loan through the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the PVAS nests have remained secure despite these trying times. PVAS's recently completed annual audit confirmed that PVAS has remained fiscally healthy despite the threats and impacts around us. Happily, your continued support is working. In addition, we are fully anticipating that the Federal PPP loan, which has been a key to keeping PVAS staff employed and our programs functional, will become a grant to us as designed by the SBA. This has been our hope. We are fortunate that it is all working out.

The goodness that I appreciate the most is yours. Your support, your volunteer work, your participation, have been and are vital to PVAS. Let us keep up the good work. As we migrate into a future that holds many uncertainties, one constant is clear: your goodness is working. May calm prevail, may we all stay healthy, and may our connections to the outdoors grow stronger and more numerous.

2020 Annual Appeal Is Underway

We hope you'll support PVAS programs, preserves, and conservation efforts by donating to the 2020 Annual Appeal! You will receive a copy of our 2020 Annual Report in early December, summarizing all the ways we worked to "preserve, restore, and enjoy the natural world through education and action" in spite of all the challenges presented over the year.

With your help, we will continue to adapt to sharing our passion for and knowledge of the natural world in new, creative ways whether it be through virtual means or in-person but small-scale. And we will continue to provide safe access to the natural world at our preserves with over 10 miles of trails and 500+ acres to explore while protecting critical habitats.

You may donate by:

1. Using the enclosed remittance envelope to mail a check to "PVAS" at PO Box 578, Shepherdstown WV 25443
2. Our secure credit card payment processing at this link: www.potomacaudubon.org/annual-appeal/.
3. Contributing a portion of your IRA to PVAS, which has certain tax benefits. You may also donate Stocks.

However you give, your donation is 100% tax deductible.

Thanks to the generosity of members like you, we will continue to pursue our mission using safe, meaningful, and impactful methods that are sensitive to the needs of the community.

This Race is for the Birds! Spring 2021



Lace up your walking and running shoes! The wheels are in motion for our annual 5K & 10K event. Stay tuned for information about our potential virtual and in-person options.

We are looking forward to seeing you back on the trails in 2021!

www.potomacaudubon.org/race/.

Potomac Valley Audubon Society is dedicated to preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action.

PVAS Events

20 Years of Dedication: A Thank You to “The Boss”*By the PVAS Staff*

Kristin Alexander is “The Boss.” Yes, literally, as she is the Executive Director, but also metaphorically. Simply stated, Kristin gets things done. She knows the ins and outs of this organization like nobody else and she is the fuel that keeps this team running.

It’s hard to believe now, but Kristin didn’t achieve “Boss” level overnight. This well-deserved status evolved over 20 years of dedicated service to PVAS. Kristin’s journey with PVAS began in late 2000. She and her husband, Jeff, had recently moved to the area and, being the friendly folks that they are, began networking. On a visit to NCTC, they met Georgia Jeppeson. After hearing about their expertise in environmental education, Georgia invited Kristin and Jeff to an upcoming PVAS meeting about the future of Yankauer Nature Preserve. At the meeting, the PVAS members were enchanted by Kristin’s personality and skill. Three days and many excited emails later, PVAS hired her to do a community needs assessment to develop a plan for utilizing Yankauer. It was a three-month, part-time assignment and PVAS spent every last penny they had in the bank to compensate her.

After those three months, PVAS knew they couldn’t let this amazing person slip away. She had determined the greatest need in the community was environmental education for children, particularly focused on our pivotal role in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. They hired her in an official capacity as the Director of Yankauer Nature Preserve. PVAS had been partnering with The Nature Conservancy to manage Yankauer since the late 90’s. However, it was under Kristin’s leadership that Yankauer became the community staple that it is today. She is responsible for overseeing the construction of the pavilion, the programming that takes place there, interpretive signage, the addition of the handicap accessible trail, and later the composting toilets.

In Kristin’s early years, she earned a reputation as a grant writer extraordinaire. She secured several large grants that allowed PVAS to build capacity, eventually leading to the creation of our Watershed Program in 2003 and our first Summer Camps in 2004. Kristin’s natural charm attracted a whole fleet of enthusiastic and committed volunteers to teach these programs to the community’s youth. In 2006, PVAS entered into another agreement with TNC to manage Eidolon Nature Preserve in Morgan County. At this time, Kristin was still the only person on staff for PVAS. Our programs were growing so fast that Kristin was becoming stretched thin despite the awesome volunteer force she had standing with her. In January 2007, Kristin was gifted with her equally incredible sidekick, Ellen. Ellen took on the role of Program Director, while Kristin stepped into the role she holds today, Executive Director.

Speed up a few years to today. Kristin’s first sidekick has since retired, but thanks to the hard work of both Kristin and Ellen, PVAS is now composed of a power squad of five staff members, two AmeriCorps volunteers and over a hundred steadfast volunteers. Over the last 20 years, Kristin has built amazing relationships with so many people in our community that Kristin Alexander has truly become a household name. It’s hard to go anywhere without someone knowing her!

Although she now primarily holds an “office” job, don’t let Kristin’s clean hands fool you; she still plays in the dirt when she gets the chance. She is the ultimate PVAS employee; with boundless energy and the ability to step into any role. She can fill in as an instructor for Amy, lead a program for Krista, navigate the database for Hannah and still make time to plant trees with KC. She doesn’t ask her employees to do anything she wouldn’t do. The Boss has even been known to clean the Nature Center bathrooms.

Summarizing Kristin is difficult. There’s so much that can be said because she’s not only our boss; she’s also our friend. Her tolerance level is unparalleled. She is our sounding board and voice of reason. She has an amazing ability to stay calm, cool and collected, even during times of stress and adversity. She is kind and compassionate. She is able to connect with everyone. But watch out, she’s also clever and crafty. She can give constructive criticism and leave you with nothing to say except “thank you.”

While she may be in charge now, she is still an educator at heart. She continues to teach her staff every day and works to grow us to our full potential. And for that, we are very thankful to have her as our fearless leader. So, cheers to 20 years, and may we have another 20 years of Kristin ahead!

Thank you, Boss Lady!

Krista, Amy, KC and Hannah



PVAS Events

Being's That It's Kristin Alexander Day*By Suzanne Offutt, PVAS Past President*

Some members of the Kristin Alexander Fan Club gathered on Sunday afternoon, November 15 at her home while many more shared through Zoom to celebrate Kristin's first 20 years with PVAS. While our official proclamation for Kristin Alexander Day used multiple 'whereases' and 'therefores', in true Appalachian fashion, President Jim (aka James D. Cummins) added the vernacular, "Being's That" to officially proclaim November 15, 2020 as Kristin Alexander Day. We are recognizing Kristin's 20 years of leadership for Potomac Valley Audubon Society. The surprise celebration brought together people from the West Coast to the East Coast. Organized by husband, Jeff Feldman; Georgia Jeppesen, Mike Sullivan, Jane Vanderhook, Gretchen Meadows, Susan Brookreson, Jim Cummins, and Jean Neely, the group crafted opportunities to acknowledge Kristin's stellar leadership.

The group collected monetary gifts, personal memories, testimonials, and an official proclamation to bring honor and recognition to Kristin. The official proclamation may hang in her office and the memory box collection will be read and savored by Kristin. The monetary gift of \$2400 was specifically designated as a personal gift from many admirers for Kristin to spend on

herself at her own discretion. These gifts and this celebration are an acknowledgement of Kristin's extraordinary leadership for Audubon in our region. She described doing a job that she loves which means that she never really works a day in her life. Through her numerous contributions of time, effort, leadership, mentoring, commitment, visioning, motivating, cajoling, grant-writing, fund-raising, and more, Kristin has grown up with PVAS in the past two decades. The scope of her work probably was best described by Mike Sullivan's summation of what she's hauled in the various iterations of her transportation beginning with the Corolla and ending with the most recent Subaru.

Kristin has worked many weekends and unexpected events as well as responding to unanticipated demands. She's carried it all out with grace, dignity, and a cheerful heart. She's spent so much time in her car, aka her mobile office, hauling goods for the jobs and events at hand actually wearing out a Subaru. She's hauled signs, chairs, tables, tents, projectors, screens, coolers, displays, envelopes, shovels, brush cutters, chainsaws, T-shirts, owls, More envelopes, birdseed, puppets, bird costumes, parade banners, More T-shirts, pizza, lots of wine, ice cream, brochures, trees, pumpkins, cornstalks, the Baby Jogger for hauling things around, chili, ice tea, and brownies (Yes—we always liked the brownies).

Recalling her beginning days with PVAS, Kristin described that she and Jeff had just gotten married and moved to this area. She diligently began looking for a job that meshed with her background in environmental education. They attended a PVAS meeting and made contact with some of the board members who invited her to a meeting on November 15, 2000. Susan Brookreson, President at the time recalled that they were so impressed by her knowledge base and enthusiasm that they brainstormed a way to put together \$3000 for Kristin to carry out a community needs assessment. Not surprisingly, there was a strong need for environmental education expressed by classroom teachers and community members. From there Kristin's relationship with Audubon evolved through contractor, coordinator, Director of Yankauer Preserve, to, finally, Executive Director. This is the role and title she's held since 2004. Growing from an all-volunteer organization for the first 20 years, PVAS has grown to five regular employees, supplemented by Americorps workers and hundreds of volunteers.

In the many tributes offered for Kristin today, one described her as "having the ability to lead by drawing in others"; "she asks and people come." "You just can't say no to Kristin." Words like exemplary leader, facilitator, effective networker, facilitator, encourager, amazing, confident, mentor, building up others, having a special place in my heart, honoring volunteers, a delight, a joy, optimistic flowed from many speakers. Kristin's mother, Marianne Alexander, offered the last comments about Kristin sharing that even in elementary school, she expressed that her aspirations for her life were to be a naturalist and teach about the environment. She loved being in the out of doors and didn't like wearing dresses.

Hooray for Kristin Alexander and her serendipitous association with PVAS for these past 20 years. May we continue to grow up together.



PVAS Events

Adult Programs Through the Winter*By Krista Hawley, PVAS Adult Programs Coordinator*

While our gorgeous autumn weather was very conducive for all kinds of outside 'play' (hiking, kayaking, nature journaling, birding, etc.), we are now entering the colder months with the pandemic potentially weighing heavily on people's minds. Since congregating indoors is not an option this winter, it is definitely an opportunity for us to embrace our inner love of the outdoors! Bundle up, lace up your boots and step out into our winter wonderland! Luckily, we live in an area where access to natural space and trails abound and social distancing is easily accomplished. Opportunities to visit any of our four preserves for walking, birding or journaling is always an option from dawn to dusk 365 days a year (except for Eidolon where the preserve is closed to hikers during firearms season.) In addition, there are ample trails that are safe and accessible: the C&O Canal, Antietam National Battlefield, the Appalachian Trail, and many more.

Whether you are staying close to home or can join us at our outdoor events, PVAS continues to offer a variety of options to stay engaged and learning.

Have you ever participated in a bird count? If so, we would love to have your experience and guidance again this year. If you have not previously been a part of a bird count, we welcome you to join!

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is an excellent example of local community science that benefits international effort. This season, PVAS will be hosting the Charles Town Count on Monday, December 14th and the Inwood Count on Sunday, January 3rd. These local-area counts are part of a massive, historic 120-year-old citizen science project. Gather your 'quaranteam' or jump in your own car to join a caravan and head to your predetermined birding location. If you live within one of the CBC circles and would prefer to say home, we have an excellent option for you! Count from the comfort of your home and tally the birds that visit your feeder. See our website for complete details, maps, bird checklists and registration. The more eyes and ears we have on the ground, the higher quality our data collection will be. All events are open to the public, and Master Naturalists will receive volunteer credit hours.

Another excellent opportunity to participate in an annual citizen science project is the C&O Canal Winter Bird Survey. Bill Telfair will be leading this survey on Saturday, January 23rd. For over 20 years, birds along the entire 185 miles of the C&O Canal have been counted. This survey, which has been coordinated by the District of Columbia Audubon Society, is designed to provide a snapshot of birds present on the C&O Canal. Details and registration can be found here <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/co-canal-winter-bird-survey-3/>.

Embrace the winter by counting feeder birds for science! Project FeederWatch runs from November 14, 2020 through April 8, 2021. Participants count birds that visit their feeder one day or



multiple days during this time. Specific details and directions are available here: <https://feederwatch.org/about/how-to-participate/>

Our monthly bird walks at Cool Spring Preserve and the USGS Fish Health Lab are continuing through the winter months. In order to keep everyone safe, these walks have a registration limit and tend to fill up quickly so make sure to register today!

Local artist, Joy Bridy, has been actively engaging our community through monthly Nature Journaling Gatherings. Since the onset of the quarantine, Joy has posted seasonal 'Finding Nature at Home' journaling prompts as well as hosting in-person gatherings when safe. The group has met at all four PVAS preserves as well as various natural settings around the panhandle. Everyone is welcome, seasoned journalers or beginners alike. The Winter Solstice Journaling Gathering at Morgan's Grove Park still has a few spaces available <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/winter-solstice-nature-journaling-at-morgans-grove-park/>

After the holiday break, PVAS's Monthly Programs resume. On January 13th, we welcome Tracy Leskey, Research Leader/Director at the USDA Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville. Dr. Leskey will be highlighting the Lanternfly as they are becoming an ever-increasing threat in our area. Learn about the Lanternfly from the comfort of your home as the Monthly Programs will continue to be conducted virtually for the near future.

Looking forward to celebrating the new year? We sure are! PVAS President, Jim Cummins, is here to help start your 2021 off on the right foot with a New Year's Day Hike. Join him as he heads downstream along the C&O Canal observing and discussing interesting features and history around the Pack Horse Ford section. Details and registration will be available on the events calendar; <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/>.

To find out more about these and other programs, subscribe to our biweekly Heads-Up PVAS! e-newsletter, and check our website (www.potomacaudubon.org) regularly.

PVAS Events



Fall Owl Banding

The global pandemic didn't keep Bob Dean from his beloved Owl Banding Station.

As a dedicated and knowledgeable bander, Bob continued his work this fall and generously offered field experiences to three separate small PVAS groups.

The small group sizes allowed for a safe environment with physical distancing. We hope to continue offering Banding Field Trips in fall of 2021!

Bird Seed Sale

A heart-felt THANK YOU goes out to those who purchased bird seed from PVAS this year. We truly appreciate your support. The birds will appreciate the delicious food provided and you get to enjoy their antics at the feeder (and likely the gymnastic capabilities of your neighborhood squirrels.) It's a win/win/win/win (the last "win" is for the squirrels).

Sunny Meadows continues to be a wonderful partner in this endeavor, and we also couldn't do it without our steadfast volunteers at each site: Diana Mullis and Susan Jones in Berkeley Springs; Susan Brookreson in Martinsburg; Jim Cummins and Steve Paradis in Charles Town at Cool Spring Preserve; and Marie VanValkenburgh, Carolyn Thomas, and Suzanne Offutt at Sunny Meadows. We truly appreciate their willingness to load cars with heavy seed, especially this year wearing masks.

I also want to thank Hannah Donnelly, our new Communications & Marketing Manager who joined the PVAS staff just in time to get thrown into the midst of the bird seed sale. She jumped in with capability and confidence. And finally, we thank Erin Shaw who got the bird seed sale organized with Sunny Meadows and got the order forms together before she left for grad school at WVU.

This event is a team effort and we are so grateful to that team for making the sale another success. It is an important fundraiser for PVAS that supports our programs and preserves. THANK YOU AGAIN!

Volunteer Spotlight

Have you met Beth Poole?

Beth is an avid birder who is willing to share her passion and knowledge with others. She has been a steadfast volunteer who leads "3rd Wednesday Bird Walks" each month at the Cool Spring Preserve. A retired teacher, Beth does a great job pointing out birds and making sure her participants gain birding skills and knowledge on her walks. Her enthusiasm for birds and the natural world is contagious. We appreciate all of the quality programs Beth has done for PVAS.

All our volunteers are great! If you'd like to nominate someone you know for a shout-out, get in touch with Hannah Donnelly at Hannah@PotoamacAudubon.org.



Family and Youth Programs

Fall Youth Programs

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher & Naturalist/Audubon Discovery Camp Director

This fall the PVAS Youth Education team has been busy leading weekly programs for our Outdoor School for homeschoolers. It has been a huge success. The program is held almost entirely outdoors to maximize social distancing. Ten students come to either Cool Spring or Yankauer once a week for a month and engage in activities and lessons relating to that month's theme. In September the themes were wetlands and stream ecosystems at Cool Spring. At Yankauer, students studied forest succession and learned how its plant community has changed over the years: from farmland, to early successional species, such as cedar trees that can be seen at the front of the preserve, to a more climax community of oaks found further back in the preserve. In October the focus was on watersheds and trees. Students learned how water travels down streams and rivers in the Eastern Panhandle to the Chesapeake Bay, and how trees act as buffer zones to stop erosion and pollution from entering our waterways. Students participated in an action project by planting trees and shrubs at both preserves. In November, students learned about the first Americans in West Virginia, the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics principles, and practiced some primitive skills such as whittling and fire building. To finish off the year, in December, students are learning how PVAS manages the invasive plants at Cool Spring Preserve and becoming "Junior Weed Warriors." They are also learning about different forms of sustainable energy, such as solar and wind power.

We have been getting tremendous positive feedback and support from parents whose children have attended Outdoor School. Meg Fael's two children attended in September and November, and she shared the following sentiment:

"We love outdoor school! It's my kids' favorite the day of the week. Especially this year, when so many things are canceled or unsafe, the fact that they can get outdoors in a social setting, enjoy nature, and learn has been more important than ever. They have made friends and always come home with lots of new information and things to share that they have learned. I have been so impressed with the safety precautions related to COVID19, and I am thrilled that this is something they have gained in a year when they have lost so much."

Parent Whitney Ingram shared: "When asking my 9 year old daughter Violet to describe Outdoor School in 3 ways, she said "fun, outdoorsy, and Amy is a great teacher!" As a parent I am grateful for these programs and everyone participating, and for creating a safe and engaging learning environment. During our personal time outside Violet often recites information about nature and science that she has learned at Outdoor School, and upon picking her up, her uplift in positive energy from nature and socializing is palpable. We will always support and promote this wonderful resource in our community. Thank you PVAS!"

In addition to our Outdoor School Programs, we have continued with our popular Wee Naturalist pre-school programs at Cool Spring. From butterflies, fall leaves and worms, to turkeys and deer, we engage the little ones in a variety of nature topics through nature exploration. The education team is in the process of planning more Outdoor School and Wee Naturalist Sessions for the Spring. Registration for spring sessions opens December 1.

In a normal year, we present a lot of in-school programs as well. One of our biggest and longest-running programs is our 4th grade Watershed program which consists of five lessons and a field trip. This fall, we adapted our program to be entirely virtual. We worked with all Jefferson County 4th grade classes, which included both students participating in virtual/remote learning, and students participating in in-person learning. Abby, Emily and I created videos for the classes to watch and then conducted a Zoom meeting with the entire grade at each school to expand upon the information in the video. It was definitely a challenge to try our program in a completely new way, but we made it work.



Family and Youth Programs

An Outdoor School Student's Creative Writing

At Outdoor School in September, we encouraged students to journal and often sent them into the woods to write or draw in a special "sit spot." This is a story that Taylor Faehl, age 12, wrote at Outdoor School in September at Yankauer. The students were asked to find a tree in the forest and create a story from the perspective of the tree. We were so impressed by Taylor's creative and imaginative writing style, that we couldn't resist sharing it with the PVAS community. We hope you enjoy it.

A Tree's Story

Hi, my name is Winter Bark and I'm a sleek Red Cedar tree. Now there are a few things that you should know about me from the start. I'm very modest, putting on no proud airs whatsoever. In fact, I sit far off in a tangle of brush hidden almost from sight. Unlike my proud and mighty neighbor Summer Bark. She has a sunny yellowish flare to her bark and is seated right out in the open where all passers can see her. I've been here since the beginning of the forest, so in a way I'm ancient and highly respectable. I don't see much excitement in my long days, although I keep a keen eye out for promising thrills. But then there was that one occasion...

It started one fall, many years ago. There was this hiker, a young man of about 60. (Though I've heard that that's not so young in human years.) He was hiking along, picking his way through birch and brush, quite oblivious to anything else. Then, amidst the shadows, a dark brown figure emerged, red eyes glowing like hot coals. He was, as you may have guessed, a bear. He was focused on only the fine day and he stopped to sharpen his needle-sharp claws on my fine white bark, slashing his steel fingers into my very skin! The hiker, not hearing him, continued to hike and the bear, not seeing the hiker, continued to sharpen! Then the hiker walked away, stomping his way through the birch and brush. The almighty beast swaggered along in such a mighty way that even the tallest of trees stooped respectfully. Then the bear spotted the hiker. He remembered the torching incident some years ago with men of the forest. He remembered the tragedies he had faced just because of men! He narrowed his blazing eyes, hatred boiling within him. Then he struck. The hiker was never seen again. Some folks will doubt this story, I know. But it's true, and I have the marks to prove it.

Now if the hiker was really eaten, I fear I'll never know. I just know that there was a hiker and then there was a bear, and then the hiker was never seen again. But I did see a small figure dart away in the woods and the bear was raving with shame for weeks after. Whether it was because of the hiker or not, I'm not sure. But every now and then the bear can be heard, sending his growls echoing into the night. Filled with shame and anguish he still sends his humiliation up to the stars. And may that be a lesson to you. Never be absentminded or oblivious when you're hiking in the woods, especially if that red-eyed bear is around. He's probably a bit older now, and has lost some of his energy, but he still waits earnestly for the day when he can get revenge on mankind. And if you humans treat bears with more respect, they might be a little kinder towards you as well. And trees are always wise in the ways of animals and people. (Just so you know.)



Northern Finch Irruption

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

As I write this, northern finches are moving south, looking for food to survive the winter. This southward irruption means that their typical food supply, conifers of many different species, have not produced enough seeds this year to see them through the cold winter months ahead. The species considered in this northern finch ensemble include; Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, Common and Hoary Redpolls, and the honorary member – the Red-breasted Nuthatch.



It was already apparent by late September that Red-breasted Nuthatches were on the move. Numerous eBird reports showed their arrival in southern Pennsylvania, with reports from Maryland and West Virginia quickly following. Pine Siskins exploded on the scene in early October, with hundreds being reported in large flocks all around our area and as far south as Florida by the end of the month. Keep a sharp eye out for the so-called green-morph of the Pine Siskin, which actually appears more yellow than green.

Evening Grosbeaks have not graced our feeders with their brilliant colors and voracious appetites for many, many years. This year looks very good for this species to be tallied on many Christmas Bird counts in our area. In fact, this irruption is being hailed as the largest in 20+ years for this species. Their exceeding fondness for black-oil sunflower seeds will bring them to many backyard bird feeding stations. Keep your eyes peeled for these rare visitors to our latitudes. As of November 1, they are as far south as North Carolina and central Tennessee.

Common Redpolls are slow to move south. However, a few were seen and reported in Ocean City, Maryland, during the last week of October. If they move south in big numbers, as predicted, they should be here in December. With any large flock of Common Redpolls, Hoary Redpolls are a distinct possibility. These paler, brighter individuals are easily seen in a flock of the more heavily marked and darker plumaged Commons. They are especially fond of nyjer thistle seed.

Pine Grosbeaks would be a real treat this far south. As of November 1, this species was seen and reported from southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut. Please call me if you see one of these fantastic finches in our area this winter.

Red Crossbills are being reported from the mountains of central Pennsylvania down through the Appalachians as far south as southern North Carolina. Some of these could be local, resident populations such as those often seen at the Cranberry Mountain Nature center near Marlinton, WV. White-winged Crossbills are moving south more slowly with reports from central New York and eastern Massachusetts. Both of these species are nomadic and may be in a grove of conifers one day and gone the next. Keep looking for pine and spruce trees with large cone crops. Hopefully, you'll see some using their unusual, crossed bills to pry the seeds out from the scales of this year's cones.

As I noted in the first paragraph, these irruptions mean that there are insufficient food supplies in the north to support these birds for the winter within their typical ranges. With this many species and individuals moving this early in the season, the lack of food must be at an all-time low. This lack of food and the need to move south to find sustenance creates a great deal of stress for each individual bird. Their need to find food and to eat in a more or less comfortable, stress-free environment is a matter of life or death. Keeping feeders and birdbaths scrupulously clean and filled at all times will undoubtedly be a great help for these beleaguered wonderers. Keeping cats indoors and asking neighbors to do the same will also significantly reduce the losses to these exceptional predators. Also, make certain that windows near feeders, birdbaths, and roosting cover are made bird-safe with any of the techniques found here (<https://tinyurl.com/birdsafewindows>).

I hope that you will have the wonderful experience of seeing and studying these amazing visitors from the north at your feeders this winter. If you do, please report your sightings via eBird so we can all see how this winter's northern finch irruption plays out in our area.



Photos clockwise from top left: Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, White-winged Crossbill © Wil Hershberger, Nature Images and Sounds LLC

Conservation

Top 5 Recommendations for Feeding Birds this Winter

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

The winter of 2020-2021 could be a real treat for birders in our area. Winter/Northern finches are on the move (see my article in this Valley Views). These birds will need food, and lots of it all winter long.

Feeding wild birds is easy if you follow a few simple guidelines:

1. First and foremost, keep feeders and the area around them clean. Dirty feeders can spread diseases that affect the health and life expectancy of our birds.
2. Wash feeders and the area around them with mild soap and water with lots of freshwater rinsing. Occasional disinfection of feeders with a 5% Clorox solution with thorough rinsing afterward, will greatly benefit the health of our feeder birds.
3. Wet seed can grow molds and bacteria that also affects the health of wild birds. Clean up and dispose of wet seed in a covered compost pile and rinse out the feeders allowing them to dry thoroughly before refilling.
4. Keep the area around feeders clear of brush and obstructions that could hide predators, such as domestic cats. Having a brush pile or hedgerow several yards away from feeders can provide a safe retreat for your birds to escape to when trouble is in the area.

5. Make your windows safe for birds by using any of a number of techniques to make your windows visible to birds (<https://tinyurl.com/birdsafewindows>).

There are many species of birds that winter in our area. Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens will require suet, finches will want sunflower seeds, and smaller finches will benefit from thistle or safflower seeds.

Black-oil Sunflower seed is perhaps the most widely eaten bird food. There are many species that will relish these high-calorie seeds (Blue Jays, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, and Common Redpolls, to name a few). Tray and tube feeders are best for this seed type.

Nyjer or Thistle seed can be a real treat for American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, and Common Redpolls. Specialty tube feeders or thistle socks are recommended.

Suet can be purchased or made at home. During the winter, when temperatures are cool, the suet should not melt and make a mess on the trees. Commercial suet is available in a no-melt suet-dough, which woodpeckers and other species seem to love. Carolina Wrens and Brown Creepers are very fond of this type of suet as well. A suet cage or stuffing holes drilled in an old log or branch are great ways to offer suet to your birds.

By providing a safe place and plenty of food for our wintering birds, you can help these tiny bundles of joy survive to the next breeding season when they'll make more of their kind for us to enjoy.

Photos clockwise from top: Carolina Chickadee, Pine Siskins, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker © Wil Hershberger, Nature Images and Sounds



Conservation

The Monarch Alliance Grant

On a breezy, cool Saturday in September 2020, The Monarch Alliance (TMA) gave away almost \$5,000 worth of native plants and milkweed as part of the 2020 Waystation Grant Program. Nine organizations committed to building and maintaining monarch waystations were the recipients. Grant volunteers showed up in cars and trucks with huge smiles as they picked up their award plants and prepared to plant their monarch gardens within the next few days.

Now that it's November, the 2021 grant program starts and is open to potential Monarch Waystation projects in Washington County, Maryland, and in Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in West Virginia. Schools, churches, universities, nature centers, garden clubs and any other organizations planning to use a waystation to educate the public about monarch butterflies and/or involve students in outdoor learning are encouraged to apply. Grant recipients will receive their award plants at TMA's spring Native Plant Sale in May 2021.

The dates for the grant program are:

November 15, 2020: Grant Program Begins

December 12, 2020: Q&A For Grant Applicants Zoom Meeting (Recorded)

January 15, 2021: Q&A Period Ends

February 1, 2021: Applications Are Due

March 15, 2021: Grant Awards Are Finalized and Grant Winners are Notified

May 2021 (exact date TBD): Plants are picked up by awardees at the Spring 2021 Native Plant Sale at Sunny Meadows Garden Center, Boonsboro, MD (if plants are not picked up prior to or the day of the sale, award plants will be forfeited by the awardee and will be distributed to waystations needing replanting)

If you know of a group or entity that would like to apply for a Monarch Waystation grant, please direct them to the TMA Grant webpage on the PVAS site at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/monarch-alliance/grants/> or contact John Maciolek at jm24@hood.edu for more information.



Fish Wonderland

By Abigail Freidline, AmeriCorps Volunteer

Where do fish go to enjoy the winter holidays? Countless fish species migrate in colder seasons whether it's to spawn, find more suitable habitat, or to find water with plenty of food. However, there are some species that rather spend the holidays overwintering within the same streams and rivers that they inhabit year-round. In our area you can find Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) as well as the Checkered Sculpin (*Cottus n. sp*) any time of year, even the winter.

Brook trout, sometimes called speckled trout or brook char, is a beautiful freshwater species that can be found throughout the Potomac River watershed. Best known for their striking coloration, the Brook trout is frequently becoming more secluded to higher elevations in the Appalachian Mountains. However, this is



not a concern for the populations due to the fact that they do not migrate in the winter. Instead, they locate areas of water that are the deepest in the river and take what ichthyologists call a "winter rest." Brook trout are able to survive even the coldest winters with ice forming on the surface of the water by schooling in these deep pools to where the warmer water has sunk.

The other species that doesn't have to commute to another body of water to celebrate the holidays is the Checkered Sculpin, a recently identified Sculpin species that is endemic to limestone and spring runs. Adorned with black and brown "checkered" spots overlaying light brown scales, this bottom dwelling fish is quite fond of the mud and sediment. By snuggling in the warm layer of sediment in the winter like the Brook Trout, Checkered Sculpin are also able to survive the cold waters that come with the winter season.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager

PVAS is now the proud owner of a John Deere 1023E Sub-Compact Utility Tractor. It is a very small tractor that does not have high impact on our trails but still possesses the horsepower required to perform large tasks quickly and effectively. This much-needed and long-awaited piece of equipment will play a pivotal role in preserve management at all four preserves. It came with a front loader, brush cutter and auger. We will now have the ability to implement new projects in a timely fashion without having to ask volunteers to haul their heavy equipment to the preserves. We are also better equipped to meet the standards of best management practices, such as mowing the pollinator meadows in early spring before the grassland nesting birds arrive.

Needless to say, 2020 has been a financially stressful year. This large purchase would not have been possible without the generosity of a valued PVAS volunteer who covered the first year of tractor payments, allowing us to feel confident moving forward with this purchase. We are proud to continue growing even during these uncertain times. We are committed to our mission of preserving, restoring and enjoying the natural world and this tractor was the next tool required to continue our stewardship.

And the new tractor has already been put to work! In early November, the Outdoor Classroom at Cool Spring Preserve received an upgrade. Thanks to funding from the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation, we were able to level out the classroom space and add fresh mulch. This Outdoor Classroom is one of the key spots on the preserve where we teach about our priceless watershed. Here, children are able to get hands-on with the stream, catching stream critters and taking water samples.

Also new at Cool Spring is a Personal Wi-Fi Weather Station with AccuWeather forecasting. This weather station was provided to us by the West Virginia State University (WVSU) Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Service. It is just one of several

weather stations being deployed across the state of WV to study climate changes. Each weather station transmits data directly to Elizabeth Moss, an Urban Forestry Extension Agent with WVSU. All of the weather data collected will be shared with us in seasonal reports and GIS models. The ultimate goal of the study is to inform farmers, forestland owners, gardeners, producers and communities about changes in important weather aspects like rainfall patterns and growing seasons. This project is funded by the USDA Forest Service Northeast Climate Hub and there are similar projects occurring throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

Since the Nature Center at Cool Spring will remain closed to the public for the remainder of 2020, we have added a portable toilet for visitor convenience. This restroom is cleaned once a week and we caution visitors to use at your own risk. We have added hand-sanitizing stations as well. There is now a dispenser on the post with the trail maps and also one in the Nature Play-space. We love having visitors and hope to keep everyone safe while enjoying our preserves.

Friendly reminder: we are still in deer hunting season until the end of December. Hunting is not permitted at Cool Spring, Yankauer or Stauffer's Marsh, however, hikers are advised to wear at least one item of blaze orange or another bright color, as neighboring properties may allow hunting. Deer hunting is permitted at Eidolon. Eidolon remains open during bow hunting with hiking hours restricted to 10am-3pm, daily. It is closed to hikers during all firearm seasons. Please be aware that most of the firearm seasons coincide with holidays and weekends. Check our website for complete details and a calendar of preserve closures.

Starting in January, AmeriCorps volunteers, Emily and Abby will begin leading some of the volunteer workdays. We are very excited to be able to offer more opportunities for volunteering at the preserves, as well as offering our AmeriCorps opportunities to step into leadership roles. We hope you will join them on these special workdays. They are excited to meet our awesome volunteers!



Advocacy

What President Biden Could Do for the Environment in His First Ninety Days

By Neal Barkus, Panhandle Progressive

There can be little debate that the Trump administration has been more hostile to sound environmental policy than any in modern history. From the start President Trump identified environmental protection as the territory of Obama liberals and sought to dismantle nearly every protection in sight. So, a Biden administration has a lot of work to do restoring the positive direction set in previous administrations. Here is where I think he should start.

Rejoin the Paris Accords

Almost every nation in the world, including the United States, signed the Paris Accords in 2015. The central aim of the Accords is to coordinate a global response to climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to find the means to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

But President Trump is a climate change denier, and his financial backers have a financial stake in things remaining as they are. On November 4th, 2019, the Trump administration began the official process of withdrawing the United States from the Paris Accords, which was completed on the day after the November 2020 election. With our withdrawal, the U.S. is no longer committed to reach its emissions reduction targets under the Accords.

Why does this matter? First, the United States is one of the two largest emitters of greenhouse gasses in the world so relaxing our efforts to reduce these emissions will have a hugely negative effect on the world's ability to reach the Paris goals. Second, the United States is an environmental policy and technology leader in the world. Our absence from the Accords takes our gravitas and leadership out of the equation. It weakens our international soft power and permits the Chinese to divert attention from their own environmental failures.

How could a Biden administration reverse Trump's withdrawal? The Paris Accords are a non-binding expression of national commitment. President Obama was able to enter the United States into the agreement through [executive action](#), since it imposed no new legal obligations on the country. Candidate Biden pledged to recommit the country to the Paris Accords, and can do so most likely through similar executive action. Legislation is also possible. Experts believe that the United States could rejoin the Accords in a matter of a few months. It is inconceivable that other nations would oppose our rejoining.

Revoke Obama's Executive Order Requiring All Federal Agencies to Enhance Climate Preparedness and Resilience

In 2013, President Obama issued Executive Order 13653 instructing all federal agencies to identify global warming's probable impact on their operations and take the actions necessary to protect against that impact. The importance of this is obvious. In 2016 alone the United States suffered 15 extreme weather and climate-related disasters each exceeding \$1 billion in losses. Moreover, the Pentagon has for years regarded global warming as a significant threat to American national security.

But in March 2017, shortly after taking office, President Trump rescinded Obama's Executive Order. He clearly set out the reason for this rescission:

It is the policy of the United States that executive departments and agencies immediately review existing regulations that potentially burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources [oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy resources] and appropriately suspend, revise, or rescind those that unduly burden the development of domestic energy resources beyond the degree necessary to protect the public interest or otherwise comply with the law. "Burden" means to unnecessarily obstruct, delay, curtail, or otherwise impose significant costs on the siting, permitting, production, utilization, transmission, or delivery of energy resources.

It is not immediately obvious why unburdening the production of domestic energy required the rescission of a direction to plan for avoiding the harmful effects of climate disasters, but there you have it. President Biden should promptly rescind this Order and restore good sense to the nation's efforts to protect itself against the effects of global warming.

Establish Science, Not Politics, As the Guiding Principle of Environmental Policy

President Trump has politicized agencies that are only effective and credible when they rely on the best science. This has happened since the beginning of the Trump administration. The list of anti-science policies and actions during the Trump administration is quite long. These have been catalogued by Columbia University Law School's "Silencing Science Tracker" (<https://climate.law.columbia.edu/Silencing-Science-Tracker>). Within the first ninety days of a Biden administration, he could issue an executive order directing federal agencies to act only after giving heightened consideration to the best data and scientific opinion available, and he could restore to a prominent role the various science advisory bodies Trump has marginalized or dismantled.

Reversing Anti-Environment Regulations

President Biden will be unable in the first ninety days to reverse many of the harmful regulatory rollbacks and changes wrought by the Trump administration. All of these have been listed by the Harvard Law School's "Regulatory Rollback Tracker" (<https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/regulatory-rollback-tracker/>). This is because any such action must proceed deliberately and be based on a reasonable assessment of all factors, usually involving public testimony or input. He will not simply be able to change a regulation because he believes it is the ill-conceived product of the previous administration.

But President Biden can direct that these be triaged and that the process for reversing the most significant of them be started. The list is long and tantalizing. It includes Obama's Clean Power Plan setting standards for power plant emissions, which the Trump administration repealed. The Clean Power Plan was

continued next page

Advocacy

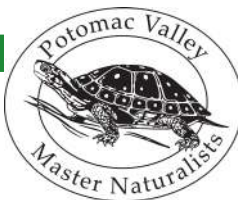
President Biden continued from previous page

a primary means to reach the nation's Paris Accords emissions commitment.

There may be other, more important steps President Biden could take immediately to restore the correct course on the environment. The plate will certainly be full. But January 2021 will mark an opportunity for our national government to regain its footing as a world leader in conservation and environmental protection.

PVMN

Master Naturalist Program Moves Forward in 2021



A huge shout-out to the entire 2020 cohort and the students from previous cohorts that have been waiting patiently for the committee to navigate the necessary steps needed to ensure a safe Master Naturalist Program during this global pandemic! You all have been amazing and we are excited to announce that the 2021 PVMN Class Schedule is in the final stages of development.

The Coordinating Committee has been working with instructors and deciding on the best options available to safely move forward with offering the classes and fieldwork.

Because we cannot predict what the pandemic will look like next year, the plan is to start PVMN classes in the spring with those classes that can be conducted via Zoom (lecture and field exercises), then proceed to those classes where the lecture can be conducted via Zoom but that the field exercises need to be in-person; the lecture and field portions will not be held on the same day. The final group of classes will be those that both the lecture and field exercise need to be conducted in-person. When we get to the schedule that requires in-person interactions, if social distancing is still necessary, appropriate safety measures will be required.

Please note that in order to keep class sizes small enough to ensure safety, the 2021 PVMN classes will be offered to those candidates who were accepted into the program in 2020, and to the candidates still working towards their initial certification.



Potomac Valley Master Naturalists, Annual Meeting, January 2020

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP!

ALL of your dues will stay here to support local PVAS efforts and help us grow! And here's what you'll get:

- 10% member discount on program fees, facility rentals, and birthday parties.
- A subscription to our bi-monthly newsletter, *Valley Views*, and twice monthly e-newsletter, *Heads Up, PVAS!*
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers/museums.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Gift Membership Form

To purchase a gift membership, send in the form below with an enclosed check. Dues are \$50/household, \$35/teacher (covering membership for everyone in your household for one year, or \$20/full-time adult student (benefits apply to member only). Make the check out to "PVAS." For more details on membership, go to: www.potomacaudubon.org/support/become-a-member/.

Your Name: _____

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Please note if you'd like us to mail your gift membership directly to the recipient of your choice, or to you. If you'd like us to mail it directly to the recipient, also note when you would like it to be mailed.

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

National Audubon has a membership program that is separate from PVAS. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org, and click on "join." If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson, or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become an affiliate of PVAS, but not a full PVAS member. Affiliates will have access to our communications, and invitations to our events. However, all National Audubon dues go to the National Audubon Society and are not shared with PVAS. We heartily invite you to become a dues-paying member of both organizations.



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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please contact any of the board members listed here or see <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>. PVAS serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

PVAS BOARD

PVAS Board meetings take place the first Thursday of every other month (September through June).

Meetings are open to all PVAS members. Please contact the President or Vice President if you would like to attend.

All Officers, Board Members, and Staff can be contacted at 681-252-1387.

PVAS Officers and Board Members (year of term expiration in parentheses)

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Secretary: Carolyn Thomas (2022)
Treasurer: Stephen Paradis (2021)
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..... Don Campbell (2021)
..... Melissa Gonzalez (2021)
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..... Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2021)
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Emerita Board Member: Jean Neely

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