



Valley Views

Volume 37, Issue 6

June/July 2019

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

I am so pleased to announce that we reached our Annual Appeal goal of \$53,000 this year. A heartfelt THANK YOU to all who contributed. We are so fortunate to have members and supporters who believe wholeheartedly in our mission and who support our work.

The annual appeal gives us the foundation we need to move forward with confidence, knowing we can “keep the lights on” for another year. This funding is part of what allows us to manage 500 acres, provide free or affordable programs, and move forward on conservation projects like our Habitat Stewardship Initiatives. It also allows us to recruit and retain our wonderful staff. We now have five permanent employees and two AmeriCorps. They deliver programs to youth and adults; attend conservation meetings and contribute to initiatives; coordinate volunteers who lead trips, presentations, and walks; communicate with our members and community; manage our 500+ acres of preserved green space. Staff and volunteers are what allow PVAS to be an active provider of conservation and education initiatives in our local service area. We reach thousands of people each year because of the generosity of our members and friends.

Thank you for supporting PVAS and all that it does in the community. You are critical to our mission.

Thank You to Board Members!

Two Board Members are stepping off the board this year, and we want to thank them heartily for their amazing contributions to PVAS over the years.

Those leaving the Board include: Amy Evrard, who has been handling all of the press releases for PVAS programs and activities over the last several years; and Dan Cogswell, who has been our Treasurer for the last five years and has helped us modernize our accounting and bookkeeping over a period of tremendous change and growth.

These individuals have made more contributions than can be counted and have been amazingly supportive during their time on the Board. We thank them and wish them well, and we hope they stay active and engaged with PVAS for years to come.

Staff Comings and Goings

We have bad news and good news...the bad news first: JiJi Russell is resigning from her position as Program Administrator so she can be more available for family commitments and responsibilities. JiJi has brought much-needed order to the administration of our programs and communications. She will be sorely missed!

The good news? Erin Shaw, our VISTA volunteer in 2017/2018, has agreed to come back and fill JiJi's role. Erin knows our new database, created the e-newsletter in her VISTA role, has a great existing relationship with all of our staff and volunteers, and has provided a seamless transition into the role. We are so lucky that she was available and willing to come back to PVAS!

We can't thank both of these amazing women enough for their contributions to PVAS.



Farewell to JiJi Russell, left, pictured with Erin Shaw, who returns to PVAS as our new Program Administrator.

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

A Tale of Two Crickets: Spring Field Cricket and Southern Wood Cricket

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds

Mid to late-May is the very beginning of the singing insect season in our area. This is the time of year when the familiar Spring Field Crickets (*Gryllus veletis*) (<http://songsofinsects.com/crickets/spring-and-fall-field-crickets>) mature and begin to sing from roadsides, fields, lawns...just about everywhere. Almost everyone recognizes the lively chirping of these field crickets since they sound like their fall counterpart, the Fall Field Cricket (*Gryllus pennsylvanicus*). These Spring Field Crickets overwinter as juveniles in the leaf litter and in burrows or cracks in the ground. Once the sun warms the soil, they continue to develop and mature finally molting to adults in May. The males sing to attract females and defend their territory. Females lay eggs in the soil which hatch and mature through a few instars. As winter approaches and temperatures drop, the juvenile cricket's maturation is put on hold as they enter a diapause stage waiting for the warmer temperatures of spring when they can continue maturing, and the cycle starts anew.

During the spring season in our area, there is another, similar sounding field cricket, the Southern Wood Cricket (*Gryllus fultoni*) (<http://songsofinsects.com/crickets/southern-wood-cricket>) that matures and starts to sing about the same time as the Spring Field Cricket. These "wood" crickets can be found along roadsides, grassy areas, woodlands...just about everywhere. It is very easy to dismiss any chirping cricket one hears in the spring as a Spring Field Cricket. Adults of both of these species die out in mid to late-July.



Southern Wood Cricket, photo © Wil Hershberger



Spring Field Cricket © Wil Hershberger

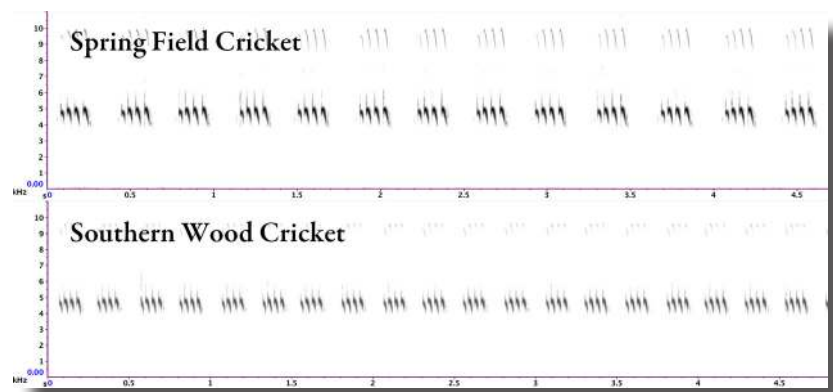
Wood Cricket outnumbers Spring Field Crickets two to one.

There is an easy way to "see" the songs of these crickets (and birds, musical instruments, etc.) by using your phone and an app that will show a sound spectrogram. For the iPhone, there is Spectrogram Pro (\$2.99) and SpectrumView (free with in-app purchases). For an Android Phone, there is Spectrogram (\$9.99) and SpectralPro Analyzer (\$4.99). With these apps, you can visualize the sound spectrogram as the sounds are happening. Some apps allow you to save an image of a spectrum while with others you have to use the phones screen grab function to save an image that is on screen.

I hope that you will take on the challenge of finding these two common species of field crickets and try to determine which species you are hearing.

So, how can we tell these two species apart without capturing and examining a specimen in the hand? Fortunately, the songs of the two species are different enough that, with careful listening, we can tell them apart. The songs of the Spring Field Crickets are composed of two to three chirps per second with each chirp comprising 3-4 pulses (Figure 1). These individual pulses are hardly discernible to the ear, but the rate of chirping is important. The songs of the Southern Wood Cricket are composed of four to five chirps per second, twice as fast as those of the Spring Field Cricket. Each chirp of the Southern Wood Cricket is comprised of 3-5 pulses, again these are barely discernible.

So, when listening to a singing field cricket in the spring, carefully count the number of chirps and try to estimate if there are two or four per second. In some areas, the Southern



Cricket songs

PVAS Events

Summertime Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

The longer, warmer days of summer offer plenty of opportunities to get outside and enjoy nature. A shady evening stroll at Cool Spring Preserve or an early morning hike at Yankauer Nature Preserve can provide that much needed respite from life's hectic demands. We invite all of our community to take advantage of our well-groomed public trails at any of our four nature preserves. If you are looking for more structured outdoor events, we hope you will join one of the various programs we offer.

PVAS bird walks are for everyone. Beginners and experts alike walk together, binoculars 'glued' to their eyes, smiles on their faces, with their heads turned upwards eagerly searching for an early morning flutter in the trees; Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Indigo Buntings, Pileated Woodpeckers, Meadowlarks...each sighting carefully noted and later submitted in their every growing eBird listing. Join one of our many bird walks scheduled this summer. We offer monthly walks at the USGS Fish Health Lab as well as Third Wednesday walks at Cool Spring Preserve.

Interested in learning about native meadows and how to transition part of your yard into a haven for birds, insects, and wildlife of all kinds? Rita Hennessy is offering seasonal, educational field trips of her residential native meadow. In June, let Rita guide you through her meadow paths to learn about the warm season meadow flowers emerging, including Beard Tongue, Wild Bergamot, and Milkweed. Learn the steps she took to establish her meadow, the meadow cycle through the seasons, and how it has evolved over the past six years.

Love to sit outside in the summer evenings, listening to the creatures of the night, insects buzzing, and moths fluttering? Then you'll want to take full advantage of our AmeriCorps Volunteer, Matt Wuertzer's program about insects of the night. We will hang a mothing sheet and explore the trails of Cool Spring Preserve with flashlights in hand.

The 2019 Master Naturalist class will continue their education with classes in June at Cacapon State Park. Cacapon is a perfect venue for learning about geology, soils, and aquatic habitats. In July, students will benefit from the Cool Spring Preserve venue as their classes will focus on documenting nature observations, invasive species, and ecology.

To find out more about these and other programs, check the calendar insert included in this issue of *Valley Views*, email Admin@PotomacAudubon.org to subscribe to our biweekly *Heads-Up PVAS!* e-newsletter, and check our website (www.potomacaudubon.org) regularly. We are adding programs and events all the time, so the website is the best way to keep up to date.

Mark Your Calendars for 'Concerts at Cool Spring'

After last year's hiatus, PVAS's Summer Concert Series will return this August! We'll be hosting one hour of music (6 to 7 p.m.) every Thursday evening in August at Cool Spring Preserve: August 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. We're still working on the line-up, but every musician is sure to provide a terrific performance. A full schedule will be printed in the August edition of *Valley Views*, but make sure to check the events calendar on our website for up-to-the-minute additions: www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/. If you have any questions about Concerts at Cool Spring, know a local musician we should reach out to, or would like to volunteer as "host/MC," contact Erin at admin@potomacaudubon.org or (681) 252-1387.



Save the Date: Fireflies, Fiddles, & Frogs

Wednesday, July 10, 6 p.m. - dark

Bring your own picnic and join us for an evening of family fun. Ice cream sundaes will be provided by South Mountain Creamery, and there will be multiple outdoor activity and creativity stations.

Location to be determined.

Pre-registration is required, the event cost per vehicle is \$15 (members), \$20 (non-members). No pets, please. Questions or sponsorship opportunities: email Admin@PotomacAudubon.org.

PotomacAudubon.org.

Join PVAS for July 4th!

4th of July Parade in Shepherdstown

Thursday, July 4, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

PVAS employees and friends will be gathered at Church Street by 10:30 a.m. to walk in the parade.

No need to register, just show up in your red, white, and blue.

Questions or additional information: email Admin@PotomacAudubon.org.

PVAS Events

Membership Update

PVAS has been evaluating its membership program based on feedback by the Association of Nature Center Administrators in 2017. Membership dues are a key component to community organizations like ours, in that an organization can rely on those dollars year after year to support the day-to-day activities of the organization. We hadn't increased our fees since our founding in 1982, while as you can guess, the costs for insurance, printing newsletters, and other items have increased significantly over the years. Not to mention the growth in services and programs PVAS provides. Accordingly, the PVAS Board decided to increase dues to \$50 per household - standard to similar organizations. That transition happened about a year ago.

The other change concerns National Audubon Society (NAS) policies. Several years ago, when someone joined NAS, NAS shared a portion of the dues from that person with the local chapter to support chapter activities and expenses; that no longer happens. NAS does encourage chapters to have their own membership programs, allowing people to join the local chapter to support the local activities directly, while NAS can focus their own membership dues on national programs. NAS does share their membership list with us, and NAS members will be "affiliate" members of PVAS. As such, NAS members in our service area will receive our bi-weekly "Heads Up, PVAS!" electronic newsletter via email so they can stay apprised of local chapter activities.

PVAS is offering "perks" to local chapter members to add value to your membership as a token of thanks for your support. One of those "perks" is this bi-monthly newsletter, *Valley Views*.

This may be the last *Valley Views* you receive if you are not a PVAS member.

We hope you'll choose to be a local member to continue to enjoy *Valley Views*, in addition to other perks including:

- 10% discount on adult programs such as Birding 101, natural history and art workshops
- 10% discount on children's programs including summer day camp
- 10% discount on qualifying PVAS events
- 10% discount on facility rentals and birthday parties
- Bi-weekly "Heads Up" e-newsletter
- Free/reduced admission at participating nature centers and museums around the country, through the Association of Nature Center Administrators (new reciprocal programs like this will be added over time)
- Invitation to members-only events such as Annual Membership Dinner and special trips
- Discounts to participating businesses

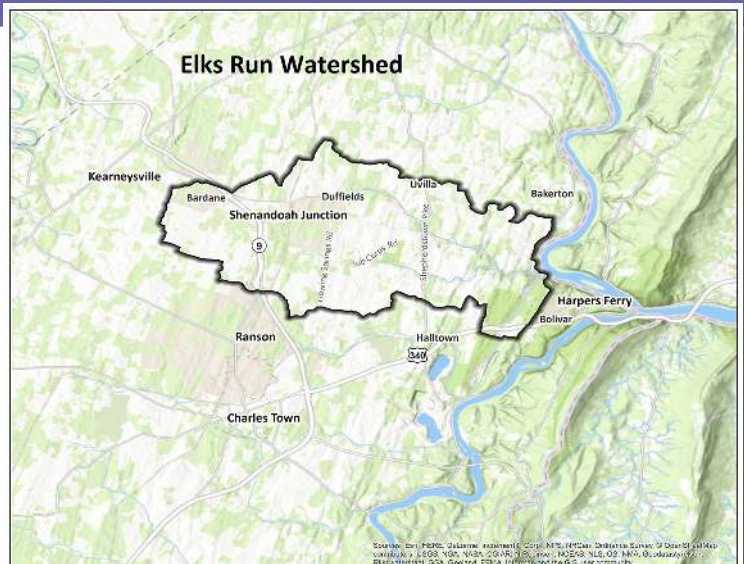
But perhaps most importantly, you'll know your dollars will stay local and support PVAS's mission to "preserve, restore, and enjoy the natural world through education and action."

We hope you'll choose to be a member of both organizations to support both national and local conservation efforts. If you are unsure of your membership status, feel free to email us at admin@potomacaudubon.org or call our office at (681) 252-1387 and we can share your status. If you want to learn more about our membership program, go to: www.potomacaudubon.org/support/become-a-member/.

Thank you so much for supporting PVAS through membership.

Do You Live in Elks Run Watershed?

The West Virginia Conservation Agency continues to promote the "Elks Run Septic Program," a septic repair cost-share program for residents of Elks Run watershed in Jefferson County (refer to map to see if your property falls within the watershed). This grant-funded program will cover up to \$7,000 in septic system repair/replacement costs, or up to \$150 in septic pump-out costs. Funds will expire soon for this program, so homeowners are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. For more information, contact Conservation Specialist Kristen Bisom at kbisom@wvca.us, (681) 247-3011, or (304) 552-1754.



PVAS Events

18th Annual “This Race is for the Birds!”

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

“In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.”- John Muir.

After traversing the beautiful trails of Broomgrass, participants of “This Race is for the Birds!” have a connection to what John Muir was saying. Whether walking, jogging, or running they were treated to spectacular trails through forests and fields, and the gorgeous vistas that wild, wonderful West Virginia is known for.

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society’s 18th annual “This Race is for the Birds!” was held on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at Broomgrass near Gerrardstown, WV. The Broomgrass community, as well as Farmer Tim of Steel House Farm, generously opened up their ‘home’ and invited us to enjoy their private trails for this one-day event. The 10K and 5K events were professionally timed, for the fifth year in a row, by 5 Runners Racing Timing Company. Nate Hawley, MC extraordinaire, kept us entertained and up-to-date as runners circled through for a second loop, as well as when they sprinted across the finish line. We were all in for a treat as Lucia Valentine (luciavalentine.com) beautifully sang the National Anthem just prior to the start of the race. Many thanks to our photographers for the hundreds of pictures taken throughout the event. Jon Howard focused on capturing the final stretches of runners and walkers crossing the finish line, while his friend Enoch roamed the course snapping photos of runners as they twisted through the forest trails or powered up the steep hills of Back Creek Valley. Race photos can be found on the Race for the Birds page of RunSignUp.com (<https://runsignup.com/Race/Photos/View/14016#page-1>). Additional photos are posted on the Race for the Birds Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Race-for-the-Birds-147070525658894/>).



A total of 214 runners, joggers and walkers participated in the 10K and 5K events with an additional 15 joining the Kids Fun Run event. Many participants were from the Eastern Panhandle and Tri-State area, but some traveled from further distances including Washington, DC and Pittsburgh, PA - we even welcomed one runner from the UK! The overall winner of the 10K race, for a second year in a row, was Nelson Mayienda of Winchester, VA with a time of 40:48. The 1st female in the 10K was Jennie Brackens of Charles Town, WV with a time of 56:33. The overall winner of the 5K race was Adrian Elliot of Martinsburg with a time of 23:34. The 1st female in the 5K was Victoria Kahsay of Kearneysville with a time of 24:42. Full results are available on the Race website: <https://runsignup.com/Race/Results/14016/#resultSetId-147954;perpage:10>.

While many of the participants were runners and joggers, this event draws a growing group of walkers that like to bird and observe nature along the way, taking advantage of the well-groomed trails and views of Back Creek. Participant Bruni Haydl observed, “I saw my first Meadowlark at the top of a tree, singing away. Doing the 5K walk allows you to see so much of this interesting property. Definitely plan on going again next year.”

“This Race is for the Birds!” is one of PVAS’s largest annual fundraisers. This year, thanks to the registrants and more than 30 sponsors, the race raised nearly \$10,000 (not including our very supportive in-kind sponsors). This race would not be the success it is without all of our generous sponsors and volunteers. The amount of work that went into pre-race preparations was tremendous, and we could not have done it without the support of numerous volunteers who helped lighten the load by clearing trails, marking the course, creating maps, setting up registrations, and delivering supplies, as well as day-of activities such as parking, registration, course marshals, and cleanup crews. The Race Committee deserves special thanks for their service, as does Nan Johnson, volunteer Race Director, whose ‘behind the scenes’ time, energy, and expertise is without a doubt, irreplaceable.

2019 “This Race is for the Birds!” Sponsors

We can’t thank the 2019 race sponsors enough for all they did to make this year’s race a success.

Not only did their support provide a wonderful experience for local runners, but the money raised from this event will also go toward PVAS educational programming and the continued upkeep of our four preserves.

We thank all of our sponsors for their loyalty and their generosity: Broomgrass (a sustainable farming community) and Farmer Tim of Steel House Farm, Friends of Deb Patthoff, Spirit of Jefferson, Associated Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, Friends of Mark Benedict, Virginia Lodge No. 1 Independent Odd Fellows, The Staff of Hospice of the Panhandle, Audiology, Inc., Bare Snacks, Chick-fil-A of Martinsburg, Michael P. Sullivan, LLC, Progressive Printing, Skinner Law Firm, The Journal, The Observer, The Shepherdstown Chronicle, Two Rivers Treads, AC&T, Community Garden Market, Dickinson & Wait Craft Gallery, Domestic Restaurant, German Street Coffee & Candlery, Good Vibes Sound Healing, Grapes & Grains Gourmet, Grove Dall’Olio Architects, PLLC, Potomac-Mecklenburg Garden Club, Reid’s Distributor, Shary’s Garden Art, The Press Room, Trees 101 LLC, and Wardensville Garden Market.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have you met Kerri Godfrey? Kerri is PVAS's 'go-to' youth program volunteer. She volunteers for many of our 4th grade watershed field trips, where she can be found teaching water quality testing, leading our water cycle game, or leading the water filter building station. This year, she even took on the task of teaching the Watershed Education Program in the classroom at Eagle School (Berkeley County). Kerri's talent as an educator stems from her past experiences as an outdoor educator with "Nature's Classroom" in New England, an educator for the "Bay Watch" program at the YMCA Camp Letts in Edgewater, MD, and as a Park Naturalist for the State of Rhode Island at Goddard Park. Kerri is enthusiastic, energized and fun; and the kids absolutely adore her. She is currently in her second year of the PVAS Master Naturalist program. If you get a chance to meet Kerri, we know you'll love her as much as we do!



Spring Fundraiser Sunday, June 9th

Join PVAS for a Garden Party at the beautiful home of Rod Snyder and Alex Orton, which was recently featured on the Shenandoah-Potomac Garden Council House and Garden Tour. It is located at 116 Wildwood Farm Lane, Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442.

While appearing to be a 19th century manor house, Wildwood Farm is a highly-customized modular home built in 2007. Corinthian columns, a cast-iron balcony above the front door, and a double curved staircase to the second floor are some of the outstanding features of the home. Indoors, guests can see an 1883 Jefferson County map that shows the farm plots and names of all landowners throughout the county. Outside, a deck provides access to a wonderful outdoor patio nestled along a 7-foot tall natural rock formation that runs through the entire farm.



Guests will enjoy wine, savories, and sweets provided by our famous events committee on the stunning patio. Home tours will also be provided, and the event will be held rain or shine. Tickets range from \$50 for individuals to up to \$250 for two guests. All proceeds benefit the programs and preserves of PVAS.

You can call to request a paper invitation, or you can purchase tickets at our website <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/2019-spring-fundraiser-at-wildwood-farm/>.

Please RSVP by June 1. You can call us with questions at (681) 252-1387. We hope you'll join us!



Family and Youth Programs

Boys and Girls Club Spring Break Camp

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher/Naturalist

On April 15th, eight kids from the Berkeley County Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle visited Yankauer Nature Preserve for a day of “spring break camp”. We could tell that this energetic bunch of kids didn’t know what to expect when they stepped off of the bus upon arrival. It took them awhile to warm up to us and to an immersive outdoor experience, as many of them had not spent much time in nature before. The PVAS AmeriCorps instructors and I were in awe of how our final activity of the day, the nature hike around the Kingfisher Loop, turned out. The hike seemed to awaken each child’s natural curiosity for nature in ways we had not seen earlier in the day. The kids were very interested in the many spring ephemeral wildflowers that lined the trails. Surprisingly, they became enthralled by finding seeds from Walnut and Pawpaw trees on the ground from last fall. They couldn’t wait to take their very own Pawpaw seed home to plant in their backyards.

Although it was a smaller group of kids than we had hoped for, it turned out to be an uplifting experience for the kids and staff alike. We plan on doing the spring break camp again next spring, and hope to bring even more kids from both Jefferson and Berkeley County clubs out to visit our preserves.

Spring Break at Local Libraries

During spring break in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties (April 15-19), PVAS provided fun-packed nature-themed library programs for kids across the Panhandle. More than 110 kids and their families traveled to different public libraries trying to fill their “Nature Passport” with stamps for the programs that they attended. Each program featured a nature-themed book and a craft to go with it. Kids learned about Leave No Trace principles at Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Library; studied birds at Old Charles Town Library; learned about animal tails at North Berkeley and Hedgesville libraries; discovered how to track animals, and learned about insects at Shepherdstown Library.

Conservation

Top 5 Campgrounds in Our Service Area

By Eric Collins, AmeriCorps Volunteer

The warmer weather is beginning to lure many people out of winter hibernation and back to the mountains, woods, and rivers of our beautiful region. This lovely weather has all of us here at PVAS daydreaming of spending summer nights roasting marshmallows over a campfire with our close friends and family. Luckily for you, we are here to share our top five favorite campgrounds, so you can enjoy the camping season right along with us. Counting down:

5. Harpers Ferry Campground

Located in the historic town of Harpers Ferry, our number five pick is situated alongside the Appalachian Trail and packed with local history. You can spend the day exploring the town’s museums and local shops, walking the canal, or going for a swim in the beautiful Shenandoah River before heading back to your cozy campfires.

4. Antietam Creek Campsite

Nestled in the woods between the C&O Canal towpath and the Potomac River, the campsites are a hop, skip away from many recreational activities including fishing, boating, tubing, hiking and biking. Located near yet another historic landmark, don’t miss out on visiting Antietam National Battlefield to learn about this important Civil War battle.

3. Treehouse Camp at Maple Tree Campground

Located near Rohrsersville, Maryland, Treehouse Camp at Maple Tree Campground sits adjacent to the Appalachian Trail on South Mountain. A perfect choice for a rustic and affordable weekend family vacation, this campground provides a relaxing atmosphere to slow down, escape from your busy schedule and enjoy the surrounding nature. Their unique lodging includes a brand new Deluxe Tree House, one-of-a-kind Hobbit House, cozy Tree Cottages, rustic Tree Houses, as well as Tent Campsites.

2. Brunswick Family Campground

Brunswick Family Campground is a great site for families with children. Located between the Potomac River shoreline and C&O Canal towpath, it is a great place to enjoy the cool water and take a brisk walk or bike ride along the historic and shaded canal. The campground is also a launching point for canoe rentals and whitewater rafting trips on the Shenandoah River.

1. Watermelon Park

Finally, our number one spot for camping this season goes to Watermelon Park. This spectacular campsite is tucked into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains along the scenic Shenandoah River. While here, you and your family can rediscover the joys of camping by sitting around the campfire, roasting s’mores, going fishing, tubing, swimming, or even playing a game of volleyball. The park also offers the lowest rates in the tri-state area, no reservations required. If you have the time, plan your trip around one of their live music festivals: Watermelon Park Fest or the River and Roots Festival.

Camp Programs

Summer Camp

Get the kids outside this summer!
Registration for Audubon Discovery
Summer Camp is still open,
head to: [www.potomacaudubon.org/
education/youth/discovercamp/](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/education/youth/discovercamp/)



Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

Spring was an incredibly busy and exciting time in the preserves!

The revamp of the Nature Playspace at Cool Spring Preserve is well underway, thanks to a grant from Eastern Area Health Education Center. Volunteers have been working diligently to lay timbers around the mulch patches and rebuild the play elements. We now have a boulder climb, a spiderweb net, a hillside slide, a loose pieces area, and a balance beam. The canoe and log jump are also back in place; so there's a little something for every child, big and small.

Sustainable Solutions, LLC conducted a prescribed fire on the pollinator meadow at Cool Spring on March 27th. Approximately four acres were burned in about three hours.



The fire was tame and swept gracefully across the meadow removing the built up thatch layer and knocking back the invasive woody species. The next step will be to plant pollinator plugs in the meadow to increase species diversity this growing season; there are 600 plants on order to arrive in early June. The planting will be held on June 15, and many volunteers will be needed. To participate, please head to our website and register.

The pollinator meadow at Stauffer's Marsh is emerging. There will be a list of the seed species planted last fall on the kiosk so you can be

on the lookout for all the new native species enhancing the meadow. Both of these pollinator projects were possible with a grant from USFWS.

Spring storms were rough on the trees at Eidolon and Yankauer, but fortunately PVAS has an amazing fleet of volunteers living near the preserves always ready to be called in to action.

I am in need of a few items for land management: a tire pump for the wheelbarrows, tool hanging hooks, and a small, gas-powered chainsaw. I

am also seeking birdseed for our feeders at Cool Spring and Yankauer. If you have any of these items that you are willing to donate, please reach out to me at katelyn@potomacaudubon.org. Thank you in advance!

Master Naturalists, don't let summer slip away without earning some of your 2019 volunteer hours. Registering for workdays on our website, or sending an email to katelyn@potomacaudubon.org, helps me to better plan the workday activities and communicate with you about changes or cancellations.



Bullying Nature

By Neal Barkus, *Panhandle Progressive*

It is a bright spring day in Shepherdstown and I am gazing out my window at my self-inflicted folly – the swimming pool in my backyard. Nature wasn't on board with the original happy plans behind this water-filled hole. Instead, nature wants to use it to grow all sorts of bacteria and algae, and allow mosquitos, toads and any other interested party to lay eggs and spawn their young. Ah, but we have the answers for nature, right? Engineering, pumps and chemicals. Every summer with much effort and money thrown at the problem, we win – temporarily. But let up a moment and nature inexorably overcomes our efforts. A swimming pool is a fool's errand to push a large rock up a hill.

A swimming pool is an apt metaphor for what I am trying to say in this piece. Humans are the most intelligent animals ever to walk the earth. But at some point we got a little too impressed with our abilities and began to bully nature into doing what it didn't want to do. That's when the trouble started.

Most of our attempts to bully nature have involved water. Although essential for life in the right amounts, water has developed a bad reputation. It has the nasty habit of accumulating in huge amounts and sweeping away everything in its path. English and American common law alike have declared water a "common enemy." When our engineering know-how and the power of our machines reached a certain level in the 19th century, we engaged water in what amounted to an arm-wrestling match. This contest has not been without its fits and starts, its wins and losses on both sides. But we have begun to realize that when we overcome nature with brute force, there is always an unexpected price to pay.

I just returned from a short trip to the Everglades in southern Florida. The Everglades is really nothing more than the overflow from Lake Okeechobee, which flows in a sheet down a very slight grade to the Gulf of Mexico. Early Florida pioneers saw immediately that if the Everglades could be drained, thousands of acres of rich land would become available for cultivation. The 19th century saw one failed scheme after another to drain "the swamp." But it looked like success was at hand until 1928, when a hurricane filled the Lake and caused it to burst through a dike, drowning 2,500 people. Corpses were stacked and burned by the roadsides. The Army Corps of Engineers then changed the rationale for draining the Everglades from reclamation to flood control. The Hoover Dike was constructed, which cut off Lake Okeechobee from the northern Everglades. This solved the flooding problem, but created many others.

What once was a swamp dried out and became like a desert. The absence of fresh water allowed salt water to invade the water table, ruining farms. The stress of low water wreaked havoc on the food chain. Sawgrass invaded water-lily sloughs, while other species invaded parched sawgrass marshes. Populations of wading birds rapidly declined. Then in 1939, one million acres caught fire and burned. Now conservationists and environmentalists have a seat at the table and a serious effort is underway to restore the Everglades.

The April 1, 2019 issue of *The New Yorker* chronicled a similar example. For millennia, the Mississippi River has overflowed its banks and deposited silt and soil debris all over southern Louisiana, building up and extending the land in all directions. Because these floods had obvious harmful effects for humans, we built levees along the river for hundreds of miles. Now there are few catastrophic floods that breach the levees; this is a good thing, right?

Well, yes and no. The problem is that there are no further soil deposits to build up the land. The land that was formerly deposited through flooding has begun to compact and subside, allowing the Gulf to retake large areas. At present, southern Louisiana seen from a satellite is nothing more than the snake of the Mississippi bounded by levees and a few hundred acres of land on either side.

Believe it or not, the current solution to this problem is more engineering on a massive scale to be paid for with mountains of tax money. One part of this solution is to dredge up silt from the bottom of the river and use massive diesel pumps to redeposit it into areas that would otherwise subside into non-existence. Another part is to cut holes in the levees and during flood periods allow water and silt to inundate areas that have heavily subsided. *The New Yorker* piece rightly concludes that humans have so altered nature in an attempt to take control, that now we are attempting to take control of our efforts to take control.

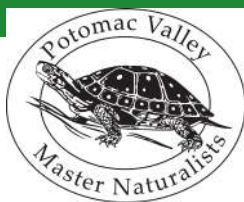
All this says to me that when we consider the so-called problems that nature creates, we need less hubris and more wisdom. We need fewer brute force solutions and a more harmonious approach that doesn't struggle so much with the way nature works. Maybe through taxation and other policies we could encourage the depopulation of places like New Orleans and Phoenix, where people simply cannot be protected from nature. Brute force may succeed in the short run, but at a huge cost with harmful consequences to environmental balance. And because of entropy and our human fallibility, the brute force solutions always fail in the long-run.

But what could I possibly know? I'm the one who built a swimming pool. Could you excuse me while I go empty the skimmers?

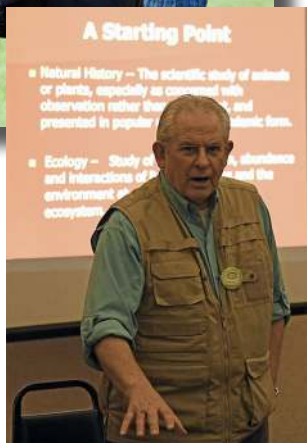
PVMN

10th Annual West Virginia Master Naturalist Conference

Friday, June 7 to Sunday, June 9, 2019, Pipestem Resort State Park



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Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

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



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

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

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PVAS BOARD

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

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