

Valley Views

Volume 41, Issue 4

Spring 2023

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director



I've never lived in one place for so long, nor have I worked for one organization for so long! I have to say both have been incredibly rewarding.

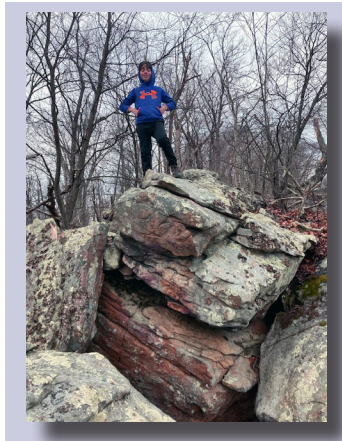
This hit me very personally recently when I realized that my son, JJ, is participating in PVAS's 4th-grade watershed education program at South Jefferson Elementary School. To have him experience PVAS's school program, developed about 20 years ago, is very exciting. To make this even more meaningful, one of our original interns, Annie Sabatos-Young, offered to be a contracted PVAS watershed educator this year and is teaching at South Jefferson! Annie helped us pilot-test the watershed program 20 years ago while studying education at Shepherd. She now owns and runs Rainbow Montessori School in Charles Town in addition to her work with PVAS (Her daughter is in JJ's class, so she gets to teach them both!) This small-world, full-circle experience is just one personal example of the "baby steps" PVAS is making over time in educating children about watersheds and training the next generation of educators as well.

Seeing kids grow up through our Audubon Discovery Camp is also so rewarding. Fairly often, campers grow up to be Junior Counselors/Counselors in Training and then come back to be camp counselors. Parents of campers continue to tell us years later of the impact the camp experience had on their children, both personally and professionally regarding conservation mindsets, interests, and career paths.

There is strong evidence that people who become conservation professionals or concerned, active environmental citizens had some sort of meaningful experience outdoors in nature as a child. PVAS strives to provide those experiences through its programs and preserve management. The number of first-time experiences PVAS provides are countless; the first time a child catches a crayfish, touches a bug, watches a spider spin a web, observes a monarch change from caterpillar to chrysalis... Those

meaningful experiences are priceless and critical as we strive to inspire children to fall in love with the natural world, and the preserves provide the "places" for those experiences to happen.

Providing free access to green spaces is a critical part of what we do. Managing over 500 acres of preserved natural areas for people to explore on their own for inspiration, personal health, quiet contemplation, exercise, photography, botanizing, or learning is key. And at the same time, those safe havens provide habitat for a variety of wildlife that depend on that protected green space.



I take hikes with JJ at PVAS preserves from time to time, and I'll confess, I find personal and professional joy as I witness his sense of ownership and belonging that comes with his familiarity with the trails and what he finds along the way – the favorite tree to clamber over, the rock to leap from. That "sense of place" – the emotional bond that comes with that familiarity – is a critical element to developing a love for the natural world and the drive to protect it. Some of that comes from hiking as a family, but quite a bit of it comes from participating in summer camps and other programs at Yankauer and Cool Spring.

JJ is not unusual. I hear this from other parents and from our staff who witness the phenomenon. Children who participate in Outdoor School have an unparalleled sense of ownership of the preserves. Some of them have been witnessing the seasonal changes at Cool Spring weekly for two years. Kids on school field trips are often heard exclaiming, "This is the best day EVER!" as they hike the trails and experience bird, bunny or spider sightings.

PVAS is there for adults, too. So, when those kids are adults, PVAS will help them stay engaged with the natural world. There will be nature preserves to explore, educational programs to inspire, opportunities to actively protect beloved green spaces, and wonderful people with whom to interact and befriend.

Thank you for making these opportunities and places possible. The monies raised in the recently concluded annual appeal is what makes these types of meaningful experiences within reach of everyone. You are what allows us to manage the preserves for people and wildlife, provide impactful programs, and promote the relationships with nature that develop as a result. These "baby steps" lead to great strides over time.

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

Hermit Thrush – A Winter Visitor

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

During spring and summer, we are all enthralled by the sights and sounds of the thrushes that nest in our area. The lovely caroling of American Robins, the quiet warbling of Eastern Bluebirds, and the haunting music of Wood Thrushes keep us enchanted from May through July.

Unfortunately, winter's quiet repose leaves us wanting. On a peaceful winter's morning walk through the woods, you may hear soft *chuck* calls (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/512515921>) from overhead. An excruciatingly exhaustive survey of the surroundings will finally reveal a lone brown, thrush-shaped bird peering down at you. The rusty-red wings, bobbing tail, and spotted breast confirm that this is a Hermit Thrush. This species spends the winter in our area searching for berries in woodland thickets. If there are more Hermit Thrushes in the area, the *chuck* calls can be punctuated with louder, longer *vreeh* calls (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/512515961>) as they interact with one another.

Hermit Thrushes (*Catharus guttatus*) nest from Alaska across Canada to the Atlantic coast, down the Cascades and the Rockies, and down to The Appalachians. In West Virginia, Hermit Thrushes breed in Red Spruce forests, typically above 4,000 feet in elevation. The recent Second Breeding Bird Atlas for West Virginia showed an incredible 242% population increase in the 20 years since the First Atlas. One aspect contributing to the population more than doubling is likely the reforestation of the higher elevations in the state, resulting in more Red Spruce habitat. Whatever the reason, there's now a better chance of encountering a breeding Hermit Thrush in Tucker, Randolph, or Pocahontas Counties than in the past.



Hermit Thrush © Lang Elliott



Hermit Thrush, USFWS photo

Nests, built by the female, are typically placed on the ground in areas with a thick covering of ground pine or grasses with overhanging vegetation, such as evergreens or ferns, to conceal the nest. After the 7-10-day construction phase, the female will lay 3-4 blue to turquoise eggs. She'll start consistent incubation once the last egg is laid. The female typically only leaves the nest at dawn and dusk to find food. During the day, the male feeds the incubating female. The male defends the nest and his territory by singing and calling. The eggs hatch ~14 days later with both parents feeding the young, but only the female broods the young. At 11-13 days post-hatching, the young leave the nest, still dependent on the parents for food. Once independent from their parents, the young along the Atlantic coast appear to form large flocks and migrate together without adults.

The song of the male Hermit Thrush is bewitching. Often considered the most gifted singer in North America. The onomatopoeia for this song is, "Oooooooh, holy holy, ah, purity purity, eeh, sweetly sweetly." The Oooooooh is a pure, whistled note, with each song beginning on a different pitch. (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/242120131>) (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/100857>) (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/100860>). Each male can have 9-10 different songs in the East and 6-12 in the West. Don Kroodsma, in his wonderful book, "The Singing Life of Birds," reflects on this bird's amazing songs, how the male Hermit Thrush uses his songs, in what order he sings his songs, and that he chooses successive songs that are especially different.

Males will start singing about an hour before sunrise during the breeding season. They will also sing at dusk, ending their vespers about half an hour after sunset. While the dawn performance is longer, the evening concert is mostly a solo, the Hermit Thrush's song standing out from the hushed sounds of the forest. Standing or sitting quietly, marveling at this amazing songster, following the ups and downs of his songs, relishing in the complexity and richness of his notes stir something deep in me – a glimpse of the joy of heaven.¹

1. F. Schuyler Mathews, Wild Birds and Their Music, 1904.

PVAS Events

Adult Programs

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

Spring appears to be arriving early this year! Never fear, PVAS programs will provide a wide variety of opportunities to explore, learn, get outside, and be inspired.

One of the things we love about our adult programs is the camaraderie and sense of community that is sparked. The friendships that develop from participating are one of the many valuable aspects of our programs, as people bond over their mutual love for, and fascination with, the natural world.

We purposefully offer diverse programs to make sure there is something for everyone.

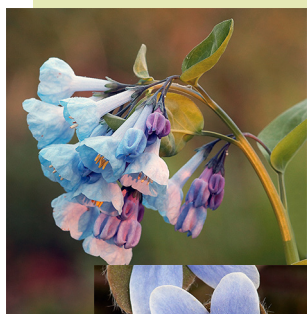
For many, birds are the introduction to getting people interested in the natural world. They provide the “hook” that inspires a person to learn more. PVAS provides high-quality bird seed for feeders; free bird walks led by enthusiastic volunteers sharing their vast knowledge and passion; Birding 101 for those who want to dive a little deeper into the world of birding; and habitat improvement programs to support bird conservation efforts at home.

virtual, but highly social, too. This spring, ephemeral wildflowers will be the Trivia Topic of choice.

If you prefer seeing wildflowers in the wild, we’ll be scheduling several wildflower walks this spring at various locations. Meet up with a knowledgeable guide and enjoy learning about these beautiful spring gems that delight us during their short tenure.

If you prefer a faster pace, join us for “This Race is for the Birds!” This walk/jog/run is an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Broomgrass Farm Community in Back Creek Valley. The wildflowers will likely be in full bloom, and you can enjoy them as you walk/jog/run the course and support PVAS at the same time! You may also bring binoculars, of course, to enjoy any birds you happen upon along the way. And speaking of birds, Wil Her-shberger will be offering a special bird walk at Broomgrass on March 30 at 7am, also in support of PVAS. Last year the group enjoyed an excellent extended view of a Louisiana Waterthrush.

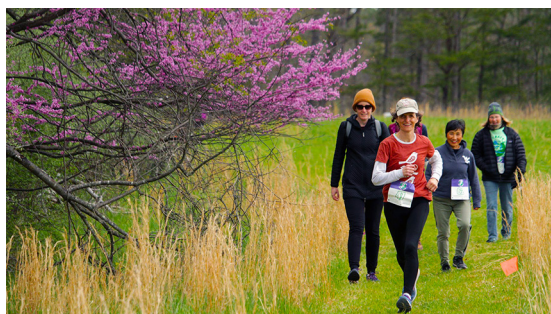
New this spring will be Second Saturdays at Stauffer’s Marsh, led by Steve Hartmann. Steve has been volunteering at the marsh for years and knows every inch of the place. He’ll be hosting monthly nature walks there this spring. It’s a great site not only



For those who love to strap on their hiking boots and explore new places, our Wellness Walks may be the ticket. This social and active group is a great way to meet new people with similar interests, explore new places, and learn a little bit along the way. For those who love to hike but may hesitate to go on their own, this is a great way to get out, enjoy some beautiful places in a social setting, and get some fresh air and exercise along the way.

If you can’t get out but love to learn, then try a Kahoot! Master Naturalist and High School science teacher Roy Boyle hosts seasonally-appropriate trivia nights with “Kingfisher Kahoot!” It’s all

for birds, beavers, and botany, but the trails are wide and level, with one section even accessible to walkers and wheelchairs. These hikes will be wonderful opportunities to enjoy the natural world, even if mobility is a challenge.



And of course, our regularly scheduled monthly programs will continue on the second Wednesday of each month. You’ll have the opportunity to learn about the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Parks and Recreation New Master Plan in April, and Plants for Pollinators and Wildlife in May! We’re working out how to offer these programs both virtually and in-person, so stay tuned as we sort out how to make that happen.

In Memoriam

In Memory of Clark Dixon

By Ellen Murphy

Have you ever met someone who was just larger than life? Someone who you didn't always agree with but you enjoyed being around? Someone who is hard to put into words? Well, the first time I met Clark Dixon, at a somewhat formal dinner, I was totally intimidated by him - although I came to know what a marshmallow he was inside. And the obituary that was on many websites and in the newspaper will tell you the facts about Clark — the many organizations he was involved with, the many boards he sat on, the many ways he interacted with others — but none of those things convey the very special person he was.

He was a huge proponent of all parks, whether they were national, state, or local — but the natural ones were special. He was supportive of everyone who was open to learning, and he wanted to make learning opportunities available to as many people as possible, regardless of age. When it came to the Master Naturalist program, he was proud that the Potomac Valley chapter was strong, but he never saw it as more important than any other West Virginia chapter.

Clark had a passion for introducing kids to nature. He spent a lot of time as a substitute teacher for middle schoolers, which I presume was his superpower, because that is a hard age to teach. At Harpers Ferry Middle School, he got kids out of the classroom and hiking in their "Tigers on the Trail" program. It was very important to him that middle school kids (especially those he taught at Wildwood Middle School) had the opportunity to go to the WV Jr Conservation Camp at Camp Cesar, and he was willing to pay their way, or ride the bus with them to make sure they had that experience. Audubon Discovery Camp staff have

remembered how great he was with the campers as a guest instructor teaching Leave No Trace. I remember watching him patiently demonstrate how to build a campfire to kids at camp (which I figure he learned in Boy Scouts — and then probably taught every Boy Scout he came in contact with). When we planned an overnight camp trip to the Chesapeake Bay, he was more than willing to drive the van full of middle school-aged kids, and spend a few days supervising them. As I said... his superpower.



Clark also had a passion for John Muir, and I have said (and still believe) that if you could have shown him that your genealogy included Muir, he'd have invited you to his house to stay! We shared Muir's love of nature and fought over a book about Muir at one of the Master Naturalist auctions a few years ago. (He won the bid, but only because I let him!) "The mountains are calling and I must go" was a favorite Muir quote. A few years ago, he was able to volunteer at Yellowstone National Park. That was a high point for him.

I saw a meme on Facebook, credited to Shawna Grapentin, that said

"An adventurous life does not necessarily mean climbing mountains, swimming with the sharks or jumping off cliffs. It means risking yourself by leaving a little piece of you behind in all those you meet along the way."

That epitomized Clark Dixon to me. He left a little part of himself in everyone he ever came in contact with. Certainly, he did with me, and I hope with you as well. My advice to everyone is get out there and be like Clark.

Annual Appeal

Thanks to our generous donors, we raised \$70,000 during our Annual Appeal, surpassing our goal. Because of your support, PVAS will be able to continue offering rich educational experiences, managing over 500 acres of habitat for people and wildlife to enjoy, and being a resource for all those who want to continue to explore their love of nature.

SAVE THE DATE!

PVAS Spring Fundraiser

Sunday, May 7th

2-4 p.m. at The Mill in Shepherdstown
Delicious Food, Drink, and Good Company!
Stay tuned for details!



Saturday, April 1, 2023

Join us at Broomgrass Farm Community in Gerradstown, WV for an in-person, professionally timed 5K or 10K trail run/walk or participate virtually from anywhere between March 25- April 1.

Visit www.potomacaudubon.org/race for details and to register.

Want to volunteer? Check out our events page on our website for volunteer days or email race4birds@potomacvalley.org with any questions you may have.



All proceeds from the race go to support PVAS.



Broomgrass



BVG Berryville



friends of
DEB PATTHOFF



FRIENDS
OF
MARK BENEDICT



HOXTON
PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

John and Patty
Bain Bachner

Thank you to the
Staff of Hospice
of the Panhandle



BAVARIAN INN
EUROPEAN ELEGANCE ON THE POTOMAC



MANCHIN
FERRETTI
INJURY LAW



SKINNER
LAW FIRM



Steel House Farm

The Journal



Two Rivers Treads
RUN • WALK • HEALTH

Audiology, Inc. Anne Basham, D.D.S. Community Garden Market Erb n' Woods, LLC
 Davis Designs German Street Coffee and Candlery Merlin's Beard Band Michael Sullivan, LLC
 Milestone Solar Consultants, LLC Mountaineer Popcorn Panhandle Periodontics
 Progressive Printing Rebecca Wellborn at Pearson Smith Realty Solar Holler
 The Charlotte Sherman Team at Modern Realty Results, LLC The Press Room Trees 101

Welcome new AmeriCorps

Welcome our new group of AmeriCorps! Liz Janelle, John Congo, and Hannah Kulla joined the PVAS team just in time for our busy spring and summer seasons. Check out their bios on our team page, www.potomacaudubon.org/about/our-team, and be sure to welcome them if you see them around!



Advocacy

By Kristin Alexander

It's been a busy session in the WV Legislature and beyond! We so appreciate the work our friends and partners do in this realm. Over the legislative session, we've tried to help these organizations spread the word to our members and friends about how to take action and communicate with your representatives to protect natural resources and habitats.

West Virginia Rivers, WV Environmental Council, Conservation West Virginia, and others have been actively educating community members and our representatives about the issues at hand. From keeping ATVs off of public lands to protecting groundwater from PFAS ("The Forever Chemical") to supporting community solar, we are so grateful for the work of these organizations. Please make sure you sign up for their alerts and newsletters so you can stay apprised of the issues at hand and take action as appropriate.

For a session wrap-up and to take action go to: <https://wvriivers.org/2023/03/water-policy-news-2023-session-wrap-up/>, and: <https://wvecouncil.org/green-volume-33-issue-9/>.

Family and Youth Programs

PVAS's Value Based Education

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

For PVAS's education staff, this spring is bringing quite a bit of activity and excitement. We have over twenty individual field trip days scheduled, as well as many other in-school lessons. Each of our educators meet with hundreds of students every week, and we hope that we are leaving an impression before we depart from the school or field trip site. While it can be easy to feel overwhelmed with all of these commitments, our educators are great at managing a busy schedule and remaining as excited for the first class of students in a day as the last. Quite often, it is easy to get lost in the hectic nature of our field trip season, and we don't always stop to remember the "why" of what we do. Remembering the "why" is nevertheless very important. Our why stems from the value that our school programs provide to teachers, students, and our community. As we evaluate our programs, we consider the messages that students are getting through our lessons, as well as the positive experiences that we are able to provide both inside and outside of the classroom.

Teachers are our biggest partners in delivering these programs. These last few years have certainly been a challenge for teachers and administrators, but they have been gracious in inviting us to share their classroom spaces and showing support to our mission despite a challenging education landscape. Many teachers are diligent in reviewing and expanding upon our Watershed Program curriculum with their students. They also often embrace the cross curricular nature of the program. While not every elementary school teacher has a strong background in environmental education, they are always supportive of the program, and appreciate the opportunity for our educators to share their knowledge.

The following are quotes from 4th grade teachers at Potomack Intermediate School when asked the question, "What do you appreciate about the Watershed Program?"

"I appreciate the knowledgeability of the presenters and how they hold expertise in the subject matter."

"I like that the Watershed Program is hands-on for the students."

"I appreciate the use of visual examples. Some students are audio focused and benefit a lot from being able to see what we are talking about."

"I love how instructors show how it all connects, from one place to another- not just the water, like in the watershed address lessons, but everything else as well."

For students, our nature programs may be one of their earliest introductions to learning about the natural world. Even by 4th grade, we often are told by teachers that some children in the class likely have never had an experience with a stream before. Early nature experiences are a huge predictor of connection to nature later in life. Watching the excitement grow on students' faces as they hop off the bus at a nature preserve is a huge source of joy for all of us. Students are quick to express their gratitude, through hugs, thank you notes, and squeals of anticipation. In the classroom, students are inquisitive and eager to learn as well. Just a week ago, when teaching lesson two of the Watershed Program to a 4th grade class at Eagle School, I heard a student exclaim "This is fun AND educational, we should do things like this more often." After having a laugh with the teacher, I reflected on the student's statement and felt a sense of pride for the curriculum and energy that I had brought to the lesson that day.

PVAS is also proud of the presence that we have in the community through our educational programs. We reach every 4th grade student in Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan counties most years. Through our other school programs, we reach students in many different grade levels, across these counties as well. This broad reach allows us to serve a more diverse audience than we do through our informal programs, such as Outdoor School and Discovery Camp. In this way, our field trips and



school programs are an outreach to underserved students.

We believe that building community

starts with our youth. These early nature experiences will hopefully translate to a more nature-connected community, with values for protecting the environment. Our ultimate goal is to create sustainability-minded community members that will care about current and future environmental issues, and feel intrinsically motivated to be a voice for our shared environment. If you would like to be a part of helping us achieve these goals, contact me by email at Laurel@potomacaudubon.org to learn more about volunteer opportunities. It takes motivated community members to build a community!



Family and Youth Programs

The Endless Benefits of Summer Camp

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

Our 2023 camp season will be here before we know it! This year, we are offering more than 20 different camp sessions throughout the months of June and July at both our Yankauer and Cool Spring Preserves.

We pride ourselves on the popularity our camps have gained over the years. Last year, we offered camp to 358 children and we hope to provide camp experiences to even more kids this summer.

So, what is it about our camps that makes them so special? We believe our camps stand out because they are held 100% outdoors and center on nature education, nature appreciation, and nature play. Nature is the playground and classroom. Summertime is an ideal time to get children outside in nature as much as possible, and our Audubon Discovery camp sessions allow children to do just that.

According to the American Camp Association (ACA) - an organization that we value for staff training, professional development opportunities, and camp resources - summer camp experiences provide five key lasting benefits for children, and our camps contain elements that offer these key benefits. According to the ACA, camp provides a nurturing environment that enhances social skills. Our camps give children a chance to meet peers outside of school. Many of our activities require campers to work together as a team and collaborate on ideas, thus building essential intrapersonal skills. For example, each week we challenge the campers to work together to build a team fort. It is amazing to watch the campers assign themselves roles, such as the log carrier or the grass collector, to ensure a high-quality structure.

The ACA also reports that camp often supplements traditional education. Our camps have a great balance of play, experiential learning opportunities, and educational programming that all challenge campers to think, wonder and create. For example, this summer at our Nature Sleuths camp, the campers will be solving a "Leave No Trace" mystery at the preserve. They will be learning all about the leave no trace principles while acting as detectives, collecting clues and evidence to solve a mystery. This make-believe mystery approach pushes the boundaries of traditional learning. Last year when we offered a similar camp, a parent wrote about her son's experience in a post-camp survey: "I think he was half convinced the nature crime committed was real, and I'm certain he learned more than he realized."

Next, camp promotes self-confidence and future academic growth. ACA's independent research shows that parents, camp staff, and even the campers themselves report significant growth in the child's life, including leadership, independence, social comfort, values, and decisions. Camp is a time for children to learn more about themselves in a group environment where they challenge themselves to try new things. They learn when to step up to act as a leader of the group and when it is the time to step back and follow.

Additionally, we know that learning is passed on to the people

that campers interact with. Skills learned at camp can be shared with their families, friends, or future campers.

In addition to our regular camps, we offer a Counselor in Training (CIT) program for pre-teens and teens who want to volunteer at camp. CITs attend an afternoon of leadership training prior to volunteering. It is amazing to watch the growth we see from campers who later become CITs. One parent wrote, "My daughter was a camper for years, and this year was her first as a CIT. She enjoyed being at CIT more than being a camper. It was such a great experience for her to learn from the counselors while learning how to be a leader and a good example to the younger campers. It's an invaluable experience for my daughter!"

One significant benefit of PVAS camps is that they encourage a respect for and a love of nature. After a long school year of mainly sitting in indoor classrooms, this is a chance for children to become completely immersed in nature and "unplug" from the technology-driven world. In past years, we have seen some campers overcome their fear of bugs while others have experienced the joy of simply playing in the mud.

In a post-camp survey, one parent wrote, "I LOVE that Audubon camps teach kids about the things that can be found all around them. Most importantly, though, I think kids learn a lot more about how to co-exist WITH and IN their surroundings..." At our camps, we want campers to realize they are a part of nature and that they have a responsibility to act as environmental stewards. Thus, we teach campers how to compost their lunch scraps to minimize waste and how to interact respectfully with the wildlife they encounter. Each child leaves camp knowing the importance of following the seven 'Leave No Trace Principles' whenever they are in nature.

Finally, camp provides the opportunity to stay physically active. I can, without a doubt, attest to this. Last summer, there were countless times that parents told me that camp completely wore out their children, who would instantly fall asleep in the car on the way home. I wasn't surprised as we schedule the days to be filled with hikes, running games, and fort building to get them moving and build strength.

These are just a few benefits that PVAS Audubon Discovery Camps provide, but the list goes on and on. Ultimately, summer camp allows children to truly explore their sense of wonder and create positive memories in nature that they will bring with them to adulthood. Camp registration for 2023 is open for enrollment. We hope to see your children there this summer!



Conservation

Monarch Minute: Your yard, a potential park*By Bruce Guthrie, The Monarch Alliance*

Wait, my lawn is a desert? But I can turn it into a national park?

That's the premise of Doug Tallamy, an entomologist and best-selling author. Tallamy is promoting his plan for "Homegrown National Park," which calls for people across the country to voluntarily devote 50 percent of their lawns to native plants in order to reverse the sharp decline of insects and the animals that feed on them.

The iconic American lawn, Tallamy argues, consists of grasses and non-native ornamentals that provide little benefit to wildlife. His particular concern is insects, the creatures the late naturalist E.O. Wilson called "the little things that run the world." Insects are a critical part of "the food web" (Tallamy dislikes the term "food chain," which he says distorts the complexity of reality): They provide nourishment for birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish, and small mammals (and other insects), which in turn sustain larger predators. And insects are indispensable to the pollination of many plants. But their populations are crashing. Wilson wrote, "If human beings were to disappear tomorrow, the world would go on with little change... But if invertebrates were to disappear, I doubt that the human species could last more than a few months. Most of the fishes, amphibians, birds and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time. Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and with them the physical structure of the majority of forests and other terrestrial habitat of the world."

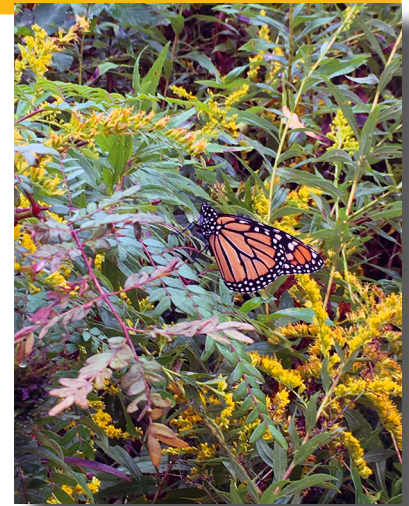
At the root of Tallamy's project is the idea that plants and insects evolve together. Plants don't want to be eaten, so they have developed chemical defenses that make vulnerable parts (like leaves) distasteful or even toxic. And insects want to eat, so they develop ways to tolerate, isolate, or excrete the plants' defenses. But since different plant species have different chemical defenses, different species of arthropods (insects and other bugs) find prey plants they can tolerate and then refine their metabolism to increase their resistance to those specific plants' defenses. Tallamy says that about 90 percent of herbaceous insect species are diet specialists, "restricted to eating one or just a few plant lineages." These relationships generally take eons to unfold, he says.

The problem: Our millions of acres of lawn are mostly comprised of turf grasses that originated in Europe or Asia. The popular Kentucky bluegrass, that must be native, right? No, it's Eurasian; it's just been given a comforting, homey-sounding name. Western Hemisphere insects haven't had the time to learn to neutralize the plants' defenses, so the plants contribute little or nothing to the food web. The same goes for many of our ornamental bushes and shrubs, many of which are alien. Often, they are even marketed as "pest-free," a tacit admission that they largely stand outside the food web. The result: A crash in insect populations.

Alien species, of course, have predators in their original range. But those predators generally didn't come along when the plants were introduced here. That compounds the problem. For instance, Tallamy reports that *Phragmites australis*, a tall alien reed that crowds out native plants, hosts 170 species of herbaceous insects in its native range; it supports just five species in North America. Without predation, some of these species can proliferate wildly, pushing out native plants (think kudzu). Where's a native arthropod to turn for some home cookin'?

To help resolve this dilemma, Tallamy proposes his Homegrown National Park. He calculates that lawns cover more than 40 million acres in the United States. The voluntary conversion to native plants of half of that acreage would restore 20 million acres of what he calls "ecological wasteland" — an area greater than "the combined areas of the Everglades, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton, Canyonland, Mount Ranier, North Cascades, Badlands, Olympic, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Denali, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Parks."

Tallamy highlights "keystone" plant species that host large numbers of insect species. At the top of his list are oaks, which can support 534 species of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths); willows and cherries, hosting 456 species; and birches, 413. (He is a huge advocate of woody plants.) He also delineates nectar and pollen plants that bloom in different seasons, so that your plantings can provide year-round benefits to wildlife. Tallamy is particularly interested in caterpillars, not only because they are (obviously) the next generation of insects, but because they are a crucial nutrition source for baby birds: high in fats and proteins, and soft and therefore easy for nestlings to digest (and for parents to jam down their throats). A single clutch of chickadees eats upward of 9,000 caterpillars before they leave the nest! Because many arthropods lay their eggs on trees, and the larva then drop to the ground and overwinter and



Conservation

pupate in burrows or among the leaf refuse, Tallamy urges that you not mow beneath your tree. Instead, he suggests, plant a native ground cover or leave the duff alone.

Rather than planting non-native turf grasses, Tallamy recommends native low-growing sedges. He says he mows his just once a year, in the spring. As well as less mowing (and therefore gasoline), they need less water, fertilizing, weeding, and weed-killers. (Need we say that Tallamy opposes using herbicides and pesticides?)

Tallamy's books – "Nature's Best Hope," "Bringing Nature Home," "The Nature of Oaks," and (with Rick Darke) "The Living Landscape" – offer voluminous information and advice on potential lawn plants and the creatures that benefit from them, far more than we can even touch on here. (And they include wonderful photos.) Information also can be found on the website homegrownnationalpark.org. The site features a map showing where people have followed his advice; you can register your homegrown park there. The site says that more than 60,000 acres, in 25,000 sites, are currently registered. As those figures suggest, many "parks" are tiny, only small fractions of an acre. But Tallamy believes each little bit is valuable; as he might say, from tiny acorns come great oaks.

Tallamy sees the main hindrance to his vision as being cultural constraints. We have long held the manicured, invasive-studded lawn to be the standard, and many people look askance at the neighbor who deviates from that ideal. But he points out that, with the proper mix of native flowers, the homegrown park can be beautiful, and the resulting rebound of nature, both plants and animals, can be relaxing and educational, particularly for children.

Tallamy relates the story of a friend who urged her father to consider the benefits of native plants on his immaculate lawn. He wouldn't listen; he saw the property, a duplicate of his neighbor's, as "the sign of a good citizen." The friend joined Monarch Watch and became engrossed in planting milkweed and asters on her property and in parks and other open spaces. She became so busy that she began to ask her dad to mind her children while she pursued her passion. He eventually asked what was absorbing her time, and she explained about the decline of the Monarchs and the efforts to save them. She was surprised when he asked her to plant a few milkweed in his yard. Soon, Tallamy says, she "started getting regular calls from her father: 'I saw a monarch!' 'A monarch laid an egg!' 'I don't think there is enough food for the monarch caterpillars. I need more milkweed plants!' 'As he became more involved, he realized he could add plants to aid additional butterfly and bee species, and wildlife in general. 'My friend's father now is drawn into his yard not by the competitive need to out-manicure the Joneses, but to learn, to watch, and to be fascinated and entertained.'"

Such individual revelations, Tallamy believes, are the seed of a resurrection of a healthier natural world.

If you're ready to get started on your own Homegrown National Park, come to the annual Spring Native Plant Sale hosted



by The Monarch Alliance and Potomac Valley Audubon at Sunny Meadows Garden Center on Saturday, June 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The online pre-sale will run from May 11 to May 25. The sale will include milkweed for Monarch butterflies and nectar plants for all seasons as well as, woody shrubs and trees (including the mighty Oak!). After planting, be sure to register your Homegrown National Park on www.homegrownnationalpark.org.



Spring Native Plant Sale

**PVAS and The Monarch Alliance
will hold the Spring Native Plant Sale
on June 3, 2033
at Sunny Meadows Garden Center
in Boonsboro, MD.**

The sale runs from
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
But the best way to make
sure you get the plants
for your garden you've
been dreaming about is
to order on online and
pick your order up the
day of the sale.



Online pre-ordering is from May 11- May 25.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves: The Circle of Life

By KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

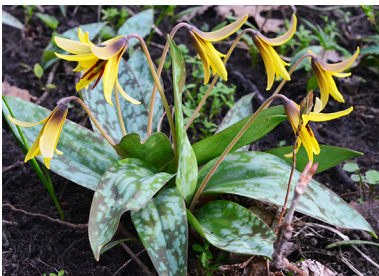
Most of you know the basic history of PVAS. We were founded in 1982 by Jean Neely and a group of like-minded birders as a local chapter of The National Audubon Society. Now, here we are over forty years later, no longer just a bird club. We are a powerhouse for well-rounded environmental education in the Eastern Panhandle. Along the way, our once small bird club grew to take on the management of four nature preserves totaling over 500 acres. Indeed, these preserves benefit the birds and provide the community with great birding opportunities. But why would a small Audubon chapter choose to take on the enormous task of these nature preserves? This question has many answers and over the course of this year, we will examine at least four of these answers. The first answer is; it's for the plants.

In the words of a once great king, "when we die, our bodies become the grass and the antelope eat the grass. And so, we are all connected to the great Circle of Life" (Mufasa, *The Lion King* 1994). As silly as it may be to quote Disney, there is certainly merit to the concept presented, and it made a lasting impression on me as a young, budding ecologist many years ago. The circle of life is a beautiful, albeit grossly oversimplified analogy. In reality, we have a complex web of endless circles that intertwine and overlap. One could argue that nearly all the circles of life require plants, and perhaps they are the greatest contributors of all.

For one thing, it takes more plants to complete one circle than any other species present within that circle. Second, nearly every living creature within the circle relies on energy from the sun. Yet only plants, algae, and cyanobacteria are capable of actually harvesting the energy from the sun and transforming it into a usable substance. Consumption of the latter two choices isn't the most appealing, leaving most organisms to rely on plants as the primary producers of energy. They're literally the power driving the entire circle.

The four nature preserves are full of plants! All kinds of plants! Gymnosperms and angiosperms, annuals and perennials, herbaceous and woodies, aquatics and terrestrials, and even a carnivorous plant can all be found within the PVAS preserves. As the days warm and you begin visiting the preserves this spring, be sure to take notice of the plants coming to life all around you. Each one has a role to play. It could be a direct or indirect food source, a safe shelter, a provider of nesting material, or even a soil rejuvenator. Below are some plants you may not have noticed before but certainly merit preservation.

Yankauer has long held the reputation for having the best spring ephemerals, but there's one ephemeral you will want to look for at Stauffer's Marsh, the Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium Americanum*). These showy flowers provide an early nectar source for pollinators, including a specialist *Andrena erythronii*, the Trout-lily Mining Bee. Additionally, Yellow Trout Lily shares a special type of symbiotic relationship with ants called myrmecochory. This is where the plant produces a nutrient-packed food body attached to seeds that feeds ants. In turn, the ants distribute the plant's seeds so that more trout lilies can join the circle.



In addition to spring ephemerals, Yankauer has

some incredible vine species. The Moonseed (*Menispermum canadense*) is a native vine that occupies a habitat few other native plants desire. Its late-spring drupes are an excellent food source for many birds, including Cedar Waxwing, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Towhee, and Wild Turkey, all species that call Yankauer home. However, the Moonseed contributes to the circle of life in another way as well. As a pioneer species, it thrives in areas of disturbance, occupying spaces that may otherwise be filled with invasive plants. As forest succession occurs, the Moonseed will slowly fade out and pave the way for secondary successional native plants. While so many vines have a lousy reputation for smothering or choking other plants, the Moonseed lives a peaceful coexistence with the surrounding vegetation.

A lesser-known but still important habitat of the marsh at Cool Spring is the shrub layer. The marsh is home to several Red-osier Dogwoods, best spotted by their bright red twigs. This bright color, along with dense branching, provides a unique nesting habitat, camouflaging some of the flashier bird species. The bushes are also a loved food source for birds. The seeds of the Red-osier Dogwood pass through the digestive tract of birds intact and are then distributed to growing locations away from the parent plant. Red-osier is also a preferred browse of beaver, contributing to the beaver's wetland restoration efforts. This shrub demonstrates many ways to contribute to and be a function of the circle of life.



Spring is a busy season for the mighty oak trees of Eidolon. Oak trees are the kings of the plant world. They serve as a direct food source for over 4,000 species of insects and animals. From the leaves consumed by caterpillars to the acorns collected by birds and small mammals to the tender branches that feed deer in the winter, almost every part of the oak tree has consumptive value. It is also one of the greatest sources of shelter and protection from the elements and predators to all of the aforementioned species. It could be said that we have no greater contributor to the circle of life than the oak.

Spring is a busy season for the mighty oak trees of Eidolon. Oak trees are the kings of the plant world. They serve as a direct food source for over 4,000 species of insects and animals. From the leaves consumed by caterpillars to the acorns collected by birds and small mammals to the tender branches that feed deer in the winter, almost every part of the oak tree has consumptive value. It is also one of the greatest sources of shelter and protection from the elements and predators to all of the aforementioned species. It could be said that we have no greater contributor to the circle of life than the oak.

We could not talk about the plants of the preserves without mentioning the invasive plants. They contribute to the circle of life too, within their native ranges, but not so much here. This lack of contribution means they have to go. However, it is my personal belief that humans cannot beat the invasive plants taking over. Not alone anyway. What will defeat the invasive plants are the native plants. By turning our focus to not only eliminating invasive plants but also actively stewarding the native plants, we can help these native plants to retake their homes and habitats. For example, removing an Autumn Olive from Yankauer is a great first step. But if we don't replace that newly vacated space with something else, another Autumn Olive will likely claim the space. Now let's say we remove an Autumn Olive and fill the vacant space with a young oak. If we steward this oak by caging it to protect it from predation and annually clearing invasive plants encroaching on its space, in 50 years, that oak tree will be big enough to shade out at least a dozen more Autumn Olive, while also serving as one of the great contributors to the circle of life.

Enjoy your visits to the preserves this spring and thank some plants. Remember, the preserves are here for them as much as they are for you!

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists Hold Annual Meeting

By Rich Brager, PVMN Co-Chair

Each year the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists hold an annual meeting to celebrate our accomplishments for the preceding year, and welcome our newly certified members. This year, we had approximately 50 members and guests, as well as three representatives from PVAS. As our umbrella organization, we work together symbiotically.



PVMN prides itself in providing volunteer work for the community in three primary areas:

Service Projects: Examples include removing invasive species at nature preserves, planting trees at State Parks, and constructing outdoor training facilities for children.

Education: Nature-related education is provided to both adults and children, such as monarch butterfly training, bird walks, and tree identification.

Citizen Science Projects: Projects such as bio blitzes, camera trapping, and rainfall monitoring.

And, for calendar year 2022, our group of nature lovers logged over 3,800 hours, a 7% increase from 2021! Many of these hours were in direct support of PVAS, and we are very proud of our efforts.

During the meeting, we celebrated eight newly certified members from our 2022 cohort. In order to become initially certified, these students had to attend ten rigorous all-day nature classes, including many diverse topics such as wildflowers, amphibians & reptiles, birds, invasive species, slime molds, monarchs, etc. In addition, they completed 30 volunteer hours. It is a great accomplishment to achieve your West Virginia Master Naturalist certification. Congratulations to those who accomplished this goal.

We also celebrated 57 re-certifying members for 2022. To achieve recertification, members must complete a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training and 16 volunteer hours during the year. We had nine members in our "Centennial Club" who volunteered more than 100 hours! We also gave out awards to nine members achieving five years, two members achieving ten years, and one member achieving 15 years of membership.

Each year, we also conduct a silent auction and book sale to raise money for our group. Members bring their "unloved treasures" for the auction. There were many tables full of these to sell. Many of the items became re-loved as we made over \$1,000 on these items.

And let's don't forget the food, which was bountiful and delicious! Wow! Everyone brought their favorite dish. To say we didn't go home hungry would be a gross understatement! Not only did we go home with full bellies, we went home with a feeling of pride and camaraderie.

If you are interested in becoming a Potomac Valley Master Naturalist, please visit our website: www.potomacaudubon.org/masternaturalists.

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:

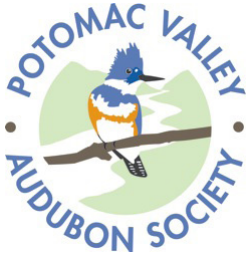
Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



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
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443
Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 30
Shepherdstown, WV

<http://www.potomacaudubon.org>

DATED MATERIALS

A proud partner of
the United Way
of the
Eastern Panhandle.



MAIL TO:

Spring 2023

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 41, Issue 4

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.

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

President:.....	Jim Cummins (2023)
Past President:.....	Suzanne Offut (2023)
Vice President.....	Ginger Hankins (2023)
Secretary:.....	Carolyn Thomas (2022)
Treasurer:.....	Stephen Paradis (2021)
Board Members-at-Large:.....	Janet Ady (2024)
.....	Susan Brookreson (2024)
.....	Dana Fogle (2023)
.....	Pete Mulford (2023)
.....	Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2023)
.....	Herb Peddicord (2024)
.....	Kristan Phillips (2024)
.....	Sally Reynolds (2024)
.....	Mary Lynn Robinson (2023)
.....	Keith Unger (2023)

*Emerita Board Member:*Jean Neely

Special Contacts:

Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397)Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
Land/Conservation Mgr: KC Walters (304-283-7319)Katelyn@potomacaudubon.org
Lead Teacher/Naturalist: Amy Moore (240-818-4714)Amy@PotomacAudubon.org
Watershed Ed Coord: Laurel Schwartz (681-252-1387)Laurel@PotomacAudubon.org
Fundraising and Communications Coordinator: Ellen KinzerEllen@PotomacAudubon.org
Web Master: Kathy Biltonkathy@fred.net
PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-754-3753)dianamullis7@gmail.com
Valley Views editor/publisher:
Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639)newsletter@potomacaudubon.org

PVAS BOARD

PVAS Board meetings take place the first Thursday of every other month (September through May, except December). Meetings are open to all PVAS members. Please contact the President or Vice President if you would like to attend.