

# Valley Views

Volume 36, Issue 5

April/May 2018

## Director's Report

*By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director*

In the last issue of *Valley Views*, I shared the news of Land Manager Bridget Tinsley's departure from PVAS to move to Oregon for a wonderful job opportunity and to be closer to her family. She left big shoes to fill, but I am pleased to announce in this issue that we have found a candidate to do just that.

Katelyn (KC) Walters, a Shepherdstown native, will be our next Conservation and Land Manager beginning April 2. KC graduated from Shepherd University as a Biology major with a minor in Environmental Studies. She interned at the Conservation Fund's Freshwater Institute during her time at Shepherd, doing water chemistry lab work and aquaculture research. She also interned at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park as a Natural Resource intern for a summer.

After graduating from Shepherd, she got her Master of Science degree in Biology from James Madison University, focusing on Forest Ecology, Landscape Ecology and GIS. Next she joined the Student Conservation Association to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana, where she gained first hand experience with forest, grassland, and wetland management, and prescribed burns. Most recently, KC has been working at Sustainable Solutions LLC in Shepherdstown as the Lead Natural Resources and GIS Technician. She knows our preserves through that work, and is also enrolled in the Master Naturalist Program. We look forward to introducing her to our members and friends this spring, and I know she looks forward to meeting our wonderful volunteers, members, and supporters.



## PVAS Welcomes Ariana, AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer

PVAS continues to find top people to fill important positions that will help us carry our successful projects and programs into the future. This time, we are excited to introduce PVAS's new AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer, Ariana Hagenau. Ariana recently graduated from Shepherd University with a BFA in Graphic Design, where she grew her skills as a talented graphic designer and illustrator. She also has experience in coding, database management, and web design, much-needed skills that will be put to good use by PVAS over the next year.

Since starting in late February, Ariana has been hard at work designing new brochures for our youth programs and diving into the website redevelopment process. We know she will be impressed with our dedicated volunteers and members, so please give her the opportunity to meet you soon. Stop in and see her at the Cool Spring Preserve office, or drop her a welcome message via email at [ariana@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:ariana@potomacaudubon.org).

## Thanks and Farewell to VISTA Volunteer Erin Shaw

We want to give a huge thank you to Erin Shaw, who has been PVAS's VISTA volunteer for the last year. Erin has become an invaluable member of the PVAS team. She has written dozens of grants, coordinated volunteers for fairs and festivals and programs, helped with fundraising events, and gotten us up and running with a new database.

Erin plans to go to graduate school in the near future in the field of conservation, and we wish her all the best in her next endeavors. She has been such a pleasure to work with, and she will be sorely missed.



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

## Birding in May at PVAS Preserves

By Wil Hershberger

One of the best times for bird watching in our area is the month of May. Migrant and resident birds are in profusion, singing exuberantly, and actively chasing potential mates. This heightened activity, despite the fully leafed-out trees, increases the odds of finding and seeing these colorful, gorgeous birds. Having a quiet, peaceful place to pursue these endeavors can greatly increase the joy and soul-soaring rewards of watching birds in the field. Fortunately, we have access to several great preserves under the protection and management of PVAS. It is hard to pick just one preserve to review, so I'll talk about two: Stauffer's Marsh and Eidolon Nature Preserve.

**Stauffer's Marsh** is located in Berkeley County's Back Creek Valley, just south of the small town of Shanghai. Here is an oasis of quiet ponds and marshlands along with open fields and edges. With all of these varied habitats, there are a number of species of birds that call this place home during the breeding season. Once you are out of your car and standing in the parking lot, Gray Catbirds will be one of the first birds you hear. They nest in the pines along the border of the preserve and the road, singing profusely all day long. As you walk in, along the main trail toward the marsh overlook, keep an eye on the rank vegetation along the path left over from last year, as well as the trees around the parking lot and along the stream to the north of the path. Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows ([http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Song\\_Sparrow\\_at\\_Stauffer's\\_Marsh\\_2009\\_mixdown.mp3](http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Song_Sparrow_at_Stauffer's_Marsh_2009_mixdown.mp3)), Northern Mockingbirds, and Orchard and Baltimore Orioles

will be singing and flying around on all sides. Brown Thrashers will be singing from elevated perches to the south of the trail. Red-winged Blackbirds will be calling and singing from near the open water and marshlands. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers will be nesting in the trees along the stream and in the woods to the east of the pond. Migrants such as American Redstarts, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Northern Parulas, and perhaps a Wilson's Warbler may be seen in the trees and vegetation near the stream in early May. Additional common breeders at Stauffer's Marsh are Northern Cardinal, American Goldfinch, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Indigo Bunting, Common Grackle, and House Finch. A real treat at Stauffer's is the breeding Willow Flycatchers (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/191178>) that can be heard singing from east of the pond in the open areas south of the overlook. The current list of birds for the preserve is 167 species.

**Eidolon Nature Preserve** in Morgan County is covered in deciduous woodlands with a few openings along the trails. This is truly a quiet place for reflection and discovery. Eidolon flushes pink and white with a profusion of wildflowers in April as spring unfolds. With the lengthening days, the preserve comes alive. Here, Wild

Turkeys, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Eastern Wood-pewees, Acadian Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Thrushes, Worm-eating Warblers, Ovenbirds, American Redstarts, Northern Parulas, Pine Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, and many others breed. The woods are full of woodpeckers of several species: Pileated, Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied, and Northern Flickers all breed here. In addition to Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches, the chickadees ([http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/WH\\_15T0020\\_Chickadee\\_hybrids\\_counter\\_singing\\_Morgan\\_Co\\_WV.mp3](http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/WH_15T0020_Chickadee_hybrids_counter_singing_Morgan_Co_WV.mp3)) here are hybrids of the more northerly Black-capped and the more southerly Carolina Chickadee. According to current research, any chickadee seen in this area would have to be listed as a hybrid as there is no sure-fire way to tell them apart with certainty.

The real jewels of Eidolon are the breeding Cerulean Warblers (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534343>). This threatened species enjoys success breeding in the taller deciduous trees of the preserve. They prefer

canopies with grapevine tangles where females make their nests hidden in the confusion of vegetation. The entire preserve is great habitat for this species and many other woodland interior breeders. Currently, all of the surrounding lands are also forested, which certainly benefits the breeding birds at Eidolon. The current list of birds seen at Eidolon contains 84 species.

I certainly hope that you will make an effort to visit one of these PVAS preserves this spring. The cacophony of songs, and the plethora of colors, shapes, sizes, and species of birds, can make any day a great birding experience and create lasting memories.



Photos © Wil Hershberger. Clockwise from top: Song Sparrow, male Cerulean Warbler, and Willow Flycatcher.

## Birding News and Events

### This Race Is for the Birds! Coming on April 14

PVAS's 17th annual "This Race is for the Birds!" is coming up on April 14, 2018. The race is being hosted for the first time this year by Broomgrass Farm, located at Broomgrass Way, Gerrardstown, WV 25420, just west of I-81.



There will be two professionally timed races: one five kilometers long and another ten kilometers long. There will also be a fun run for children under ten years of age. In addition, adults and families who wish to walk or jog the 5K course at their own pace may do so.

The 5K and 10K races will follow non-technical cross-country trails through the farm's scenic fields, rolling hills, and woods. The course is suitable for all runners. The 5K and 10K races will begin at 9:00 a.m. and the children's fun run at 10:45 a.m.

The children's fun run is free. Fees for the other portion of the event range from \$25 to \$35, with discounts for pre-registering online. All proceeds will be used to support PVAS preserves, projects, and programs, and all fees are tax deductible.

As well as participants, volunteers are needed to make this event a success. Volunteers can help set up, take race day registrations and hand out t-shirts, serve as course monitors, serve refreshments, clean up, and encourage the participants.

To register, or for more information, go to the race website: [www.raceforthebirds.org](http://www.raceforthebirds.org). For questions, or to volunteer, contact [race4birds@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:race4birds@potomacaudubon.org).

### Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon Registration Open

The month of May will mark the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon. Similar to a walkathon, a Birdathon helps raise money as participants accept donations or pledges per species counted in a 24-hour period. This fun event is an important fundraiser for PVAS, and everyone can be involved. Registration is open on the PVAS website, and donations are accepted at any time. This year's proceeds will support the Chimney Swift tower.

Participants will search for and count as many birds as possible during a consecutive 24-hour period on any day between May 5 and May 13. There are several options for participation. You can create your own team or join an existing team and register online. You might want to join one of our daily International Migratory Bird Day bird walks that week to kick off your counting. If you prefer to stay in one place, you can also participate in a "Big Sit." In this case, you count as many bird species as possible within a fifty-foot diameter circle of your choosing during the 24-hour period. For those who may not wish to count birds, you can participate by donating to the birdathon.

Donations can be made to a specific team or by pledging to donate a dollar amount (\$1, \$2, \$5, or more) for each bird species counted by a participant or team. Pledge form applications and donations are accepted online at <http://potomacaudubon.org/birdathon.html>. Or you can mail a check to P.O. Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443. (Please note the team name in the memo line, if applicable.)

There is no entrance fee, registration is easy, and prizes are awarded at the end. Teams must consist of two to five participants (unless a person registers for the Big Sit). To register a team: identify your team members, choose a leader, select a team name, and decide whether your team will be competing in one of the special categories, such as youth or new birder teams.

For questions, or to find an existing team to join, please contact Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org).

## PVAS Events

### Save the Date: Annual Meeting and Picnic on June 9

PVAS will hold its annual meeting and picnic on Saturday, June 9, 6:00 p.m., at Yankauer Preserve. Dinner will be provided as a thank you to PVAS members and volunteers. The event will begin with a very brief business meeting to elect Board members, acknowledge contributions of Board members who have completed their term of service, and recognize Birdathon winners and dedicated volunteers.

This free event is open to members and volunteers only. A delicious dinner - and everything you need to eat it, including plates, silverware, napkins, and drinks - will be provided. For planning purposes, please RSVP via email to [admin@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:admin@potomacaudubon.org) or leave a telephone message at 304-676-3397 to let us know how many from your party to expect for dinner. We hope you will join us in this important annual meeting and celebration.



## PVAS Events

## Adult Programs

April is upon us, which means wildflowers are beginning to bloom, birds are finding their way back to our yards, and the sun is with us just a wee bit longer each day. Adult Programs is hitting the ground running, with activities that celebrate nature in all shapes and forms. Join us as we embrace birds, flowers, art in nature, and so much more.

The Art Inspired by Nature group has been meeting, sharing ideas and preparing a host of workshops. Look for upcoming events such as Susan Brookreson's *Mandalas in Nature*, Carolyn Duckworth's *Introduction to Field Journals* and *In-Depth Field Journaling*, Susan Loonsk's *Art to Earth: An Ecopsychology Workshop*, and Joy Bridy's *Native Clay*.

If you love wildflowers, April is your month. Hit the trails of Eidolon in search of spring ephemerals after Larry Stritch's Berkeley Springs presentation, *Wildflowers of the Eastern Panhandle*. We are also offering wildflower and nature walks at Yankauer Nature Preserve and the C&O Canal's Ferry Hill Trail.

We do not hold Monthly Programs during the summer months, so make sure to attend April and May's programs on the second Wednesday evening of the month. Not only are these programs a great way to keep abreast of PVAS's happenings and learn about interesting topics, they also provide a way for Master Naturalists to earn educational hours.

May 12 is International Migratory Bird Day, and PVAS will be celebrating all week long. Starting on Sunday, May 6, through Sunday, May 13, we will offer daily bird walks at various locations around the eastern panhandle. The Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon will also be held that week, and teams can participate in the Birdathon any time during those seven days.

Remember that we are continually updating the calendar with new events. Make sure to check the website regularly.

## Visit PVAS at Local Spring Fairs & Festivals

PVAS is gearing up for a busy fairs and festivals season. These free, public events provide wonderful opportunities to publicize PVAS programs, connect with new people, and encourage folks to get involved with PVAS. Of course, we love to see familiar faces, too - so come visit us! We will host a booth at the following events:

**April 21: The Panhandle Earth Day Celebration at Sam Michael's Park, near Harpers Ferry**

**April 22: Earth Day at the USGS Fish Lab, Leetown**

**May 5: Charles Town Farmers Market**

**May 19: Boonsboro GreenFest**

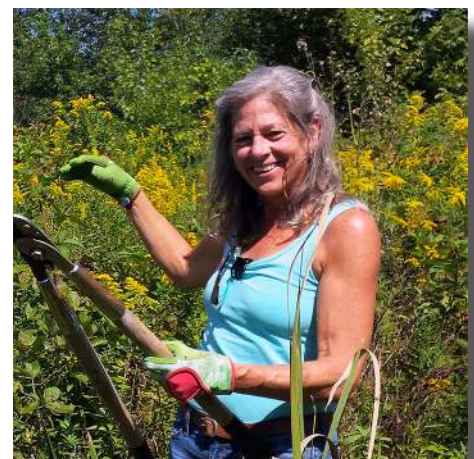
The success of these booths depends on volunteers like you! If you would like to volunteer, contact Ariana, our AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer, at [ariana@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:ariana@potomacaudubon.org).

### Volunteer Spotlight

## Have You Met Charlotte Fremaux?

Charlotte is involved with nearly every aspect of PVAS. She serves on the Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee, shows up often at invasive removal days, and is the designer/editor of this newsletter, *Valley Views*. She is also a talented artist and generously shares her art with PVAS, from the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo for the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists to the new entrance sign currently being designed for Cool Spring Preserve. We thank Charlotte for her many contributions to PVAS.

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



## Your Expertise Needed

Do you have special expertise and experience that can contribute to planning the future of PVAS?  
If so, why not join one of the following Board of Directors committees or task forces?

Short- and long-term commitments possible.



**Advocacy**  
**Communications**  
**Conservation**  
**Land & Facilities**  
**Fundraising for Chimney Swift Tower Project**

If you would like to indicate interest or have questions, please contact Board President Mike Sullivan at [msullivanwv@gmail.com](mailto:msullivanwv@gmail.com).



Chimney Swift © Douf Pifer

## Save the Date: Spring Fundraiser on June 3, 2018

Skip Adkins is hosting the PVAS spring fundraiser at his home on June 3, 2018, from 3:30-6:00 p.m. His impressive modern house is next to the Bavarian Inn, visible as you cross the Rumsey Bridge approaching Shepherdstown, and allows an unmatched view of the Potomac River, Rumsey Bridge, and Fairy Hill. Plans are still underway, so stay tuned for details on the PVAS website calendar. If you would like to receive a hard copy invitation, please contact Kristin at [Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org).

The PVAS Events Committee (Alice Barkus, Susan Brookreson, Gretchen Meadows, Diana Mullis, and Jane Vanderhook) always throws a wonderful party. All proceeds benefit PVAS programs and preserves. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

### Toasting Marshmallows with Sacagawea: PVMN to Host State Master Naturalist Conference

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalist chapter has the honor of hosting the West Virginia Master Naturalist annual statewide conference and meeting on June 15-17, 2018. The conference will take place at Cacapon Resort State Park, near Berkeley Springs in Morgan County.

The annual conference is a time for Master Naturalists from all over the state to come together, meet one another or renew past acquaintances through a variety of social events, and learn together through classes, field trips, and activities. Attendees also conclude important business, including electing officers and selecting a host for the next year's conference.

Under the theme of "Discover, Learn, Share," the WVMN conference will include classes covering a wide range of topics, from West Virginia's indigenous peoples to drone research on birds to native, solitary bees. The PVMN planning committee has some exciting additions to the conference as well. Re-enactors will bring to life such characters as Thomas Jefferson, John J. Audubon, and Sacagawea. Between sessions, conference attendees will be treated to "Nature Bytes" - short presentations, videos, and demonstrations, such as a viewing of the short film, "How Wolves Change Rivers." There will even be two optional all-day field trips to Sideling Hill and Ice Mountain, as well as an evening star party trip to Morgan County Observatory.

The planning committee also hopes to entice participants to spend their pre- and post-conference time exploring area sites of interest, including Berkeley Springs, Washington, D.C., the C&O Canal, and the USDA Fruit Research Station.

Clark Dixon is directing the planning committee and has this to say: "I want to encourage all Potomac Valley Master Naturalists to attend this conference. You won't want to be the one who stayed home!" Master Naturalists can complete all recertification education credits and many of the required service hours in one weekend, while learning more about the statewide program and its participants. For more information about the conference schedule, fees, and room reservations, see <http://mnofwv.org/> (scroll down to find the conference). For more information about volunteering, contact Clark Dixon at [dixonconsultants@aol.com](mailto:dixonconsultants@aol.com).

Other members of the planning committee include Paul Breitenbach, Amy Evrard, Lisa Kovatch, Wanda Miller, Diana Pavlik, David Pennock, Mary Lynn Robinson, Flo Wilbik, and Lynne Wiseman.



## Camp Programs

### Summer Camps

Our Audubon Discovery Camp registration opened on March 1, and sessions are filling quickly. Our camps offer hands-on, experiential learning, as campers engage in active investigations in a variety of natural habitats. Our goal is for campers to gain a better understanding of their role in the natural world by using all five senses and exploring with mind and body.

Sessions run from June 11 to July 27 and are offered at both Yankauer Nature Preserve in Berkeley County and at Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County, WV. For seven straight weeks this summer, we will be able to provide our amazing camp experience to over 440 campers. That will be the largest number of campers PVAS has ever had in one summer!

Campers learn survival skills such as shelter building, orienteering, and fire building at Camp Survivor. They discover the animals of West Virginia at Amazing Animals camp, and learn about the lives of native peoples of the region at Native Ways camp. Our Nature Sleuths camp will have campers digging up animal skeletons so we can determine “who rotted here?” Nature Art Camp will incorporate all of the arts: painting, sculpture, poetry, writing, music, and puppetry.

Camps for preschool aged kids include Wee Naturalist camps and Nature Explorers camp.

In partnership with the American Conservation Film Festival and Shepherd University, we are excited to offer our brand new Conservation Video Camp for high schoolers. At this camp, participants will learn the art and technique of making videos about conservation and the environment and will create a short conservation-themed movie.

Our Outdoor Adventure Camps for pre-teens provide campers the opportunity to go caving, canoeing, biking, and practice archery and orienteering.

For those in need of financial assistance, we also offer camp scholarships.

Please help us spread the word about camp. If you know of kids who love spending time in nature, send them our way. Or if you know kids who think they don't love being in nature but are willing to give it a try, encourage them to register. We promise that all kids will have a wonderful camp experience.

Registration is available online at [www.potomacaudubon.org/camps](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/camps).



## Camp Programs

### Summer Camp Scholarship Program: Applications Accepted until April 6

PVAS is accepting applications for its 2018 summer youth camp scholarship program through April 6. Scholarship application forms and more information are available on the PVAS web site at <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/scholarships>.

The Summer Camp Scholarship Program helps send deserving area youngsters to summer camps that emphasize conservation and the environment. Scholarships are available not only for PVAS's own day camps in Berkeley and Jefferson counties but also for camps at other locations in West Virginia. Any young person within the PVAS membership area (the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and Washington County, Maryland) is eligible to apply.

Currently, scholarships to camps geared to all ages and interests are still available. The camps, locations, ages/grades served, and dates are as follows:

**Audubon Discovery Day Camp:** PVAS's own local camp at its Yankauer and Cool Spring Nature Preserves; pre-school to grade 12, plus junior staff opportunities for grade 7 and up; a variety of week-long sessions during June and July.

**PVAS Nature Photography Day Camp:** at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 18-27.

**New: PVAS Conservation Video Day Camp:** at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 25-29.

**Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp:** at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; July 15-21 or July 22-28.

**Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies:** at Capon Bridge, WV; ages 11-15; June 24-July 27, July 10-24, or August 1-14.

**Mountain Stewards Summer Camp Middle School Program:** at Mountain Institute, Spruce Knob, WV; entering grades 6-8; June 10-16.

**Mountain Stewards Summer Camp High School Program:** at Mountain Institute, Spruce Knob, WV; entering grades 9-12 (up to age 17); June 10-16 or June 24-30.

**West Virginia Junior Conservation Camp:** at Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV; ages 11-14; June 18-22.

**West Virginia State Conservation Camp:** at Camp Caesar, Webster County, WV; Campers must be age 14 and not yet age 19 on June 11; June 11-16.

**Wind Dance Adventure Camps:** at Wind Dance Farm, near Berkeley Springs, WV; Teen Camp, ages 13-HS, June 24-30; Youth Camp, ages 8-14, July 8-14; and Farm Stewards, ages 10-HS, July 29-Aug 4.

Funds for the scholarships come from the proceeds of PVAS's annual fall Bird Seed Sale and from donations and other community sources. For more information about all these camps and scholarship application forms, go to the PVAS website at <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/scholarships> or contact Mary Etta Boesl at 304-261-6167 or [meboesl@yahoo.com](mailto:meboesl@yahoo.com).

## Family and Youth Programs

### Passport to a Fun Spring Break at Local Libraries

From April 2 to April 6, PVAS is hosting a free program for children at local libraries. Each library will present a unique program with book readings and crafts - and a passport page to complete.

Each hour-long lesson will focus on a world region and a corresponding nature theme. Children aged four years and above are welcome to attend as many of the programs as they like, and children who attend all of them will win a prize.

#### Library Passport Schedule:

- Monday, April 2, 11:00 a.m., North Berkeley Library: *Europe and City Gardens*
- Monday, April 2, 3:00 p.m., Hedgesville Library: *Asia, Birds and Eggs*
- Tuesday, April 3, 11:00 a.m., Shepherdstown Library: *Africa and Renewable Energy*
- Wednesday, April 4, 11:00 a.m., Charles Town Library: *South America and Rain Sticks*
- Wednesday, April 4, 1:00 p.m., South Jefferson Library: *The Arctic and Polar Bears*
- Thursday, April 5, 11:00 a.m., Martinsburg Library: *Australia and the Great Barrier Reef*
- Friday, April 6, 11:00 a.m., Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Library: *North America and Trees*



## Conservation

## Monarch Alliance to Hold Milkweed and Native Plant Sale and Fundraiser on May 19

The Monarch Alliance will hold its spring milkweed and native plant sale on Saturday, May 19, at Sunny Meadows Garden Center in Sharpsburg, MD, between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. The sale will feature four milkweeds: Common Milkweed, Butterfly Weed, Swamp Milkweed, and Whorled Milkweed. In addition, TMA will be selling more than 50 native flowering plants for your Monarch Waystation.

Quart-size plants will be sold for \$5 each. Larger plants will also be available. One hundred percent of the profits from the sale will be awarded as grants in the form of plants for Monarch Waystations that will either be available for educational purposes or open to the public. TMA will be giving away over \$5,000 worth of plants this spring in Jefferson and Berkeley counties in West Virginia, and in Washington and Frederick counties in Maryland.

The Monarch Alliance is a program of PVAS. Its mission is to help bring back the monarchs to our area.



## Conservation

## Monarch Alliance Grant Program: A Successful First Year

The Monarch Alliance, a program of PVAS, has offered grants to schools, universities, nature centers, and other organizations that wanted to use Monarch Waystations to add monarch habitat to the landscape and involve students in outdoor learning. The program was open to projects in Washington and Frederick Counties in Maryland, and Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in West Virginia. The effort was part of an “all hands on deck” approach to reverse the precipitous decline in the monarch population and to help stabilize it at approximately six hectares in its Mexican overwintering area.

The Alliance received seven applications in response to the grant announcement and was able to award all applicants. The grantees received a voucher good for the purchase of Waystation plants at the Monarch Alliance Native Plant Sale at Sunny Meadows Garden Center coming up on May 19. Grants were made as follows:

Grantee	Voucher Amount	Number
North Jefferson Elementary	\$500	222
Shepherd University	\$500	222
Briggs Animal Shelter	\$250	111
Wind Dance Farms	\$300	133
For the Love of Children (FLOC)	\$220	97
Hood College	\$475	211
Catoctin Creek Nature Center	\$500	222

Grantees are required to register their gardens in the Monarch Watch Waystation program, after which they will receive Waystation certification and a sign. The Monarch Alliance will reimburse grantees for the Waystation certification fee and sign purchase. Grantees are also asked to submit a summary report one year after the award. They will provide “before and after” photos of their gardens and describe how their Waystation has been used to engage and motivate students and their community in monarch conservation efforts.

The Monarch Alliance will offer more grant opportunities this fall. See our website for more details: <https://www.themonarchalliance.org/grants>.



## The Chickadee Checkoff: Creative State Habitat Preservation Programs From Around the Country

By Neal Barkus

PVAS is involved with wildlife habitat preservation in several ways. The Grassland Birds Initiative seeks to preserve grasslands from excessive mowing and other harmful practices to secure cover, nesting sites and food for a number of imperiled species. The Chimney Swift Tower project has addressed a habitat issue for a particular species of migratory bird in our area. Habitat preservation programs like these are often funded through federal grants and local fundraising. But what state-funded programs around the country provide examples we might offer as proposals to our own West Virginia and Maryland state governments?

Habitat protection efforts are coordinated by the Division of Natural Resources in West Virginia and the Department of Natural Resources in Maryland. Each state sponsors a program whereby small property owners can amend conditions on their property to preserve wildlife habitat. In West Virginia this program is called the Wild Yards Program: <http://www.wvdnr.gov/Wildlife/Wildyards.shtm>. The WYP provides helpful educational materials and planning guides. Participants receive a certificate and a colorful sign to post identifying the property.

Maryland's program, called the Wild Acres Program, is similar: <http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/habitat/wildacres.aspx>. The WAP is a voluntary program that encourages Maryland citizens to create backyard wildlife habitat. It offers fact sheets on how landowners can enhance their habitat for wildlife by creating food, water, and shelter resources. A quarterly publication, *HabiChat*, highlights native plants, animals, and habitat-enhancing activities.

Around the country, habitat preservation programs fall into four different categories: direct payments to landowners to achieve some preservation purpose, tax advantages to landowners through conservation easements and other property rights tools, education and technical help, and recognition programs. The West Virginia and Maryland programs involve education and recognition, each with relatively low costs to the states.

Nationwide, states have been creative both in the type of programs offered and the manner of funding those programs. Some programs are focused on habitat for a particular species, such as pheasant, that bring in substantial revenue from hunters. Others are focused on habitat improvement and preservation for all wildlife.

North Dakota offers small grants to landowners under its Watchable Wildlife program. Any type of private land can qualify for the program. Fundable projects are those that enhance the public's watchable wildlife opportunities, such as bluebird trails, wood duck boxes, and goose tubs. Projects are usually less than \$300 in cost. The program has approximately 30 participants per year and is funded through a Watchable Wildlife state tax check-off, giving wildlife enthusiasts an opportunity to support nongame wildlife such as songbirds, birds of prey, reptiles and amphibians: <https://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/tax-checkoff>. The state sponsors an annual contest for wildlife photos from the project.

Many states involved with habitat protection are concerned with the harmful effects on habitat of agricultural operations. Iowa has the Wildlife Habitat on Private Lands Promotion Program, which operates to create shelterbelts on agricultural lands. The practice introduces or maintains the woody component of a savannah-type habitat, originally typical of much of Iowa, and is intended to benefit all types of Iowa wildlife. Funding derives from the Chickadee Checkoff, a voluntary contribution for wildlife from individual income taxpayers, and from the sale of wildlife habitat stamps, which are purchased by hunters and trappers at approximately \$75,000 annually.

In the same category is Georgia's Bobwhite Quail Initiative. According to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, restoring early successional habitat (i.e. native grasses, legumes, weeds, briars, bugs and shrubs) benefits quail, numerous songbirds, rabbits, wild turkey, deer and many other wildlife species, improves water quality, reduces soil erosion, and can enhance local economies by stimulating quail hunting and wildlife viewing. The Project originally made cash payments to qualifying landowners, but this aspect of the Program was suspended in 2011 due to declining revenues. Funding now comes from the sale of special "Support Wildlife" vehicle license plates and matching grants: <http://georgiawildlife.com/licenseplates>.

States that operate programs to preserve habitat for specific game animals usually do so out of recognition that hunters provide a boost to tourism and the economy. These programs are usually paid for through some sort of user fee. For example, Montana operates the Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program. A portion of the funds received from the sale of each upland game bird hunting license must be used by the department for the exclusive purpose of preserving and enhancing upland game bird populations in the state. In addition to cost-sharing habitat projects, the Program may enter into protection agreements for high value upland game bird habitats, which involve "lease" payments to the landowner to engage in prescribed maintenance practices.

Wisconsin operates the Turkey and Pheasant Stamp Programs. The programs are utilized on many types of lands, such as

*continued on page 10*

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*Chickadee Checkoff continued from page 9*

woodlands, savannah, wetlands, and prairie. Landowners may receive 50-50 cost-share on approved practices. Turkey, pheasant and waterfowl hunters are required to purchase a species-specific stamp to hunt these game birds legally in Wisconsin, raising approximately \$500,000 a year.

There is big money in hunting and fishing licenses, and probably some room to expand or redirect some of this revenue toward wildlife habitat preservation. In West Virginia hunting and fishing license fees go to the Division of Natural Resources, and by law must be used for fish and wildlife management principally benefiting hunters and anglers. The DNR collects around \$14,000,000 annually from the sale of these licenses in all their forms. But only about three percent of this money is used to enhance and preserve wildlife habitat.

This survey shows that, even in a period of reduced state revenues and reluctant legislatures, there are creative ways to enhance and protect wildlife habitat that do not involve increased general taxation. Instead, they make use of voluntary contributions from taxpayers, the sale of affinity license plates and gear, and user fees from those who benefit directly from the wildlife. But the survey also shows states recognize that enhancing the natural environment can lead to improved revenues from tourism. When we advocate wildlife habitat programs to our local state governments, it will be useful to remember that money talks.

*Neal Barkus is a retired attorney living in Shepherdstown, WV. Read more of his work at [www.panprogressive.com](http://www.panprogressive.com).*

## **For Children and Communities: Myriad Health Benefits of Exposure to Nature**

*By Diana Gaviria, M.D., Secretary of the PVAS Board of Directors*

For many of us, childhood experiences in the outdoors, whether wading in streams, hiking, gardening, or camping, laid the foundation for a lifelong love of nature. The restorative effects of time in the outdoors and the value of immersing growing children in nature may seem intuitive. However, it is worth digging deeper to ask what health benefits have actually been demonstrated, and if the evidence for a relationship between children's health and exposure to nature can guide us to better policies, and help to build a stronger case for environmental stewardship and public health.

The impact of access to nature on childhood obesity has been an active area of research. According to the CDC, one in five children in the U.S. between ages six and nineteen are obese, and there are significant disparities along socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic lines. Obesity is stigmatizing for children and closely associated with the development of chronic diseases in adulthood, such as type II diabetes, hypertension, asthma and arthritis. While there are many contributing factors, certainly increased screen time, a sedentary lifestyle, and poor nutritional options are prime culprits. Research has shown that access to nature helps to mitigate factors leading to childhood obesity in different ways. Children living in proximity to parks are more physically active and are more likely to have a healthy weight. People who participate in community gardens double their fruit and vegetable consumption. Additionally, stress hormones such as cortisol, which contribute to obesity, have been shown to be lower after exposure to natural settings.

Other areas of study that have shown positive effects are improved resilience to stress and reduction in symptoms of attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder. Even brief exposure to green space has been shown to improve focus, attention, and cognition among children with ADHD. Research suggests that time outdoors in a natural setting significantly reduces stress indicators in children. Time in natural settings has been shown to be associated with lower levels of stress hormones and improved functioning of NK cells, a key component of the immune system.

Access to green spaces has also been shown to increase social cohesion and promote a stronger sense of community. Benefits such as decreased incidence of near-sightedness and asthma have also been linked to green environments. In addition to these direct health benefits, it is also important to consider the public health value of natural settings to the larger community. These areas can be vital to mitigating a warming climate and improving air and water quality.

So, what actions can we take to promote the health benefits of access to nature? In its policy statement "Improving Health and Wellness through Access to Nature," the American Public Health Association suggests a number of action steps which include: incorporating green spaces in urban design and planning, tree planting and natural landscaping, establishment of community gardens, promotion of trails and greenways, and land use decisions that prioritize access to natural areas and green spaces for people of all ages, income levels, and abilities. Another promising practice has been "Park Prescription" programs, which enlist healthcare providers to promote physical activity in green spaces.

It is heartening to know that studies have shown that children who have positive experiences in nature, such as those offered by PVAS programs, do indeed grow into adults who value and protect natural environments.





## Advocacy

### Advocacy Update: Senate Bill 270 Defeated

Senate Bill 270 “Authorizing DNR Implement Silvicultural Management for State Park Lands” was defeated, never making it out of committee. A huge thank you to all of you who contacted your state senators to let them know you did not support this potentially devastating bill, which tried to authorize the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to implement “silvicultural management” on state park lands.

Many problems were evident in the bill, including poor science justifying a need for clear cutting in state parks and even a reference that this practice would save habitat for Cerulean Warblers. Nearly all of West Virginia’s state parks are lands that were set aside as nearly denuded properties following the massive timber harvests of the late 19th through the middle of the 20th centuries. They seem to have recovered without clear cutting, and some are beginning to represent old growth forests. The presence of logging trucks, new roads for removing timber efficiently, and the noise pollution would have had a deleterious effect on our parklands, the crown jewels of West Virginia’s beauty.

Make it a point to get out to these beautiful places, adding Watoga, Pipestem, Babcock, New River Gorge, and Cacapon Resort State Parks to your bucket list to celebrate this victory.

### Advocacy Forums Ahead for Spring

This spring, PVAS will collaborate with the League of Women Voters to hold the following public forums, both at the Byrd Center Auditorium at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown:

#### April 26 (John James Audubon’s Birthday)

7:00-7:45 p.m.: Conservation District Supervisors

8:00-9:00 p.m.: Circuit Court Candidates

#### April 30

7:00-9:00 p.m.: Board of Education Candidates

## JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

- Member discount to many PVAS programs and events.
- A subscription to *Valley Views*, the PVAS newsletter.
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers and/or their programs across the country.
- E-mail alerts about events and programs (upon request).
- An invitation to a PVAS Members annual gathering.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Details available at [potomacaudubon.org/member](http://potomacaudubon.org/member)

To become a local member, send in the form below and enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Make the check out to “PVAS.” This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year. For details, go to: <http://potomacaudubon.org/member>.

### Membership Form

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*To save postage costs, PVAS regularly sends its newsletter by e-mail. You can be assured that we do not share email addresses with anyone. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by U.S. mail check here: \_\_\_\_.*

### Clip and mail this form to:

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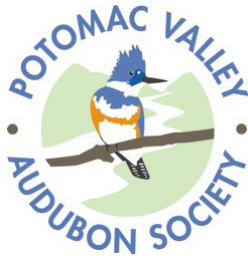
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### If you’d rather join the National Audubon Society:

Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society’s Audubon magazine. To become a National member, go to the Society’s website at [www.audubon.org](http://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 a member of PVAS and have access to our events, an e-mail copy of newsletter and e-mail alerts. However almost all of your dues payments will go to the National Audubon Society; only a small percentage will go to PVAS.



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

## PVAS BOARD

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

### *PVAS Officers and Board Members (Year of term expiration in parentheses)*

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