



Valley Views

Volume 38, Issue 6

June/July 2020

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

I'm going to confess something...I played hooky on a Wednesday last week. Too many beautiful days spent on virtual meetings finally got to me, and I'd promised myself that this was the year I'd go see the Trilliums at Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Virginia. The long, cool spring provided a little extra time to squeeze it in before the heat set in, but Wednesday was my last chance. JJ, Jeff, and I went - it was spectacular.

I've only been meaning to go for 15 years or so, ever since Kathy Bilton told me about it during one of our wildflower outings at Yankauer. We were reveling in the impressive patch of Twinleaf and she told me about a REALLY impressive array of wildflowers at Thompson WMA in VA. She was so right. I've never seen so many Trilliums in one place. And not only that, but the stands of Mayapple were spectacular, Showy Orchids were everywhere, and I even saw my first wild Yellow Ladyslipper.

It's funny how days off give you fresh perspective. It served to reinforce how valuable wild places are. Of course I know that, but I don't experience it personally as often as I'd like. And this year, more than ever before, people are taking advantage of open spaces and wild places. New people. Never have we seen so many people using the Yankauer Preserve, or Cool Spring, either. I'm sure visitation is up at Stauffer's Marsh and Eidolon as well, but we're not there quite as often to witness just how many people are using those spaces.

The people, places, and programs of PVAS have undoubtedly enriched my world. Volunteers (like Kathy Bilton who taught me everything I know about wildflowers) have shared their knowledge and passion and provided me with so many experiences I may not have otherwise had. And the places PVAS manages provide hiking and learning opportunities for my family, friends, and neighbors. And I've so enjoyed the native wildflowers I purchased at the native plant sales over the years (so have the bees and butterflies!)

I hope you have had similar experiences with PVAS... its preserves, programs, and people sharing enthusiasm and knowledge. They enrich our lives and the experiences we have. Whether it be one of the staff's or volunteers' recent videos about wildflowers, turtles, birds, gardening, trees, or other topic, or a hike at one of the preserves, or the exploration of your own backyard that per-

haps has been enriched through knowledge, practice, or purchase gained through your relationship with PVAS, I hope PVAS has made your world - especially the last 3 months - a little better.

Ironically, the night we got back from our day of "playing hooky," JJ found an old "Calvin and Hobbes" comic book of Jeff's. He opened it up to the page where Calvin is having a really bad day. He's in trouble at home, at school, on the playground. He finally gets home, grabs Hobbes, and goes outside into the woods. As they sit on a rock, Calvin says, "The world isn't so bad if you can just get out in it." I totally agree.

Welcome New Board Members!

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

Summer brings with it a new slate of Board Members to PVAS. Thanks to votes from our members, we welcome some new folks, or some experienced folks with new roles.

Jim Cummins will assume the role of PVAS President beginning July 1. At the same time, our At-Large Board Members will include Patty Bain Bachner, Georgia Jeppesen, and Susan Brookreson for their 2nd terms, and Herb Peddicord and Wil Hershberger for their 1st terms. Suzanne Offutt will assume the role of Past President. The rest of the board members will be continuing their terms (for which we thank them!) Those folks include: Steve Paradis (Treasurer), and At-Large Members Don Campbell, Melissa Gonzalez, Mina Goodrich, Rita Hennessey, Pete Mulford, Patti Mulkeen Corley, and Rod Snyder. Jean Neely will continue to be an Emerita Board Member.

All board member biographies can be found at: www.potomac-audubon.org/about/board/.

In addition to welcoming new board members, we'd like to recognize those board members who are stepping off the board after many wonderful contributions: Michael Sullivan, Shannye Carroll, and Tiffany Lawrence.

Board members work very hard behind the scenes and contribute time, resources, knowledge, and connections. PVAS benefits tremendously from the richness of their experiences and we are so grateful they've been a part of PVAS's leadership. A heartfelt and sincere "thank you" goes to each and every person who has served on the board - or will very soon!

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

Wood Thrush – A Woodland Virtuoso

By Wil Hershberger

As I write this, a male Wood Thrush, just back from spring migration, is singing in the woods next to the house. Hearing his ethereal notes is my harbinger of spring. When a Wood Thrush first arrives on his territory in the spring, he'll sing one song after the other more rapidly than he will later in the season (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/228535611>). During these extended, rapid song bouts, a neighboring male may take umbrage that he is being challenged by this amorous competitor. During these early-season encounters, males may fight with one another viciously. They will chase each other at high speed, wrestle on the forest floor with wings flapping and slapping each other. During these "on the ground" grappling matches, you might hear the wildest barrage of song elements (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/228535091>). After seeing one of these battles, you have to wonder how these birds come away without serious injury.

Wood Thrushes spend our winter in Central America and southern Mexico. Here the entire breeding population is squeezed into an area that is nearly 1/10th the size of their breeding range. Some of the highest breeding season densities occur in and around the Appalachians, so we're fortunate to be in the heart of this magnificent species' summer home. The breeding range extends from the southern portions of the eastern provinces of Canada, from the Atlantic coast, west to western Minnesota, south to eastern Texas, and along the Gulf Coast to southern Georgia. Basically, this range consists of the eastern United States, where forests or copse of trees can be found. Any farther west and you're in the mixed and short-grass prairies.

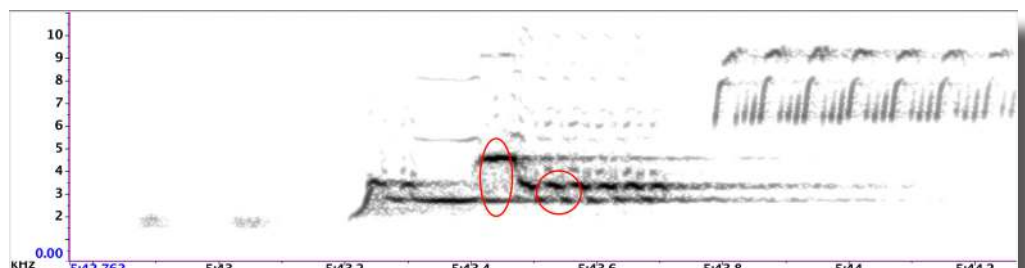
These are forest birds, requiring deciduous woodlands in which to nest and raise young, as well as to survive when they migrate south to escape the northern winter. The destruction and fragmentation of these forests has led to a severe decline in Wood Thrush populations all over their range. This is especially prominent on the wintering grounds, where the numbers of individuals per acre are very high. Here, any disturbance is magnified many fold, simply due to the numbers of birds in these habitats.

Even though some areas in West Virginia are re-foresting after resource extraction companies removed or degraded the forests that were once on these lands, the breeding population of Wood Thrushes in the state is still declining. Forest fragmentation and Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism are the main factors for this decline.

After the females arrive from spring migration and they find a mate, the pair selects a site but, she has the last word on its location. She alone builds the nest in the crotch of a tree or shrub typically using dead grasses, leaves, stems, and other similar materials. Nests are typically within 20 feet of the ground; a few may be as high as 60 feet. The female lines the nest with mud and shapes the cup throughout the process by squatting in the nest and turning around using her breast to shape the construction. She then lays 3-4 smooth, greenish-blue eggs, one a day. She alone then incubates the eggs for about two weeks. The nestlings are dependent on both parents as they repeatedly bring food to the ever-hungry young. Fledging occurs about two weeks after the eggs hatched. The young still rely on both parents for food and protection for another 2-3 weeks. So, it takes on average six weeks to raise a nest of Wood Thrushes to independence.

Fortunately, we are blessed by still having Wood Thrushes in our area. During the lazy days of late June, evening concerts performed by males of this species are more relaxed and measured, lulling us into a trance of quietude (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/168331>). I hope that your favorite patch of woods will have Wood Thrushes this season, that you'll go and listen to the morning and evening performances of these

magical singers. Listen to the flute-like caroling, ponder the Olympian feats of neurology and physiology that are required of the male to produce these sounds using his double-sided syrinx. Occasionally, he sings two notes at once (see spectrogram image). Allow yourself to focus only on his songs, to be amazed by the awesome performance of this woodland virtuoso.



This spectrogram, of one song of a Wood Thrush, shows time on the x-axis and frequency on the y-axis. The louder the sound, the darker the trace. The red circles show where this male was singing two notes at once. As with most songbirds that sing two notes at the same time, the lower-pitched notes are likely from the left side of the syrinx and the higher-pitched notes are from the right side. Other, fainter traces above the darker notes are harmonics of those fundamental notes.



Wood Thrush © Wil Hershberger

PVAS Events

President's Note

By Suzanne Offutt, PVAS President

Swift Watch season is underway. Since the beginning of April, a group of swift tower watchers have been monitoring the Chimney Swift tower on the Shepherd University campus. Beginning about 45 minutes before sunset and ending about 30 minutes after sunset, a small band of volunteers have set up lawn chairs to watch at the tower for Chimney Swifts who might show an interest in this new tower as a possible nesting and roosting site. In the first year that we could expect to have some interest in the tower, we're pleased to report the progress we've seen.

At the beginning of April, when we could first anticipate the arrival of the first wave of swifts from their wintering grounds in South America, we didn't see any activity around the tower. On April 11, KC Walters heard a swift near Knutti Hall, the site of a traditional roosting chimney in Shepherdstown. On April 18, we had a significant increase in interest in our tower with the first two swifts arriving suddenly and dropping into the tower followed by two more with none re-emerging that night. On April 19, KC and her mother observed a small flock of 15-20 birds over the downtown chimneys with a larger flock of about 50 seen two days later. In the last week of April, our tower watchers regularly saw Chimney Swifts in the area of the tower with birds staying in the tower on four of those nights. Since Chimney Swifts conduct their approximate 6,000-mile migration in small flocks of 30-50 birds, we may have seen one of these groups in the latter part of April. There's speculation that the windy, rainy weather of April 25-26 may have accelerated these birds along on their northerly migration with a different small flock arriving after those dates.



Since May 1, the tower watchers have seen a range of three to nine Chimney Swifts flying in the vicinity of the tower or circling the tower every night except May 3, when there was a steady rain all evening (data through May 7). With this increased interest, we're hopeful that a few birds may select the tower as a suitable breeding and nesting spot for the season. We'll be watching for courtship behavior when three birds may be seen flying together with a female in the lead followed by two males flying close to each other. We may observe a mated pair flying together with first one and then the other moving the wings into "V" positions. With ample trees and shrubs in the area of the arboretum, we may see both males and females clipping small twigs while on the wing to take back to the nest site. When we have cameras mounted in the tower, PVAS can continue to contribute observations about the elusive Chimney Swift, which conducts much of its domestic life out of the watchful eyes of observers since the species choose to nest in chimneys or hollow trees. The big shows occur in the

fall, when our tower - which is built for a capacity of up to 5000 birds - may host the magnificence of the murmuration of swifts emerging and returning to the tower as they fatten up for their 6000 mile trek back to the Amazon basin.

Our citizen science project of the construction of the Chimney Swift Tower has been made possible through the financial support of many Audubon members, our community, grants, and gifts. Thank you to Schmitt Construction for the building of the tower designed to last about a 100 years. Thank you to the Swift Watch team, which includes PVAS Land & Conservation Manager KC Walters, Don and Kathryn Henry, Jim and Melinda Schmitt, Bruce and Carolyn Thomas, Susan Brookreson, Mike Zagarella, and myself.

Summer Appeal

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

Like the rest of the country, PVAS has been reinventing itself as quickly as possible in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19. The staff have become quite proficient at Facebook, Facebook Live, filming and posting videos on YouTube, teaching virtually, and of course, Zoom meetings. We've provided schools with virtual programs, have been a resource for homeschool families through "Nature Now" videos, and have done our monthly programs using social media, as well. "Hands-on" experiences have always been PVAS's strong suit, but now adaptability seems to be our strength, and I'm really proud of our team for their creativity, tenacity, "can-do" attitude, and flexibility.

Now summer camp is the big question looming...at the writing of this newsletter, we're following "Safer at Home" guidelines and watching health department guidance daily. We've cancelled Audubon Discovery Camp in June and it's quite likely we'll have to cancel July. In any case, it will be much smaller than normal. We've not hired any summer staff and for safety purposes, the numbers of children will be much smaller than normal, if we are able to do anything at all.

All of this is to say that Audubon Discovery Camp, one of our few programs that generates significant revenue, will not be a source of income for PVAS this year. PVAS relies on summer camp to support program staff salaries. We estimate that we'll lose over \$25,000 as a result of reduced summer programming. This loss, coupled with the loss of our spring school/family programs and our June fundraiser will certainly have an impact.

PVAS is turning to its members and friends for support to help make up for this loss. You'll be receiving a mid-year appeal for the first time ever, in hopes that you can help PVAS maintain its programming in this unprecedented programmatic, and therefore financial, challenge. Funds will be used to support the youth programs and the preserves at which many of the programs take place. With your support, PVAS will continue to be creative and tenacious in meeting the many challenges presented by the pandemic, and will serve its members and community with creative programming that will continue to encourage kids and adults to get outside and explore the natural world - which happens to be the safest possible place to be.

Thank you in advance for any support you can provide as we navigate our changing world.

PVAS Events

2020 Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon Results

By KC Walters, Land & Conservation Manager

Despite many challenges and change-orders, the 2020 Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon was so much fun! This year our Birdathon consisted of two parts: a fundraising, Top Birder Competition and a family-fun, Community Collaborative Big Day. Birdathon's events collectively raised \$2,459 for PVAS! The proceeds from Birdathon go toward growing our Habitat Stewardship Programs.

For the Top Birder Competition, Bob Dean, Matt Orsie, and Wil Hershberger conducted Big Sits at their respective homes in a friendly competition for the title of PVAS Top Birder 2020. Community members sponsored these birders in order for them to earn 'birding privileges' to use during their Big Sit. Each birder had to earn at least \$500 in sponsorships in order to use binoculars, have an assistant birder, count birds heard but not seen, use a spotting scope and count birds at a feeder. All three competitors earned full birding privileges through sponsorships.

One element of the competition was the ability of the birders to pick what they thought would be the best birding day. Both Matt and Wil conducted their respective Big Sits on May 15, while Bob chose to do his on May 17. Matt's top bird of the day was a Red-Headed Woodpecker. Wil had a hard time picking just one stand-out bird from his list. He captured the nocturnal flight call of a Gray-Cheeked Thrush on an audio recording early in his sit, but then experienced Warbler-palooza later on in the day. Bob noted his full five-second experience with a Common Nighthawk during his sit.

While PVAS knows all three competitors are top birders and all around great fellows, there can be only one winner of this competition. With a total count of 72 species, the PVAS Top Birder of 2020 is Wil Hershberger! In second place was Matt Orsie with 59 species, and in third place, Bob Dean with 45 species. Congratulations to all three competitors for exceptional species totals collected during their quarantined Big Sits!

The goal of the Community Collaborative Big Day was to collectively count at least 100 bird species in the PVAS, 4-county service area. All birders, new and experienced, were encouraged to conduct Big Sits at their homes and submit their species lists for the Community Collaborative Big Day. In total, we had lists submitted from 32 quarantine teams. When the lists were combined, the final total was 119 bird species recorded, exceeding our goal! The most common birds spotted were Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, American Goldfinches American Robins and Blue Jays. PVAS is so proud of our community for proving we can achieve goals together, even when we are kept apart. The following is the full species list from the Community Collaborative Big Day.



Acadian Flycatcher
 American Crow
 American Goldfinch
 American Redstart
 American Robin
 American Woodcock
 Bald Eagle
 Baltimore Oriole
 Barn Swallow
 Barred Owl
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Belted Kingfisher
 Black-throated Blue Warbler
 Black-throated Green Warbler
 Black Vulture
 Black and White Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Blue-headed Vireo
 Blue Grosbeak
 Blue Jay
 Blue-winged Warbler
 Broad-winged Hawk
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Brown Thrasher
 Canada Goose
 Canada Warbler
 Cape May Warbler
 Carolina Wren
 Cedar Waxwing
 Cerulean Warbler
 Chickadee
 Chimney Swift
 Chipping Sparrow
 Common Grackle
 Common Nighthawk
 Common Raven
 Common Yellowthroat
 Cooper's Hawk
 Dark eyed junco
 Double-crested Cormorant
 Downy Woodpecker
 Eastern Bluebird
 Eastern Kingbird
 Eastern Meadowlark
 Eastern Phoebe
 Eastern Towhee
 Eastern Whip-poor-will
 Eastern Wood-Pewee
 European Starling
 Field Sparrow
 Fish Crow
 Fox Sparrow
 Gray Catbird
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 Great Horned Owl
 Green Heron
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Hooded Warbler
 House Finch
 House Sparrow
 House Wren
 Indigo Bunting
 Kentucky Warbler
 Killdeer
 Magnolia Warbler
 Mallard
 Mourning Dove
 Nashville Warbler
 Northern Cardinal
 Northern Flicker
 Northern Mockingbird
 Northern Parula
 Northern Waterthrush
 Orchard Oriole
 Osprey
 Ovenbird
 Philadelphia Vireo
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Pine Warbler
 Prairie Warbler
 Prothonotary Warbler
 Purple Finch
 Purple Martin
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Red-headed Woodpecker
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Rock Pigeon
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Ruby Throated Hummingbird
 Scarlet Tanager
 Semipalmated Plover
 Sharp-shinned Hawk
 Song Sparrow
 Swainson's Thrush
 Tennessee Warbler
 Tree Swallow
 Tufted Titmouse
 Turkey Vulture
 Warbling Vireo
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 White-crowned Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 Wild Turkey
 White-eyed Vireo
 Wood Duck
 Wood Thrush
 Worm-eating Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo
 Yellow-breasted Chat
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Yellow-throated Vireo

PVAS Events

Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Programs Coordinator

The longer days and warmer weather of summer bring with them a renewed sense of hope and energy. While there certainly remains uncertainty around us, there are things we can focus on to give us purpose and belonging. The way the leaves shine bright after a hard summer rain, the gently floating cumulus clouds against the bright blue sky, the Barred Owl calling “who cooks for you?” off in the distant dark night, the way the newly opened leaves filter the sunlight on a wooded path...what sparks joy for you on a warm summer day? How can we use this time to benefit the environment while also staying safe?

Self-care and nature go hand in hand. Making sure to provide a safe space for yourself to respite from the unknown, while also staying productive and feeling useful, will be important in the coming months. What can we do from our own safe space? And how can we protect our personal environment? How does the saying go? “Think globally, act locally.” From potting native pollinator plants on your porch to pulling invasive garlic mustard while walking the trails at your neighborhood preserve, our community offers ample opportunity to enjoy, preserve and learn about our local natural world.

The Master Naturalist Class of 2020 has been ‘dealt a difficult hand’. We have 20 eager students ready and waiting to begin their yearlong journey towards becoming certified Master Naturalists. While there is no good answer at this time for if and how the rest of the year will play out, the Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee has been hard at work creatively looking at ways to move forward with classes and field experiences. The committee has created a list of opportunities for volunteer work that can be accomplished both at home or a nearby preserve; they have also researched and approved a variety of online learning options for those interested in continuing their education. These volunteer and continuing education opportunities can be found at this link: www.potomacaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PVMN_Volunteer_Education_Opportunities_2020_Final.pdf

While these have been provided to the Master Naturalists, this information and options could benefit any of PVAS’s community. This list is just a sample of the endless ways to stay involved and educated during this time. The list is continually being expanded upon, so please feel free to take a look and see if there is something that sparks your interest.

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society has had to rethink and reschedule much of its summer programming. However, our mission has not changed. We are people dedicated to preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action! Our promise to you is to continue to find ways to support you, your interests, and your environment.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met the Curfmans?

Have you met the Curfmans? Dave and Aileen Curfman are longtime volunteers of PVAS, in fact, they’ve been supporting us from the very beginning. Yankauer Nature Preserve has especially benefited from their dedicated volunteerism. As our Land Manager KC put it, “the Curfmans are volunteers I don’t have to ask, they just do,” with Dave clearing trees from trails before we even know they’re down, and Aileen regularly picking up trash and tending Yankauer’s gardens. Beyond preserve maintenance, the Curfmans are reliable and welcome faces at many of our special events. They’ve helped create trails and staff stations at “This Race is for the Birds!” and always lend a helpful hand at the annual Day of Caring. Last summer, Dave and Aileen were one of the “last volunteers standing” at Fireflies, Fiddles, and Frogs - helping us pack up tent poles and canopies in near darkness. Both Curfmans are involved with the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program, and their volunteer work extends far beyond our organization. In the photo you see, they’re pitching in at a stream access clean-up (and practicing good physical distancing, too!) We find ourselves appreciating motivated, talented volunteers like the Curfmans more than ever these days. If you get a chance to meet Dave and Aileen, be sure to thank them for all they do for PVAS.

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



Family and Youth Programs

Virtual Youth Programs

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher & Naturalist

Due to school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, March 12 marked the last day the PVAS Youth Programs team were able to provide in-person environmental education lessons to elementary school students in the Eastern Panhandle. Our 20 plus field trips for the spring were cancelled along with a number of other scheduled school, homeschool, and preschool programs.

The Youth Programs team wondered what we could do to still provide environmental education opportunities to our students. As much of the world turned to virtual options to maintain physical distancing recommendation, we decided to do the same.

It is so important that kids and parents alike are getting outside during these times of physical distancing. Being in nature reduces stress and fosters a sense of wonder and exploration that every child needs. We wanted to show families that you can explore nature right at home. Thus, we decided to create our Nature Now series, which consists of a weekly post for families about a certain nature topic. With each post, either our Americorps Environmental Educators - Griffin and Laurel - or myself create a video to show kids some aspect of nature that they can explore in their own backyard. The posts also contain links to activities and resources related to the weekly theme. These posts are sent to local teachers and families, and posted on our website (www.potomacaudubon.org/nature-now/) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/PotomacValleyAudubon/) for anyone to view.

From nature scavenger hunts and backyard birding, to gardening, flowers, and trees, we've covered a variety of topics that can be explored at home. One family sent me a picture of them doing a backyard forest floor investigation with a hula hoop. Another mother informed me that after watching our backyard birding video, she downloaded the Merlin Bird ID app to practice identifying birds with her two children. I definitely feel that our videos are achieving our goal of giving families ideas on how to explore their own backyard.

In addition to our Nature Now posts, we created video lessons for the 4th graders in our watershed education program to make up for the ones we missed due to school closures. One video showed students how to investigate their own backyard to see how it impacts their watershed. Our final video was a virtual field trip to Bullskin Run at Cool Spring Preserve, which showed students how we use chemistry and study benthic macroinvertebrates to assess water quality.



In April, every Wednesday morning I hosted a Facebook Live session of me reading a nature story and then feeding our "teaching turtles" - Poppie, Louie, and Scute. I created the "Least Picky Eater" contest for the turtles to see which one ate the greatest variety of food. Poppie, our Red-eared slider, surprisingly won the contest. I honestly thought she was the most picky eater before the contest considering she often tastes her vegetables and then spits them back out. However, she won fair and square!

All in all, over these past couple of months Griffin, Laurel, and I have really enjoyed thinking of creative ways to continue to provide nature based education. I've loved watching Griffin and Laurel grow as amateur cinematographers. Neither had ever made videos before and they truly embraced the challenge and hit the ground running! Whatever the coming months bring, the three of us will continue working to engage our community in the natural world.



Family and Youth Programs

Youth Photography & Poetry Contest

By Erin Shaw, Program Administrator

In April, we held a Youth Photography and Poetry Contest. We asked that photo entries “capture the beginnings of spring,” and for poem entries to be about a nature experience, local plants or animals in West Virginia, or a natural place of the poet’s choice. Poems of any style and length were welcome.

The results are in, and we’re eager to share them with you! We truly enjoyed reviewing these entries, each one brought a smile to our faces. The winning submissions from each category are featured here, but because we are so impressed with the budding photographers and poets in our community, we’ve also decided to highlight our favorite submission from everyone who sent us something at this link: www.potomacaudubon.org/2020/05/youth-photography-poetry-contest/. Enjoy!

Winner of the Age 12+ category:

The Throne

By Felix Alexander, age 12

I came to sit between the reeds,
when I heard a sound beyond the breeze.
A flutter, a flitter, a buzz, a bee?
I crouched down closer to try and see.
There it was! A tiny sight!
A flash of color! A flicker of light!
Now I had a perfect view.
It opened its wings, stretched them, and flew.
It stayed aloft, and then it landed.
The weeds around it quickly disbanded.
I craned my neck, and with all my power,
I saw it sit upon a flower.
Then and there, it was known.
The monarch butterfly had found its throne.



Winner of the Age 12+ Category: Marleigh Blackwell Age 12

Winner of the Age 5+ category:

The trees awake

By Oliver Faehl, age 7

In the cold winter the trees are asleep
With the first trickle of spring they wake
From the long, long winter
Their leaves are dancing
Pinks, greens, reds, and purples appear
Slowly and bursting into bloom
In the first small breeze of spring.



Winner of the Age 5+ Category: Matthew Clark Age 8

Camp Programs

Summer Camp Update

By Erin Shaw, Program Administrator

We've made the difficult decision to cancel June camp sessions. We're disappointed, but our top priority is ensuring everyone's health and safety. We will make a decision on our July camps by June 1; for the most up-to-date info on Audubon Discovery Camp, please head to www.potomacaudubon.org/education/youth/discovercamp/.

There is no greater joy than watching our campers laugh, play, and learn throughout the summer. So to continue serving our camp community during the month of June, we are offering half-day family programs at both Cool Spring and Yankauer Nature Preserves. These programs are designed for families with children three and up, and will be filled with fun, camp-like activities based on input from parents and their children. There are two-day (\$30/child) and three-day options (\$45/child). Through these programs, we'll work with groups of two (minimum) to eight (maximum) children and two adults who are quarantining

together. If you or someone you know is interested, head to this sign up link for more info and to register: secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/X9xBZJqk-VyBn77ZqtbmzQ?t=1590677019. We think this is a safe alternative to our traditional camps, that is designed in such a way to avoid the spread of COVID-19. But we will of course continue to monitor the advice of CDC, state, and local health guidelines.

No surprise here, but our camp families have been wonderfully supportive and understanding as we navigate this unprecedented process. We are offering full refunds for any camp sessions cancelled by PVAS; if you have not requested your refund yet, please get in touch with me at Admin@PotomacAudubon.org.

This is definitely not the summer we imagined, but we remain hopeful and excited for better days ahead. The buzz of campers building forts, splashing in the stream, throwing together mud-pies, and berry picking along the trails will return, and I think we'll all appreciate these joys of summer camp more than ever. In the meantime, we look forward to facilitating a wonderful outdoor experience through our June family programs.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, Land & Conservation Manager

I am so excited that I FINALLY get to share this news: Cool Spring Preserve has expanded! Linda Case, founder of CraftWorks which donated the original 13 acres of Cool Spring Preserve, has donated an additional 50 acres of adjacent land to PVAS. Prior to this donation, we leased approximately 30 acres from Linda, which accounts for most of the Cool Spring hiking trails you know and love. Pleased with our work, Linda decided to donate those 30 acres, plus 20 more, for us to continue to serve our community and fulfill our mission.

But wait, there's more! As a part of the agreement with Linda, all 62 acres of Cool Spring Preserve have been placed into a conservation easement with the West Virginia Land Trust (WVLT). This means that the special place we know and love today, will be conserved forever.

Mike Sullivan has been spearheading this project on behalf of PVAS for nearly two years. He served as the liaison in negotiations with both Linda and Adam Webster of the WVLT. He spent countless hours reviewing documents pertaining to both the land donation and conservation easement. Next time you see Mike, be sure to thank him for all of his behind-the-scenes work in making this possible! A big thank you is also due to our attorney, Frank Hill, who donated an enormous amount of his time and effort in this process.

With this addition of property, the PVAS staff has been busy creating new trails for the public to enjoy. The expanded trail system makes Linda's Loop longer, winding through the open woods at the rear of the property, and also adds in two new cross trails. As soon as it is safe and you are able, we encourage you to come walk the new trails. We are currently soliciting the public's help in naming the new trails. If you have a name suggestion, please email it to me at Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org. We have also created a special trail through the marsh, leading to the Muskrat Pond, for use only during guided programs. Stay tuned for more information and registration for these guided programs.

In a silver lining to the dark cloud hanging over us, the preserves are being more loved and appreciated than ever before. People are coming from all corners of our community, discovering our pieces of West Virginia paradise for the first time. The comments, emails, and phone calls I've received from our new visitors have been so positive. They are grateful to have a place to go to escape the house for a little while and take the kids on an adventure. Many families look forward to becoming volunteers in the future. Because of this, I want to thank you, our members. Thank you for your support of PVAS and the preserves for so many years. Thank you to those who have donated their time, skills, and financial resources to making the preserves as great as they are today. You are the reason we have this gift to share with our community during this difficult time.

And boy do I miss you guys! As soon as it is safe to do so, and the guidelines allow for small groups of non-quarantined folks to gather together outdoors, I will resume volunteer workdays in the preserves. In the meantime, as our state reopens, I'm happy to help you find volunteer projects that you can complete solo or with your family members while getting in your outdoor exercise. Email me, at Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org, for details on these opportunities.



Standing, l-r: Jason Walls, Land Conservation Attorney, WVU LUSD; Nicola Smith, Attorney, Bowles Rice; Amanda Greene, Student Clinician, WVU LUSD; Mike Sullivan, Past President PVAS; Frank Hill, Attorney representing PVAS
Sitting, l-r: Suzanne Offutt, PVAS President; Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director; Adam Webster, WV Land Trust Conservation and Communications Coordinator; Brent Bailey, WV Land Trust Executive Director; Linda Case, Donor. Photo by David DeJarnett, Attorney, Bowles Rice

Conservation

Top 5 Eco-Hobbies to Take Up

By Laurel Schwartz, AmeriCorps Environmental Educator

If you are looking for new hobbies during this time of self-isolation, you are not alone. Finding ways to occupy your time and keep your sanity may be a daily struggle. Consider taking up one of these five eco-hobbies to keep boredom at bay and strengthen your connection with Mother Nature:

1. **Raising your own food:** Over the last several weeks, going out for a trip to the grocery store has become increasingly more inconvenient and intimidating. Why not try your hand at raising your own food at home? Growing your own vegetables, fruits, herbs, and greens can be quite empowering and rewarding. Help preserve biodiversity by growing heirloom plant varieties. If you're up for an even bigger challenge, and in need of fertilizer for your garden, try raising chickens in your backyard. You will be self-sufficient and helping the planet in no time. Who knows, maybe you'll even be harvesting enough to share with your neighbors or sell at a drive-thru farmers market!

2. **Cooking with wild edibles:** If you've ever explored the world of wild edibles, you know that Mother Nature has a lot of new flavors to offer. Whether you crave something sweet, savory, spicy, or floral, there is a plant calling your name. Some of my favorite wild edibles include watercress, chicken of the woods, dandelions, and mulberries. There are also plenty of invasive plants which are edible or produce edible fruit. Harvesting these helps protect the diversity of the local ecosystem. To help out and try something delicious, check out recipes for wineberry pie, honeysuckle tea, and garlic mustard pesto.

3. **Honing your identification skills:** Are you ever envious of those who seem to be able to ID every bird, insect, tree, shrub, flower, and fungi? Do you ever feel like you don't know your warbler from your wren, your cricket from your katydid, or your ash from your aspen? Good news: there are a lot of tools out there to help you hone your identification skills. Use this time while self-isolating to brush up on common and uncommon plant, animal, and bird ID. Try apps such as Audubon Bird Guide and eBird for birding. For plant and fungi identification, I have enjoyed using iNaturalist. Using these apps, you can take advantage of technology and the online community to help you reach your full potential as a naturalist.

4. **Using nature as art inspiration:** Call on your creative side and explore art as a hobby. Of course, there are many mediums to choose from, including photography, poetry, sketching, painting, songwriting, and more. Being outside and enjoying the beauty of nature certainly will get your creative juices flowing. If you prefer a more personal and reflective style of art, I suggest trying out nature journaling. You can sketch, write, watercolor, or press flowers in your nature journal. You make the rules in your journal!

5. **Sharing nature with others:** Whatever your favorite nature hobby is, you can share your passions and help someone else find theirs! Take your child on a bird walk, write a journal prompt for your sibling, start a garden with your spouse, or meditate outside with your dog. Sharing your love for the outdoors might spark excitement for someone else. Social media could also use some positivity these days. Share a photo of your family picking up trash while on a neighborhood walk, harvesting from your garden, or practicing your tree ID. We could all use a little more outdoor time in our lives.



Be a Weed Warrior!

By KC Walters, Land & Conservation Manager

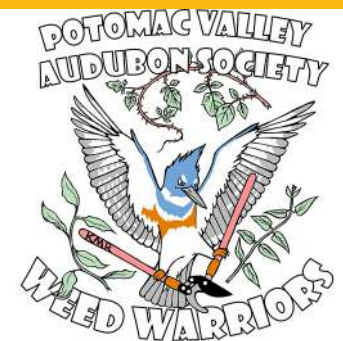
Tired of being stuck inside? Looking for a meaningful outdoor activity that helps our native ecosystems? Trying to fulfill required volunteer hours? Become a PVAS Weed Warrior!

Invasive plant species are plaguing our local environment. These plants were either intentionally or accidentally introduced to the United States. Without natural predators or pathogens in the US, these invaders are spreading rapidly and taking over the native ecosystems. They prevent the propagation of native species and outcompete the natives for resources. Only you can stop them!

PVAS Weed Warriors will receive all the training necessary to go to battle against invasive plants at the nature preserves. Whether it's Garlic Mustard at Yankauer, Autumn Olive at Cool Spring, Bush Honeysuckle at Stauffer's Marsh, or Multiflora Rose at Eidolon - you will be prepared to identify and take down

any invasive plant species in your path.

The first Weed Warrior training will be held on Tuesday, June 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. via Zoom. After the virtual portion of the training, participants will sign up for a one hour outdoor training in small groups at either Cool Spring or Yankauer Preserve, dates TBD based on participant availability. At the completion of this two hour training, all participants will become certified PVAS Weed Warriors. This certification comes with distinction, an awesome t-shirt (see the beautiful logo created by Karli Rogers) to wear while performing duties, and exclusive access to the best tools of the trade, both provided through a grant from National Audubon. Additional trainings will be held over the summer based on interest.



Conservation

Nature Notes: What to Do With the Poo

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher & Naturalist

As the weather warms, there is nothing like going on a walk with your dog. Dogs are great walking companions, but we have found that not all pet owners who visit our nature preserves with their furry friends do the responsible thing when it comes to dog waste.

Of course, no one wants to squat down to look at a flower only to find a pile of dog doo right beside them, let alone accidentally step in it. The responsible thing to do is bag your pet waste and bring it home with you to dispose of there, and the reasoning goes beyond helping keep our trails beautiful. Dog waste actually has unintended effects on human health and the health of our local waterways.

Oftentimes, dog waste that remains on the ground breaks down and gets carried to streams in the form of runoff when it rains. Local wildlife can be greatly affected by this. According to the USDA, dog waste contains nitrogen and phosphorus, and when it enters waterways it can deplete oxygen that fish and other water-based life need to survive, as well as encourage the growth of harmful algae.

Dog waste is also considered a significant source of pathogens including fecal coliform, a disease-causing bacteria. According to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, a single gram of dog waste can contain 23 million fecal coliform bacteria. If ingested by humans, it can cause cramps, diarrhea, intestinal illness, and serious kidney disorders. Perhaps you don't plan on drinking straight from a local stream, but consider children who play in the stream and accidentally swallow some water. Additionally, shellfish such as crabs and crayfish that we eat can also harbor these pathogens. What's more, pathogens can also enter the body through open cuts and mucus membranes.

America's 83 million pet dogs produce some 10.6 million tons of poop every year. That's a lot of doo! If you are a dog owner, you have the power to make a difference. Simply use a plastic bag to pick up and bag your dog's waste and bring it home with you to properly dispose of in a sealed trash receptacle.

You might wonder, how is sending organic waste wrapped in an oh-so-lovely plastic bag to a landfill any better? Well, believe it or not, trashing dog poop isn't your only option. You can actually flush it in your toilet! If your waste goes to a treatment plant, your flushed dog waste will be treated along with human waste. There are even pet waste composting initiatives going on across the country in cities like Portland, Oregon and Boulder, Colorado. These composting facilities are able to heat the dog waste hot enough and for a long enough period of time to kill harmful pathogens. If you are able to create a composting system that gets hot enough, it is even possible to compost your dog waste at home. But make sure you do the necessary research before giving this a try.

Picking up after dogs is an easy thing we can all do to be better stewards of the land that we love. You can go a step further by informing other dog owners about the importance of picking up after their pets. I wish you happy trails with your canine companion!

The sign above is used by the town of Boone, NC, in an effort to reduce pet waste.



Advocacy

Solar Energy and the Legislature: A Power Play in Charleston

By Neal Barkus, Panhandle Progressive

For a state beholden to the coal and natural gas industries, solar energy generated a lot of heat during the recent West Virginia legislative session. Two initiatives concerning alternative energy, including solar, were introduced. One survived and will become law. Unfortunately, the survivor is a timid effort to attract a specific hi-tech enterprise that will involve no new solar energy facilities unless that enterprise locates here. But progress on renewable energy in West Virginia will have to be made in small steps, and this was a start.

The unsuccessful initiative - SB 759 - contained a number of wonderful ideas that would have enabled commercial and individual property owners to develop alternative energy for their own consumption. The bill would have accomplished this by authorizing municipalities to establish low-cost alternative energy revolving loan programs to assist the property owners. Interest rates charged on the loans from these programs would have been below prevailing market rates.

Unfortunately, SB 759 was referred to the Government Organization Committee, the place where bills of this sort go to die. At the end of the session, 67 bills - including SB 759 - had expired in that committee with no action.

The survivor of the two initiatives - SB 583 - was introduced by Senator Patricia Rucker of Jefferson County, among others. This bill will authorize electric utilities in the state to construct or purchase solar energy facilities on sites that have previously been used for industrial, manufacturing, or mining operations. Wind and other alternative energy sources are not covered. But SB 583 is a puny little thing without much prospect for changing the energy landscape.

Demonstrating how timorous this legislation is, solar facilities under the law can only be built in 50 megawatt increments. When 85% of the power from the first increment is under contract, facilities for the next 50 megawatts can be built. No single such facility can generate more than 200 megawatts and the cumulative generating capacity of renewable energy facilities can't exceed 400 megawatts. Evidently, neither the utility industry nor the coal industry wanted a lot of excess solar power sloshing around that would require companies to reduce coal-fired power generation.

This bill surprisingly had the support of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. It seems that whenever the business recruiters at the Department tried to lure tech companies to the state, these companies insisted on the availability of solar energy. Well, of course, we have had no such capacity.

The particular focus of the Department's recent efforts is a company that proposes to build a research and development facility in Preston County that will test ultra-high speed transportation systems. The provisions of SB 583 that enable utilities to recover their costs for constructing solar facilities will sunset in 2025, by which time this company will either have located in West Virginia or not. So despite the high-sounding rhetoric about the need for

continued next page

Solar Energy continued from previous page

West Virginia to enter the twenty-first century world of renewable energy, the real driver of this legislation was immediate business development and not a long-term commitment to renewable energy.

House environmental advocates considered proposing an amendment to SB 583 when it reached the House. The amendment would have broadened the bill to include solar power purchase agreements (PPAs). These are contractual arrangements where a third-party developer arranges for the design, financing, and installation of a solar energy system on a customer’s property at little to no cost. The developer sells the power generated to the host customer at a fixed rate that is typically lower than the local utility’s retail rate.

However, the idea for an amendment allowing PPAs was dropped. Democrats favoring the amendment had little time to gather support and it was feared that complicating the process would threaten passage of the main bill.

So West Virginia will move forward with a solar facilities law limited in scope that was carefully managed by electric utility and coal interests to avoid any threat to the existing carbon-based power generation monopoly in the state. The motivation for this law had nothing to do with any recognition that burning coal is fouling our air and literally killing us. Nevertheless, it is a first step and progress will have to be made this way.

Where’s the Month-at-a-Glance (again)?

This will sound all too familiar: COVID-19 continues to throw our upcoming events for a loop. Though the re-opening process is underway in much of our service area, we are adopting a cautious approach when it comes to holding in-person gatherings. So once again, we have decided not to include a June and July Month-at-a-Glance in this issue. But rest assured, we’re constantly thinking up ways to keep you engaged. The PVAS staff and board continue to monitor the advice and recommendations of healthcare professionals while we consider scheduling events that would be held entirely outdoors, in which physical distancing guidelines can be followed with a limited number of participants. As a PVAS member, what services and opportunities would you like us to provide during this period? Would you attend in-person events, or are you looking for more virtual opportunities? Going forward, what can we do to help you feel safe attending in-person programs and events? We would love to hear from you - send an email to admin@potomacaudubon.org or give us a call at 681-252-1387 (we continue to monitor the Cool Spring office voicemail remotely) with any suggestions or comments. And in-between editions of *Valley Views*, please keep an eye on our website calendar and Facebook page to stay updated on our activities. We miss you!

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.



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June/July 2020

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 38, Issue 6

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.

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

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- Past President:Michael Sullivan (2020)
- Vice President: Jim Cummins (2020)
- Secretary:Georgia Jeppesen (2020)
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Emerita Board Member:Jean Neely

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- Valley Views editor/publisher:
 Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639) newsletter@potomacaudubon.org

PVAS BOARD
 PVAS Board meet-
 ings take place
 the first Thursday
 of every other
 month (Septem-
 ber through June).
 Meetings are
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 members. Please
 contact the
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 would like to
 attend.