



Valley Views

Volume 39, Issue 4

February/March 2021

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

20 Years?!?!?

I want to take this time and space to thank everyone I've worked with over the last 20 years (!) within PVAS. And by "worked," I don't mean that you have necessarily been an employee. I mean anyone that has helped fulfill the mission of PVAS by my side, literally, figuratively, or these days, virtually.

The kind words of my staff, board members and volunteers in the last issue of *Valley Views*, in the Zoom celebration held back in November, and the "memory box" to which so many of you contributed, were so lovely. I am so lucky to have a job I love. Not only do I get to "work" toward a mission I believe in whole-heartedly, but I get to "work" with others who believe in it too.

I have learned so much in my various roles with PVAS. I've learned so much from YOU. There was a statement in the last newsletter that I've been successful with grants. Most of the credit goes to members and volunteers who have lent their own expertise in that realm and I've tried to soak up what I can. I'd never written a grant in my life 'til I worked for PVAS. Jean Neely took me under her wing with our first grant that was to the WVDNR, and Alan Biggs (Board Member) wrote our first federal grant to the EPA to get funding for our first watershed education program - now foundational to our school offerings.

So please don't give me the credit for getting PVAS where it is today. You - the members, donors, friends, staff (past and present) - have done more than your fair share. And it's been a pleasure working, playing, learning, sweating, shoveling, weeding, writing, raking, teaching, wining, dining, hiking, and all the other "stuff" we've done over the years together. Great people make "work" fun.

And give yourselves credit for saying "yes" so often! All I do is ask, and you have awed me over and over again with the generous and gracious affirmative responses. Building a pavilion, cutting trails, writing signage, mowing fields, constructing bird houses, teaching programs, planting gardens... All that was possible because YOU said YES.

So THANK YOU for making the last 20 years positive and fun! May we all continue to have fun while making great things happen for PVAS.



Annual Appeal Status

We can't thank you enough for the generous gifts we've received thus far in our 2020 Annual Appeal, which runs from December 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021. We are SO grateful for your support, and are happy to report that we are currently at 76% of our budgeted goal.

We've just learned that PVAS will not qualify for the second round of PPP funding. Congress has established a new criterion for this second round of pandemic support, namely that organizations must demonstrate a 25% or greater loss in revenues due to the pandemic. Thanks to your generosity last year, the staff's creativity in making programs happen "in spite of it all," grantors' flexibility with how grant funds were used during the pandemic, and the success of our on-line auction, we find ourselves in the enviable position of NOT clearing this hurdle. Thank you!

Although we are very relieved to be in this position, we are still at risk. The pandemic is not over; there are still many uncertainties through which we will be navigating over the next several months to a year. PVAS staff will undoubtedly continue to provide outstanding programs and preserve management, but the real sustaining life and strengths of PVAS are the inspiring supportive hearts and hands of our membership. We are extremely appreciative of your support over the last year, and hope you will choose to give generously in the months to come.

There was good news for donors from the recent legislation. It re-established the temporary \$300 above-the-line deduction for people who do not itemize their deductions, and established a \$600 deduction for couples filing jointly in 2021. The bill also extends for one year the increased limits on deductible charitable contributions for individuals who itemize, and for corporations, as well.

So thank you again for your generosity. The Annual Appeal, which runs through February 28, supports our general operating expenses, including staff salaries and preserve management expenses that are not otherwise covered by grants or other designated funds. These are the most important funds, and the most difficult to come by.

To contribute, you may send checks (personal or IRA contributions) to PVAS at PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443, or you may donate on our secure website at www.potomacaudubon.org/annual-appeal/. Stocks or other securities are also gratefully accepted. If you have any questions of how you can support PVAS, you may always contact me at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org or 304-676-3397.

We are so very thankful for your support.

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

Winter Trekker – The Spotted Salamander

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

In mid-to-late February, warm rains bring an amazing, though seldom seen, miracle to our area's nighttime woodlands. Despite snow and ice still covering the ground, tempered waters percolating through fallen leaves into the soil create an irresistible signal for slumbering salamanders to awake.

Among the first to respond to this siren call is the Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*). These large (up to about 10 inches in length), black, mole salamanders have large yellow spots most prominently seen in two rows running down the back. They spend most of their lives in burrows in loose soil in wooded habitats. Once awakened, they are compelled to dig their way to the surface and wander over snow and ice to find the nearest small, fish-free pond or large vernal pool. A soaking rain can seem to stir all of the salamanders to the surface on just a few nights. Large numbers of males and females congregate in the pools to mate. These mating spectacles are something that everyone should witness at least once in their lifetime.

Once the males arrive at the pool, they begin to attach several spermatophores to the submerged vegetation. They remain in this area, courting the incoming females in an attempt to have her select one of his packets to fertilize her eggs. The writhing mass of salamander bodies is mesmerizing. Grappling matches are common as males try to outcompete their neighbors for the newly arrived female's attention.

Once a female internalizes a male's spermatophore, she moves to a calmer area of the pool to lay her eggs. She can lay approximately 300 eggs per season, spread out in several clusters. The clusters are suspended within a ball of gelatinous material that can be clear or whitish in color and are secured to submerged vegetation to keep them from floating to the surface. Interestingly, this protective goo that keeps the eggs from drying out and keeps frog larvae from feeding on the eggs also inhibits oxygen absorption into the developing embryo. As days lengthen and temperatures warm, the individual eggs within these masses turn green with the growth of a symbiotic algae, *Oophila amblystomatis*, which produces plenty of oxygen for the growing larvae within. This amazing alga is found nowhere else in nature, only in salamander eggs.

The temperature of the water dictates the rate of embryo development. Once the eggs hatch, the brownish larvae obtain oxygen through large gills, which they lose after a few months of growth. By this time, they have transformed into miniature versions of the adults and leave the pools to burrow into the rich soils under the rotting leaves of their woodland homes. In 2-7 years, they will join in the mating rituals with the coming of the first warm rains of the season.

While most individuals that reach adulthood live about 20 years in the wild, a few adults can live to be 30 or more years old! Most of the hatchlings do not survive their first summer, succumbing to predators or desiccation. The surviving adults return year after

year to the same vernal pools from which they hatched. They usually remain within 300-500 feet of their natal pool during the remainder of the year. Spotted Salamanders are not strong burrowers and will use abandoned animal burrows or crevices, which they may enlarge to some extent. The adults feed at night in or around their burrow and use their sticky tongues to capture forest floor invertebrates. Adult Spotted Salamanders are also preyed upon, but they have a defense. They secrete a milky toxin from the skin of their backs and tails. If they lose their tails or a leg or even part of the head and brain, they can regenerate the missing tissues.

While still reasonably common, Spotted Salamanders are vulnerable to habitat destruction, acid rain, pesticides, and global warming. I hope that you'll make an effort to witness for yourself the amazing mating ritual of these winter trekkers – the Spotted Salamander.



Photos © Wil Hershberger, Nature Images and Sounds

PVAS Events

Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

With hope on the horizon, we have turned the corner into the new year. As we look ahead with anticipation, PVAS continues our commitment to bring interesting, educational and accessible programming to our community.

While spring 2021 may not look like years past, we are still eager to safely get outside and continue to enjoy our natural world. Bird Walks continue in February and March at the USGS Fish Health Lab and Beth Poole's "Third Wednesdays" at Cool Spring Preserve. Registration remains limited to small groups in order to ensure a safe experience for all. After a successful New Year's Hike on the C&O Canal, PVAS President, Jim Cummins, is looking forward to leading future Natural History Hikes. While details are not yet set, watch the calendar for registration to open for educational hikes on Saturday, March 6 and Saturday, June 5. In addition, Wildflower Walks will return in April and May. Our knowledgeable and dedicated Master Naturalists, Kathy Bilton, Wanda Miller and Mary Duke, will be leading early and late spring walks on various trails in search of our glorious spring ephemerals. Join these walks to learn about what woodland flowers bloom first in our area, how to tell them apart and more! As Mary commented, "I am so looking forward to the emergence of those little spring blossoms of joy!"

Local artist and Master Naturalist, Joy Bridy, encourages anyone interested in nature journaling to join her monthly gatherings. Whether at one of PVAS's preserves, or a local park, Joy celebrates natural wonders, big and small, by sketching and writing about their amazing features and interesting qualities. These gatherings welcome budding beginners and experienced journalists alike. If you are not able to join a gathering at this time, don't miss Joy's online journaling prompt that can be done from the safety of your own home: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/nature-journaling-finding-nature-at-home-during-winter/>

PVAS's beloved and long-standing Birding 101 is happy to announce that it will transition to fall 2021. With the promise of a successful vaccine campaign, the Birding 101 leaders are committed to offering this popular four-week workshop in the fall. The structure of the class will look the same as years' past with four evening classes and four weekend field trips to various locations around the panhandle. More details will be available on the events calendar.

"This Race is for the Birds!" will offer both virtual and in-person options in 2021! See the race article in this edition of *Valley Views* or visit <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/> to register and for more details.

For those interested in community science opportunities, we are highlighting The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The 24th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15. This is a free, fun, and easy opportunity that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds. Follow a few simple steps to participate: 1. Register online at [birdcount](https://www.birdcount.org/).

[org](https://www.birdcount.org/), 2. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days between February 12 and 15, and 3. Enter your observation data on the GBBC website <https://www.birdcount.org/participate/>. Participants can count birds in their backyards or at another location such as a PVAS nature preserve. An exciting feature of this website is watching global eBird observation lists roll in in real time on their live map!

The calendar is continually being updated, so please check frequently for updates and additional programming. <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/>

Announcing the PVAS Spring Fundraiser!

On March 21, the eve of the Spring Equinox, join PVAS staff and volunteers for our spring fundraiser - a Virtual "Walk in the Woods with Wine."

Enjoy a virtual visit to each of PVAS's preserves while sipping wine paired with savories and sweets provided by PVAS's infamous Events Committee and friends.

You'll experience a "sneak peek" of some of PVAS staff and volunteers' favorite places at Cool Spring, Eidolon, Stauffer's Marsh and Yankauer and learn what makes each place special. You'll have the opportunity to interact with the presenters and each other as you enjoy wine and other special treats in your goody bag.



Wine and delicacies can be picked up the afternoon of March 21. "Tickets" are \$50/person and include a gift bag including a bottle of wine and delectable edibles, and exclusive access to the "Walk in the Woods with Wine" presentation, which will be available via Zoom at 4:30 p.m.

Details and registration are available at PVAS's website events calendar at www.potomacaudubon.org. Pre-registration is required.

Look forward to "seeing" you there!

PVAS Events

"This Race is for the Birds" Returns with Virtual and In-Person Options

By Krista Hawley, PVAS Adult Programs Coordinator

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is happy to announce that it will be offering both an in-person and a virtual event in 2021.



VIRTUAL 5K & 10K (April 9 – 17)

This is an exciting addition to our annual race and allows for people to participate safely at their chosen location:

- Participate anytime between Friday, April 9 through Saturday, April 17.
- Log your chosen miles (10K or 5K) any way you like! Run, walk, jog, kayak, horseback ride, bike, etc.!
- For extra fun, log some 'Wild Miles' at one of PVAS's preserves!
- Take a picture of yourself completing your event and email your distance, times and photo to Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org with subject line of "My Results."
- All participants will be entered in an awards raffle.

VIRTUAL KIDS FUN RUN (April 9 – 17)

- Participate anytime between Friday, April 9 through Saturday, April 17.
- One mile anywhere – for extra fun, log some 'Wild Miles' at one of PVAS's preserves!
- Ages 10 and under may register for this virtual event.
- Run, walk, jog, kayak, horseback ride, bike, etc.!
- Take a photo of them completing their activity and email their distance and photo to Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org with subject line of "My Results."

IN-PERSON 5K or 10K (Saturday April 17)

Broomgrass has again graciously extended an offer for the PVAS community to run or walk on their beautiful trails.

In order to offer the safest event possible:

- Staggered starting times
- Limited number of participants spaced out with small groups starting every 15 minutes
- No professional timer
- No 'race-day' registrations
- Separate start and finish lines
- Self-timing with option to compete for first place (M/F) using a Strava Segment
- All participants will be entered in an award raffle

Registration and more information can be found here: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/>

Any in-person registration will be converted to a virtual registration if COVID-19 conditions prevent us from meeting in-person.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met Nan Johnson?

Nan wears many volunteer 'hats' around the Eastern Panhandle, and PVAS considers itself lucky for the unlimited hours she has given to us. With her exceptional organizational skills and willingness to tackle large projects, she has immensely contributed to numerous events, especially as Race Director for "This Race is for the Birds!" She is a master of 'behind the scenes' work, tending to time-consuming tasks without hesitation, and happily running errands for anyone in need. If you know Nan, you know that caretaking is in her blood. Her passion is kayaking and she readily shares her skills, time and equipment with anyone interested, especially seniors in our area. It is a pleasure to have Nan on 'our team', as we truly value her time, energy and generosity.

All of our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone who deserves a shout out, please contact Kristin at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org.



PVAS Events

Seeking Sponsors for "This Race is for the Birds!"

With both an in-person as well as a virtual event this year, race sponsorship in 2021 brings you double your investment! Sponsors for the race receive a number of benefits including press coverage in local news outlets, promotions on the PVAS website/social media pages/and newsletter, prominent featuring on the race t-shirt, and free race entries/t-shirts.

If you or your business is interested in sponsoring this race, details on sponsorship opportunities can be found here <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/>, by emailing the Race Director at Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org or calling (304) 870-4414.

PVAS is Seeking AmeriCorps Service Members

Summer members needed starting the first week of June.

We have one position available for a Land and Conservation Member and two positions available for Summer Camp Counselors!

For more information and to apply, visit

www.potomacaudubon.org/about/positions-with-pvas/.

Advocacy

America's Newest National Park Is West Virginia's First

By Neal Barkus, *Panhandle Progressive*

Tucked into the omnibus spending bill that passed Congress at the end of 2020 was a measure creating the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. This is the sixty-third national park, but the first one in West Virginia. To achieve this was not just a simple matter of changing the name of the New River Gorge National River that applied to the area before. It required some deft political preparation by the bill's sponsors, Senators Shelly Moore Capito and Joe Manchin.

The land comprising the National River area totaled over 72,000 acres. The new National Park will cover approximately 7,000 acres, and the Preserve approximately 65,000 acres.

While this legislation has been planned for many years, it was initially introduced by Senator Capito in October 2018, but failed to advance because of concerns about the impact on hunting, which is not permitted in National Parks. The legislation then went back to the drawing board, and re-emerged in its present form under which hunting will be permitted in the Preserve just as it had been under the National River status.

The park portion of the area will not withdraw much new territory from hunting because the town of Thurmond, Sandstone Falls, and the areas around the park's visitor centers and its Grandview unit are already off limits to hunters.

Coupling a National Park with a Preserve in which hunting is permitted is not a new practice, but the six examples of its use are all in Alaska. Even preserving much of the former hunting rights that existed under the National River designation did not satisfy hunters. The outdoors columnist for the Beckley *Register-Herald*, himself a local hunter, said:

Local hunters are not for it. We've just kinda been bulldozed over it. When it comes to public lands, we can't get

enough of it and we don't want to lose any of it. If you want to hunt, it's the first thing you've got to have.

The new National Park designation was a primary project of the New River Gorge Regional Development Corporation, which worked closely with outdoor recreation business interests. Supporters argued that National Park designation would enhance the Gorge's "brand."

Rebranding federal parkland as a National Park has been shown to increase visitation without raising costs, evidently due to the perception that National Parks are the "gold standard" outdoor experience. A study from May 2018 showed that eight former National Monuments that became National Parks during the previous five years had annual visitor increases averaging 21%.

According to Manchin's press release:

...redesignating the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve creates new adventure opportunities while preserving the unique culture and traditions we take so much pride in.

Despite the dual name, the National Park and Preserve will remain a single National Park Service unit, managed and staffed by the same personnel. The Bluestone National Scenic River and Gauley River National Recreation Area, which are now part of the New River Gorge National River, will be split off and separately administered.

As we attempt to wean ourselves from coal and other fossil fuels in the coming decades, projects like this promote our tourism strengths at very little cost. They seem to be the way forward for West Virginia.

Birding

Annual Christmas Bird Count Summary

By Bob Dean

As we enter a new year with hope that Covid-19 will be in our rearview mirrors before the next Christmas Bird Count season arrives, I'm happy to report that we were able to finish the current counts with appropriate social distancing. All parties in the field were either individuals or small groups that normally socialize. Although some folks did not participate because of concerns about COVID-19, we hope they will be able to return to the counts next season. The post-count tally rallies were both done via Zoom, which worked very well, although we missed the usual group dinners with shared stories of "good" finds.

In spite of some reduction in anticipated effort, the Charles Town count was quite successful. Count dates had to be moved for both counts due to horrible weather forecasts. The Charles Town count was moved back one day to Tuesday, December 15, thus avoiding a day in the field with heavy rain in the morning and scattered showers in the afternoon.

The 15th was mostly sunny with temperatures ranging from 23 to 39 degrees, and light winds. There were 83 species reported by the 18 field birders and 7 feeder watchers, well above the recent 10-year average of 74.4. The flushing of a single Wilson's Snipe, the sifting of a single Pintail from a pond full of ducks, and the sighting of a Merlin with partially eaten sparrow helped swell the numbers in a memorable way. As with most counts, it's the species found in small numbers that boost the totals. On the Charles Town count there were 12 species found individually or paired: Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Killdeer, Red-headed Woodpecker, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Towhee, as well as the three species mentioned above. The flock of 24 Double-crested Cormorants on a SE heading toward the bay; the 41 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers; and the 175 Carolina Wrens all set records that may stand for quite a while, and helped to flesh out the count.

At least 4 somewhat irruptive species have showed up in the Eastern Panhandle this winter, and 3 of them were counted on at least one of the local counts. Charles Town had three Red-breasted Nuthatches and 95 Pine Siskins, but missed out on an Evening Grosbeak. There were a few Snowy Owls in nearby counties, but none was found on either local count. It would be advisable to check out every white plastic grocery bag seen in corn stubble, cut soybean fields, or short grass pastures. They have been known to have haunting golden eyes and black flecking on otherwise white plumage.

The Inwood count amassed a total of 69 species, very near the recent 10-year average of 67.7. In contrast to the cold, wet, and windy January 3, 2021, the 2nd was dry and breezy with temperatures ranging from 30-55 degrees. There were 23 observers in the field and 2 at feeders, one of whom turned up a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. There was a count record of 93 party hours accumulated. Seen as individuals only were the following: American Wigeon, Pied-billed Grebe, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Horned Lark, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Common Grackle. The 10 Ring-necked Ducks established a new count record high, as did the 307 Black Vultures and 47 Common Ravens. There were good numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks as well.

There is a bit of relief in having finished the 69th Charles Town count and the 68th Inwood count. They will be remembered for the impact of COVID19. Please follow CDC guidelines until we are, once again, able to share space and views of our feathered neighbors.

Respectfully submitted by your compiler, Bob Dean.



Photos: Red-shouldered Hawk © Bill Telfair; Back Creek, © Wil Hershberger



Wil Hershberger, photo © KC Walters

Family and Youth Programs

School Programs

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

This spring we are providing our 4th grade Watershed Program virtually to schools in Berkeley and Morgan Counties. In addition, we have started holding virtual nature programs for elementary school classes.

How do you do a virtual nature program you might ask? Well, if the students are at home, each individual student and their teacher tune in to a live lesson with a PVAS instructor on the Zoom video chat platform called. If the students are in school, the teacher will Zoom with a PVAS instructor and project the video chat on a projection screen for the students to see.

In order to keep a virtual program engaging, puppets, songs and pictures are a must. For example, our “Animals in Winter” program for Pre-K – 1st grade consists of the PVAS instructor showing different puppets, each of which teaches the students a verse in a song that explains what that animal does in winter.

One virtual program that we are particularly excited about is called “Caught on Camera” where we show students pictures of animal tracks and signs that we found on the preserve and ask the students to help interpret what happened. We then show them photos of these animals that were taken with our trail cameras. We hope to give the students a glimpse of what wildlife is around them and encourage them to bring their families to PVAS’s preserves to explore these wild wonders themselves.



Outdoor School

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

In January, we started up our Spring Outdoor School sessions. Children attend this all-day program once a week for a month. The program is held almost entirely outdoors to maximize social distancing.

Our theme in January was “Winter Wonderland.” Students learned all about how animals survive winter, and became expert trackers. The students set up motion sensing trail cameras to try to capture what animals are lurking about at night. Additionally, we installed a tracking sand box which we baited in order to see what animals might come by and leave prints in the sand.

In February, the theme for Outdoor School is “Forces of Nature.” Students are learning about extreme weather and climate!



Homeschool and Pre-school Programs

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

This spring we are also doing monthly homeschool and pre-school programs.

In January, in our “Capturing Winter” homeschool program, students learned about nature photography and then used PVAS’s Nikon DSLR cameras to take their own photos, where they captured the natural beauty of winter at Cool Spring Preserve. We will be holding a similar “Capturing Spring” program in March. This month, our homeschool program is about Climate Change.

January’s Pre-school Wee Naturalist program was all about exploring prickly plants found at Cool Spring. Believe it or not, there is quite the variety of spikey plants. From invasive Japanese Barberry, Wine Berry, and Multi-flora Rose, to prickly trees such as Honey Locust, the pre-schoolers learned how prickles are a plant’s own self defense. This month, our Wee Naturalist program is called “Plants Can’t Sit Still” and it all about how plants, seeds and leaves are always on the move.

Camp Programs

Summer Camp

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

Planning for Audubon Discovery Camp for this summer is full steam ahead! Camp will run from June 7 through July 30 and will include sessions for elementary and middle schoolers, as well as opportunities for middle and high schoolers to volunteer as Counselors in Training.

Each week, camp will have a different theme, such as our very popular “Camp Survivor” where campers learn primitive skills such as knot tying, fire building, and water filtration. Like last summer, we will be following COVID health and safety guidelines and will be keeping camp group sizes on the smaller side. Registration for camp opens February 4, so be sure to register on the early side to ensure that you get a spot. Registration and information about camp session can be found on our website.

Conservation

Top 5 Outdoor Winter Activities

By Abigail Freidline & Emily Sperling, AmeriCorps Volunteers

Just because it's cold outside does not mean you have to stay indoors. There are so many wonders about winter that you should go out and explore...

1. Look for animal tracks in the snow

With the frozen precipitation that is bound to come, don't forget the fun of looking for animal tracks in the snow! This is a great way to find out what animals are in your area that do not hibernate or migrate, like certain birds and mammals. This is especially enjoyable with a younger crowd, with additional fun when solving the mystery of where the animal came from and where they went!

2. Make bird feeders

Winter is a great time of year to feed the birds. With the weather being cold, birds use more energy to stay warm. Whether you feed the birds all year round or not, it's a great time to make a new feeder for your birds and have some fun too. To make a simple pinecone feeder go for a hike and look for pine cones. Once you have them, attach a string to each one so they can be hung outside. Cover each one in peanut butter or crisco and then roll them in bird seed. When you are done, decorate the trees with these helpful decorations. Watch the birds enjoy their new feeders. This is just one way to make an easy nature bird feeder, but you can be creative: try using an orange peel or other natural objects. Kids will love to help out too.

3. Stargazing

Don't miss Orion, Taurus and Pleiades! These are just three of many winter constellations in the Northern hemisphere. Although it may be cold, it's the only time of year we can see them in our night sky. Winter is also the best time to go stargazing. The cold dry air makes the atmosphere clearer than the hot moisture heavy summer air. Look up and don't forget to make a wish! You never know when you might see a shooting star.

4. Go for a Hike

Bundle up and listen for winter sounds. Hiking in the winter can reveal all kinds of unique sounds. The crunching of snow and ice under your feet, winter bird calls and dripping icicles. How much water the snow contains changes how it sounds. When there is a lot of water in snow, it makes a crunching sound. When snow is fluffy and has less water, it tends to squeak. Dripping icicles make a unique sound, but ice can sound unworldly too. When ice or a rock is skipped across a frozen lake, it creates both high and low frequencies making an exotic sound. Give it a try for yourself, but be careful around frozen lakes.

5. Winter photography

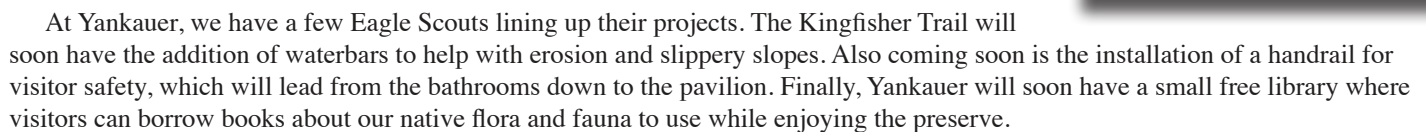
The frozen precipitation that falls in the winter can make a barren landscape come alive with a frosty beauty! Take your digital camera, or even the camera on your telephone, and go outside and explore how snow and sleet can absolutely transform a dormant forest into a crystal palace. Falling snow and icicles make for a stunning picture. Bundle up and keep an eye out for slick surfaces when you're focusing on your camera!



In the Preserves

Fortunately, 2020 ended quietly in the preserves. We even got to enjoy the peace and renewal a beautiful snowfall brings. With the holidays behind us, it's time to look ahead to all the awesome things that 2021 has in store!

The outlook for this spring at Cool Spring is very similar to last year, but with any luck and a lot of good health, we will not have any more major delays. We have two big projects on the docket. First, construction of the boardwalk trail: we are planning to construct a 100-foot boardwalk along a particularly wet section of Linda's Loop. Because of the heavy rains of 2018, we experienced terrible trail flooding and mud. We have all the permitting complete, and cannot wait to start construction! Our second project will be the installation of a Monarch Waystation. In December, James Dillon of Native Havens, completed a garden plan for the two garden beds in front of the nature center. We are so excited for this transformation to native plants that will benefit our pollinators!



The new trail signs for Eidolon are ready for installation. Created by Tom Davis, of Davis Designs and funded by an anonymous donor, these signs are sure to enhance the beauty of our trails. We will also continue working on re-blazing all of the trails this year.

A person wearing a tan jacket, blue pants, and a light-colored beanie is using a shovel to dig in a gravel area. The person is bent over, working on a patch of ground that appears to be a tree pit or a similar excavation. The background is a dense forest with many trees, some of which are bare and others with green foliage. The ground is covered in gravel and some snow.

Any questions, feel free to reach out to Hannah Donnelly, hannah@potomacaudubon.org

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Congratulations to PVMNs Who Met the Recertification Requirements!

By Maria Parisi, Recognition Coordinator, PVMN

The West Virginia Master Naturalists Advisory Committee, and your PVMN Coordinating Committee, waived the 8-hour education and 16-hour volunteer hour recertification requirements for 2020. It was a novel year with a novel virus that changed our lives. At the same time, the PVMN Committee members are impressed with and grateful for those Master Naturalists who persevered and completed your recertification hours, and sometimes more! We will recognize you at the February 27, 2021 annual meeting. For now, we honor you here.

Congratulations to the Master Naturalists who completed 2020 recertifying hours:

2006: *Clark Dixon**

2007: *Ellen Murphy*

2008: *Debbie Crouse, Kathryn Henry*

2009: *Kelly Heldreth-Wolf, Laura Lee Clark, Nanette Johnson*

2010: *Marybeth Grove, Susan Fluharty, Vicki Blazer*

2011: *Marilee Cunningham*

2012: *Linda Mercer, Mary Lynn Robinson*

2013: *Flo Wilbik*

2014: *Charlotte Fremaux, Lynne Wiseman, Margie Knott, Mary Etta Boesl, Philip Folk*

2015: *Aileen Curfman, Cathy Purchis, David Cooper, Karlin Sink*

2016: *Linda DeGraf, Lucy Duff, Pamela Ellis, Paul Breitenbach*

2017: *Carol Winckler, Dale Kirchner, Denise Domian, Dorothy Mozden, Kristan Phillips, Richard Lowman, Stephen Sensabaugh, Susan Loonsk, Tim Hull, Zapporah Ellis*

2018: *Anthony Maciorowski, Barbara Gamble, Carol DiSalvo, Colleen Young, Deborah Rochefort, James Miller, Joy Bridy, Lisa Kovatch, Lisa Radler, Maria Parisi, Mary Palmer, Melanie Files*

2019: *Christy Fraga, Diana Mullis, Elizabeth (Tess) Dew, Jennifer Reed-Grimmett, Rich Brager, Stacy Toup*

** Lifetime Member*

Congratulations, as well, to those who recertified for five and ten years:

Five-Year Awardees: *Aileen Curfman, Cathy Purchis, Karlin Sink, Linda Mercer, and Margie Knott*

Ten-Year Awardees: *Vicki Blazer*

We want to recognize our Lifetime Members:

Clark Dixon, Ora Dixon, Cheryl Jennings

And, finally, kudos to our amazing volunteers who logged 100 or more service hours!

Chairman's Century Club Awardees: *Carol DiSalvo, Charlotte Fremaux, Dale Kirchner, Elizabeth (Tess) Dew, and Kristan Phillips*

Save the Date Reminder

Potomac Valley Master Naturalist 2021 Virtual Annual Meeting

February 27, 2021, 10 - 11:30 am

The PVMN Coordinating Committee is hosting this year's annual meeting via Zoom. We'll take care of business, and, best of all, we'll have opportunities to reconnect. We will have fun with engaging chats, breakout groups, and other ways to engage. Join via Zoom at this link: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/potomac-valley-master-naturalist-annual-meeting/>.

Zoom Practice Session: 7 pm, Monday, February 22

If you are new to Zoom, or want to become more adept at using Zoom, join us for one-half hour to learn and practice. To prepare, download the Zoom app on your computer. It works on smartphones and tablets, but you can best enjoy what Zoom has to offer by using a computer. All the better if your device has a camera. To connect:

<https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/potomac-valley-master-naturalist-practice-zoom-for-virtual-annual-meeting/>

PVMN

Vote for Your PVMN Coordinating Committee Members

By PVMN Coordinating Committee

PVMN thanks Paul Breitenbach (2016-2020) and Dottie Mozden (2020) for their service. As they step down, we need your votes to usher in their replacements. We need two-thirds of



our members to pass the slate, per our Bylaws. The vacancies are for Data Management Coordinator and Recruitment and Retention Coordinator. You can see their responsibilities in our Policy Manual. The Bylaws and Policy Manual can be referenced here: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/master-naturalists/resources/>.

Debbie Crouse for Data Management Coordinator (2-year term). Debbie became a mas-

ter naturalist with PVMN in 2008. After a brief break, she has returned to the program and is eager to resume Data Management duties.

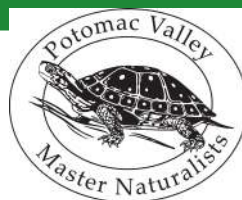
Rich Brager for Recruitment and Retention Coordinator (2-year term). Rich transferred from the Virginia Master Naturalist to the PVMNs about one year ago. He was on the outreach, recruitment, and retention committee in Virginia and would very much like to help out in this area for Potomac Valley Master Naturalists.



How to Vote:

Click: <https://tinyurl.com/y5v56sdc> to enter your name and votes by February 20. We will announce the results at the February 27 PVMN Annual Meeting.

Interested in serving in the future? We encourage interested members to job shadow a Coordinating Committee Member in the coming year. You are eligible if you plan to certify or recertify in 2021. Contact any Coordinating Committee member to share your interests, or wait for more information at the February 27 PVMN Annual (Virtual) Meeting.



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: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Recipient's Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Recipient's E-mail: _____

Recipient's Phone (optional): _____

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.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
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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)

President: Jim Cummins (2022)
Past President: Suzanne Offut (2022)
Secretary: Carolyn Thomas (2022)
Treasurer: Stephen Paradis (2021)
Board Members-at-Large: Patty Bain Bachner (2022)
..... Susan Brookreson (2022)
..... Don Campbell (2021)
..... Melissa Gonzalez (2021)
..... Mina Goodrich (2021)
..... Rita Hennessey (2021)
..... Wil Hershberger (2022)
..... Georgia Jeppesen (2022)
..... Pete Mulford (2021)
..... Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2021)
..... Herb Peddicord (2022)
..... Rod Snyder (2021)

Emerita Board Member: Jean Neely

Special Contacts

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