

# VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac  
Valley  
Audubon  
Society

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## Eastern Bluebird

By Wil Hershberger



Photo ©Wil Hershberger

Perhaps the most iconic birds of rural life in eastern North America are the Eastern Bluebirds—*Sialia sialis*. Their quiet nature and acceptance of human presence has endeared them to generations of farmers and rural folk. Eastern bluebirds are members of the thrush family, along with the American Robin, Wood Thrush, and Veery. Their compact bodies, short, stout bills, and rotund profile are all thrush traits. Males are bright blue on their backs, wings, tails, and heads. During the breeding season the blue of the male's feathers can be amazingly intense. More amazingly is that there are no blue pigments in their feathers. The colors are produced by the fine structure of the feathers that create wavelength-selective scattering of the light coming into the feathers. Light is refracted and reflected off of tiny air pockets and cells so that only blue light escapes, creating the colors that we see. That is why the blue seems so intense in certain light or at different times of the day. The more intensely blue a male is the better he is at attracting a mate, finding and keeping a nesting site, and consequently producing healthier chicks.

Eastern Bluebirds sing pleasant, caroling songs and produce a number of calls. A male sings "loud song" from exposed perches from March through July to attract a mate and to establish and defend his territory. Females will also sing "loud song" to defend the territory from predators when the male is away. Males will sing a very quiet version of the loud song when the female is laying eggs. It is believed this singing is to reassure the female of the male's presence. (<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/85201>)

Throughout the year bluebirds can be heard calling to one another typically using the "Tu-a-wee" call. This somewhat loud, low pitched call is used by nestlings near the time of fledging, by adults when approaching the nest, and during the non-breeding season by members of foraging flocks. You can listen to the call at:

([http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/EABL\\_tu-a-wee\\_calls.wav](http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/EABL_tu-a-wee_calls.wav))

During the beginning of the nesting season, males will perform a nest demonstration display to prospective females. He will land at the nest entrance with nesting material in his bill, look around, then enter the nesting site and stick his head out of the nest hole while still holding the nesting material. He will then perch on the top of the nesting box or a nearby limb and display with his wings outstretched to his sides. Once the female enters the nesting site with the male, the pair bond is established. Females will beg food from males in a display similar to a juvenile begging for food. Pairs may remain together for more than one nesting during the season or even remain together between seasons. In fact, if a pair has already nested successfully together, they are more than twice as likely to re-nest together than if they've had a failed nesting attempt. A male will remain perched near his mate when she is still fertile. After eggs are laid, he ceases to perform this "mate-guarding" behavior.

First nests may take three weeks to complete, but later in the season a nest may be built in a day. The female alone builds the nest and prefers nesting sites with old nests within. The typically 4-6 pale blue eggs are incubated for 11-19 days (14 days average), and hatchlings fledge in about 19 days. The female alone incubates the eggs and broods the young. Males and females both feed nestlings and young. The fledglings are fed for an additional 3 weeks after leaving the nest. Young are fed principally insects, with fruits and berries being rarely given.

If you have some open area and scattered trees you might be able to attract these gorgeous blue birds right to your own backyard by building your own bluebird houses. There are numerous plans available online from a standard square box to the more recent Peterson design. Be sure to install predator guards as snakes, raccoons, and other mammalian predators can and will get the young if given a chance.

Eastern Bluebirds move to the woodlands during our winters in search of fruits and berries. They can be attracted to backyard bird feeders by offering mealworms. There are a number of great sites on the Internet to purchase mealworms and to learn more about feeding them to your birds. One such site is <http://www.sialis.org/feeder.htm>.



Photo ©Wil Hershberger

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

## President's Perch

By Diana Mullis, PVAS President

### Save The Date: Annual Meeting

On May 31, PVAS will be hosting a members-only picnic at the Yankauer Preserve. The event will begin at 6:30 pm. PVAS volunteers will provide the food, so all we ask you to bring are reusable plates, cups, and utensils to reduce waste.

**We need YOUR VOTE!** At the Annual Meeting PVAS members elect its Board of Directors. This year we will also be voting on changes to our Constitution and Bylaws. Our governing documents require that we receive votes from 10% of our membership (which includes Local and National Audubon Members), so we need about 80 households to vote. We will also encourage voting electronically and/or by mail, but we really hope that you will join us for free food and fun at Yankauer ... so mark your calendar!

The slate of officers and the changes to the Constitution and Bylaws will be published in May's "Valley Views," so keep an eye out!

## Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

I love working for PVAS for many reasons, but in the last month some special examples of "why" stand out that I'd like to share.

**Land Conservation.** Spring is one of those times when the importance of preserved open space becomes particularly apparent. Sandhill Cranes recently took a short break at Stauffer's Marsh while journeying north to their summer breeding grounds. It makes me so happy to know that "our little marsh" helped the birds on their trip. It reinforces the gratitude I feel to Stauffer and Elinor Miller for entrusting the marsh to PVAS in perpetuity. The Cerulean Warblers will soon be arriving at Eidolon for breeding, as will the Prairie Warblers to Yankauer. The Preserves have become such an important part of PVAS's mission.

**Programs.** I just taught a session for the new Master Naturalist class for the opening weekend. I was reminded of how important this program is – not only for PVAS to recruit and train volunteers to help with programs and conservation projects – but for community members to find like-minded people who are enthusiastic about the natural world. Many of this year's participants are new to the area. The program will not only introduce them to their new wild neighbors, but friends with common interests.

**Generosity.** Our annual appeal has already surpassed last year's final total thanks to the generosity of PVAS members and friends. I'll give a report next month on the final outcome, but this is a tremendous accomplishment. And once again, 100% of the PVAS Board contributed to the appeal. Another example of generosity? At the March Board meeting, after hearing that more classrooms of Title 1 schools had requested programs than we had grant funds, Board members chipped in. By the end of the meeting, the \$575 shortfall was covered by either pledges or cash in hand. We are so

fortunate to have a fully engaged, supportive, and generous Board of Directors to represent you, our members.

There are so many more examples—volunteers who go above and beyond on a daily basis, those who work diligently behind the scenes to make sure programs and projects go smoothly—all reasons it is such a pleasure to work for you and with you. **Thank you** for all you do, as members and friends, to support PVAS and make it such an active, engaged, and meaningful organization.

## This Race For The Birds! Saturday, April 5

*This Race Is For The Birds!* is scheduled for Saturday, April 5 and it is not too late to register!



If you are interested in running our 7+ mile, 4+ mile, 2 mile or kids fun run, please come to the National Conservation Training Center the morning of the race to register. We will have a table set up for "day-of" registrations and will be happy to help you out.

If you would like more information on our race, please visit [raceforthebirds.org](http://raceforthebirds.org) or email [race4birds@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:race4birds@potomacaudubon.org).

## Race Volunteers Needed!

On Saturday, April 5 we could use your help for *This Race For The Birds!* Opportunities abound and most jobs are done before noon on race day. We need volunteers to staff water stations, direct parking, hand out t-shirts, direct runners, clean up after the race, etc.!

If you are able to help, please go either to [raceforthebirds.org](http://raceforthebirds.org) and click on the Volunteer link to fill out the volunteer form or email Nan Johnson at [race4birds@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:race4birds@potomacaudubon.org).

The Potomac Valley Audubon thanks you very much and appreciates your support. All volunteers get coffee (donated by Hypno Coffee), sandwiches (donated by Chic-fil-A) and a race t-shirt.

## Potomac Valley Master Naturalists Update

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists began their eighth 2014 session on March 15 – 16 at For the Love of Children Outdoor Education Center outside of Harper's Ferry. This year's class has 15 students from Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan counties as well as Maryland.

On Saturday March 15, Wanda Miller led the class with a course on Names and Classifications as well as Dichotomous Keys. Kathryn Henry joined Ms. Miller for the second half of the day when

the students participated in a General Ecology course. On Sunday morning, Sandy Bloom and Vicky Blazer taught a course on Recording and Sharing. The day ended with Nature Interpretation by Kristin Alexander.

The next class will be on April 19 at Craftworks at Cool Spring and will focus on Wetlands, taught by Tracy McLeaf and Katrina Fauss, and Wildflowers and Weeds, taught by Dr. Carl Bell.



Master Naturalist class

## PVAS Field Trips

Listed below are PVAS field trips scheduled for April. For more information, use the web address or phone number given in the article, or visit the PVAS website [www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org). Participants should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions; bring insect repellent, water, and sunscreen; and wear comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots. A snack might be useful for the longer trips. The trips are open to all and are free unless otherwise noted in the article. In some cases pre-registration is required or recommended.

### • Family Nature Hike at Maryland Heights

PVAS will offer a special nature hike on the Maryland Heights Overlook Trail across the river from Harpers Ferry on Saturday, April 19, from 10:00 a.m. to about 12:30 p.m. The hike is intended for families with children of any age.

The Maryland Heights Overlook Trail is located on the ridge across the railroad bridge at Harpers Ferry and offers spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. It is part of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and maintained by the U.S. Park Service. The trip will be led by Jan Hummer, an experienced natural science educator. She will describe plants, animals, and other natural features found along the way.

This hike is part of the Potomac Valley Audubon program *Outdoor Explore!* which gives youngsters and their parents a better understanding and appreciation of the natural world in a safe, supervised way. Activities include hiking, exploration of different local habitats, plant and animal identification, and other natural science activities. The program was initiated in 2012 with the help of a grant from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. (See article on page 7.)

Enrollment in the hike will be limited and *pre-registration is*

*required*. There is a modest fee of \$5 per child. To register or get more information go to the PVAS website or contact Jan at [janhummer@hotmail.com](mailto:janhummer@hotmail.com) or 304-839-5128.

Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. in Harpers Ferry, at the Potomac River overlook near the railroad trestle. Parking may be available at the Harpers Ferry Train Station. However, if visitor traffic is heavy, participants should allow time to park at the NPS Visitor's Center and ride the shuttle bus to the lower town.

### • Claymont Birding Trip Set for April 6

PVAS will sponsor a birding field trip on the historic Claymont property outside Charles Town on Sunday, April 6 beginning at 7:30 a.m. It is free and open to anyone, regardless of birding skills. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. The trip will last about four hours and involve about three miles of moderate hiking. Participants need not stay for the entire trip and should feel free to leave anytime they wish.

Participants should meet the trip leader on the Claymont entrance road where a wetland meets the access driveway. The entrance is located at 577 Claymont Mansion Drive and is marked by a street sign that says "Claymont Mansion."

This trip will be conducted rain or shine. Participants should bring a snack. Those who need binoculars should let the trip leader know ahead of time, as loaner binoculars will be available.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the Society's website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org). For more info, contact trip leader Joette Borzik at 240-440-4221 or [pep4223@comcast.net](mailto:pep4223@comcast.net).

### • NCTC Birding Trip April 12

PVAS will sponsor a birding trip to the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown on Saturday, April 12, beginning at 8:00 a.m. Children are welcome. PVAS will provide binoculars for those who need them.

The Center's 538-acre campus is not normally open to the public, so this is a wonderful opportunity to visit the campus and enjoy its trails while birding. The campus contains a mix of fields and forest, providing good habitat for a rich variety of bird species. This trip should also provide a good opportunity to see NCTC's resident Bald Eagles. The trip will last about three hours and involve walking about two miles over moderate terrain.

Because of security considerations at NCTC *pre-registration is essential*. Easy, on-line registration is available on the PVAS website. Please register before April 9.

To check on possible cancellation due to bad weather or to obtain more information, go to the PVAS website or contact trip leader Sandy Sagalkin at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

### • Shannondale Springs Birding Walk April 26

PVAS is sponsoring a birding trip to the Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area, on the east bank of the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County, on Saturday, April 26. Participants should plan to meet at 7:30 a.m. at the WMA parking area by the boat launch site, off Mission Road.

The 1,361-acre Shannondale Springs property is managed by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources; it includes a mixture of forest, brush land and open fields covering rolling hills. The trip will involve walking about three miles over moderately even ground. Possible species to be sighted include spring migrants, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, vultures, Great Blue Herons, waterfowl, and woodpeckers.

Children are welcome. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trip may be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

*Pre-registration is strongly encouraged* but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website. For more info, contact Jim Farley at [jamesfarley@frontiernet.net](mailto:jamesfarley@frontiernet.net) or 540-686-2056.

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## Don't Miss April 6 Nature Sketching Workshop

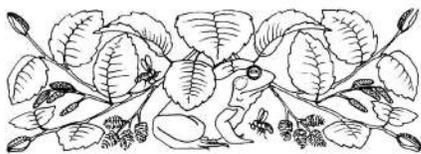
The Potomac Valley Audubon Society will sponsor a Nature Sketching Workshop at CraftWorks in Jefferson County on Sunday, April 6, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., taught by Susan Brookreson, an experienced arts educator and Master Naturalist. It will be aimed at those with little or no drawing experience although all skill levels will be welcome.

Part of our PVAS “Natural History Workshop” series, this event will focus on a drawing technique used routinely by field biologists: (1) to capture quickly as much information as possible about nature subjects being observed, (2) to provide a valuable record of field observations, and (3) to help other observers see the beauty and complexity of nature in more detail.

Pre-registration is essential and a fee is required. Easy pre-registration is available on the PVAS website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org). The fee is \$15 the general public and \$10 for members and students of the Society’s Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program.

If weather permits, some drawing will be done outside; participants should therefore dress accordingly. They should also plan to bring their own pencils and a small portable sketchpad.

CraftWorks is located at 1469 Lloyd Road, five miles south of Charles Town. For directions, go to their website at [www.wvcraftworks.org](http://www.wvcraftworks.org). For more information, contact Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org) or 304-876-8471.



*Border with Frog by Rosemary Gilbert Bell*

## Everyone Welcome At April 12 Wildflower Festival

PVAS will hold its seventh annual spring Wildflower Festival on Saturday, April 12 from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm, rain or shine, at the Yankauer Nature Preserve in Berkeley County. The festival includes guided beginner and advanced wildflower walks through the preserve for all ages, children’s activities, and refreshments. During early April, a wide variety of wildflowers should be on display, including bloodroot, spring beauties, Dutchman’s breeches, and rue anemone.

For the seventh year in a row, the festival will also include a special Poetry Walk. Poems, contributed by local poets and focusing on spring themes, will be posted along the preserve’s Kingfisher trail where the majority of wildflowers are found.

A new feature of this year’s festival will be an informal “tips for nature photography” session at 1:00 p.m., led by professional photographer Frank Ceravalo. Festival attendees are encouraged to bring a camera or smart phone for in this session.

Another new feature will be a “Story Walk” along the preserve’s Cedar Loop trail. Pages from a carefully chosen, nature-themed children’s book (“On Meadowview Street,” by Henry Cole) will be posted along the trail. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. No pre-registration is required. Guided walks will leave the pavilion on the hour, though visitors are welcome to explore the trails on their own as well.

The trails at Yankauer are primitive, so wear sturdy walking shoes. Please leave pets at home and leave the wildflowers for all to enjoy.

The Yankauer Preserve is located on Whiting’s Neck in northeastern Berkeley County, off Scrabble Road. Directions can be found on the PVAS website. For more info, check the PVAS website or contact Ellen Murphy at 304-676-8739 or [ellen@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:ellen@potomacaudubon.org).

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## Register Now for April 13 Egg Hunt

We will hold our sixth annual Spring Children’s Egg Hunt the afternoon of Sunday, April 13 at the Yankauer Nature Preserve north of Shepherdstown from 2:00-3:30 p.m. for children ages 3-6. Parents should plan to accompany their children as they hunt for eggs.



Unlike traditional egg hunts, this one combines fun with an educational experience. The eggs used in the hunt are colored to resemble real eggs of wild birds. Children are challenged to find these eggs on the trail. In the process, they discover how birds use camouflage keep their eggs safe from predators. Other activities this year will include a “penguin egg walk,” an “ostrich egg balance challenge,” and an egg-toss game. At the end of the event, collected eggs will be “traded in” for a sweet treat: decorating an egg-shaped cookie to enjoy on the spot or take home and enjoy later.

Space is limited and pre-registration is required. There will be a fee of \$5 per child. Register online at the PVAS website or contact Ellen Murphy at [ellen@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:ellen@potomacaudubon.org) or 304-676-8739.

## April Program Will Focus on Monarch Butterfly Issues

Our monthly program for April will focus on declines in Monarch Butterfly populations, and on efforts to stem these declines. The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9 at the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown. It will be held in Room 105 of the Center's Instructional East Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.



The speaker will be Nicole Hamilton of the Loudoun (VA) Wildlife Conservancy, which has been active on Monarch population issues. Ms. Hamilton will provide free handouts that give advice on helping to protect Monarchs. She will also offer for sale cages for rearing Monarchs, books, and Monarch t-shirts.

Monarch Butterflies can be found throughout North America during temperate months. They migrate twice yearly over long distances, wintering in Mexico, Cuba, and some southern U.S. states. Habitat destruction in both their summer and winter ranges along with climate changes are generally regarded as a major cause of these declines.

## Combine Bike Ride With Wildflower Watching!



PVAS will sponsor something different this April—a special, family-oriented field trip combines bicycling along the C&O Canal with viewing spring wildflowers that proliferate there. The trip will be held on Tuesday, April 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon and will be led by local naturalist Susan Fluharty. Participants will gather at the C&O Canal Visitors Center at Williamsport, MD, and ride west from there to Dam 5 and back, a distance of about 14 miles. Participants will have plenty of time to stop, rest, take pictures, and admire the scenery.

The main wildflower attraction will be huge patches of Virginia Bluebells that are located along the section of the canal about 4 to 5 miles west of Williamsport. It's expected that these flowers will be at the peak of their blooming at this time.

The trip is free and open to everyone, but pre-registration is strongly encouraged. To register, go to the PVAS website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org). Children will be welcome but they must be accompanied by an adult and capable of biking the full trip distance. Participants must provide their own bicycles.

The C&O Canal towpath is an easy ride but it can be rough and muddy in places. Make sure your bike has sturdy tires that can handle those conditions. Dress for the prevailing weather and bring along drinking water and a snack.

The trip may be canceled or postponed due to poor weather conditions. For more information contact Susan Fluharty at [pemaquid@fluharty.org](mailto:pemaquid@fluharty.org).

## PVAS Cosponsoring Two Maryland Birding Events in April

PVAS is cosponsoring two Maryland birding events during April, led by PVAS birding committee member Sandy Sagalkin. PVAS members are welcome to attend either or both of them. Children are welcome.

The first event is an April 27 bird walk over easy terrain in the Hagerstown City Park, sponsored by the City of Hagerstown and the Washington County Bird Club. The walk will start at 8:00 a.m. at the Hager House parking lot inside the Park and last about two hours. The focus will be on spring migrants. The trip will be cancelled only if there is steady rain.

The second event, on April 30, is a two-and-a-half to three hour biking/birding trip along the Western Maryland Rail Trail near Hancock, sponsored by the Washington County Bird Club. The trip will start at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot of the C&O Canal Visitor Center in Hancock, and will also focus on spring migrants. The plan will be to bike at a leisurely pace and stop whenever birds of interest are seen or heard. All participants must supply their own bicycles. This trip will be cancelled in the event of any rain.

Both events are free. However, participation will be limited and *pre-registration is required*. To register, contact Sandy at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

Participants in both trips should wear appropriate footwear, dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water, sunscreen and insect repellent.

## Photo Camp at Shepherd University

Teens entering high school, with an interest in digital photography, have an amazing adventure waiting for them this summer! Our Teen Digital Photo Camp is held at Shepherd University the week of June 23-27. The leader of the camp is a photography instructor at Shepherd University. Students learn the basics of digital photography including composition, lighting, and other techniques that can create a great picture. Campers spend much of their day outside taking pictures and then use the Shepherd University Photo Lab to download and manipulate their photographs. All students have the use of a Nikon SLR digital camera during the week and can keep all their photographs. We're even working on an "artists reception" so that the campers can enjoy a public display of their photos! Cost for the camp is \$200 for PVAS members (and slightly higher for non-members.) You can see examples of the photos taken during last year's camp and find a registration link at [www.PotomacAudubon.org/photocamp](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org/photocamp). Contact [ellen@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:ellen@potomacaudubon.org) with questions about the camp.



## Fifth Annual Birdathon Coming Up

PVAS will hold its fifth annual “Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon” the weekend of May 3-4. The Birdathon offers several options for joining friendly competitions to see who can identify the highest number of bird species during the weekend inside PVAS’s geographical territory (Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan counties in West Virginia and Washington County in Maryland).



Carolina Wren  
Photo ©Wil Hershberger

This is a very family-friendly event and a great way to get children more interested in birds and the natural world in general. Everyone is welcome to participate, regardless of experience or expertise at birding. All activities are free. Participants are encouraged to recruit sponsors to help raise funds for habitat improvement at our Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve. This effort, part of PVAS’ on-going *Grassland Birds Initiative*, would convert about 8 acres of the 46-acre wetland preserve to warm season grasses and native wildflowers. The project will provide new kinds of nesting sites, food and cover at the preserve, benefitting birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. Full details are available on the PVAS website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org). Or contact the event coordinator, Sandy Sagalkin, at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

People can participate in the Birdathon in one of three ways.

- Go out in the field, as part of a team or as an individual, and actively seek to identify as many birds as possible during any 24-consecutive-hour-period during the weekend. Birdathon teams should have two to five members. If you don’t have a team of your own, PVAS can help you find one.
- Initiate a “Big Sit,” in which you choose any location within PVAS’s territory and identify all the bird species you can see or hear from within a 50-foot diameter circle—again, within a 24-consecutive-hour-period during the weekend. You can locate your circle outside your porch or deck, in your yard, or in any favorite local spot. Here, too, you can do this on your own or invite friends and family to join you and make it a special event. This is a much easier option, and better suited for older folks and families with small children.

- Join one of three public Big Sits that PVAS is organizing for Saturday, May 3 only. The public Big Sits will be held at these locations: the Burnside Bridge section of Antietam National Battlefield at Sharpsburg, MD; the Murphy’s Farm section of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park at Harpers Ferry, WV; and the picnic area by the west entrance to Sam Michael’s Park, at Shenandoah Junction, WV. The Antietam and Harpers Ferry Sits will be held from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Sam Michaels Park Sit will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Sam Michaels Park Sit will also include a children’s StoryWalk<sup>®</sup> featuring the book “Flute’s Journey” by Lynne Cherry. Anyone is welcome to join these public Sits for their entire length or just part of the time.

Experienced PVAS volunteers will be on hand at each location to help people get oriented and to provide advice, and binoculars will be available for those who need them. The rain date for the public Sits at Harpers Ferry and Sam Michaels Park is Sunday, May 4. There is no rain date for the Burnside Bridge Sit.

Those participating in the field and in individual or small-group Big Sits are asked to register with PVAS. Registration is free and easy on the PVAS website. No registration is needed for the public Big Sits.



Drawing by Steven  
D’Amato

The PVAS newsletter and web site will announce winners of the Birdathon and Big Sits. The Owl trophy, inaugurated last year, and a plaque identifying each year’s winning team will go to the top Birdathon winner, who keeps these prizes until the following year. As an added incentive, prizes will be awarded to birders raising \$75 or more for the marsh project fundraising effort. There will be additional prizes as well!

PVAS’s annual Birdathon is named in honor of Ruth Ann Dean, who was a founding member and ardent supporter of PVAS. Each year it is part of a week of local activities commemorating International Migratory Bird Day.

## Sign Up Now for April 28 Wee Naturalists Session

PVAS is accepting enrollments for a “Wee Naturalists” session for preschoolers on April 28, from 9:30 am to 11:00 am at our Yankauer Nature Preserve. Wee Naturalists sessions are designed to provide opportunities for children ages 3-5 to explore nature together safely under the guidance of an experienced PVAS instructor. At each session, children must be accompanied by a parent, grandparent, other adult relative, or guardian.



The theme of the session will be “April Showers Bring May Flowers.” It will focus on finding evidence of spring in the Preserve’s woods, such as emerging leaves and flowers.

Our Wee Naturalists program is led by Suzi Taylor, of Sharpsburg, MD, a veteran Audubon camp director who has a degree in environmental education.

To ensure that everyone receives close, personal attention, enrollment will be limited and pre-registration is required. Easy on-line registration is available on the Society’s website at [www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org). The fee is \$5 per child/adult team per session. For more information, contact Ms. Taylor at 301-432-1908 or [tomandsuzi506@cs.com](mailto:tomandsuzi506@cs.com).

The Wee Naturalists program was established in 2009 with support from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation’s Two Rivers Giving Circle.

## Audubon Discovery Camp Update

It must have been all the snow days out of school that did it--registrations for Audubon Discovery Camp have been coming in at a rapid rate and several sessions are full or nearly full! Waiting Lists are established for each session as they fill. Don't wait to sign up or you may miss your chance. The extension of school calendars this year is impacting our first Camp Survivor session, but we are going ahead with the session as planned the week of June 9-13. (If registration demands it, we may be able to add another session later in the summer, but that decision will not be made until later in the year.)



Camp fees range from \$50-\$200, depending on the session. Fees can be paid online, but if you prefer to pay only the \$50 deposit, you may send a check to *Audubon Discovery Camp, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown WV 25443*. Please be sure to include the camper name and session on the check memo so we can accurately credit your account. Full fees may also be paid by check using the same address. A \$50 non-refundable deposit is required for each session (except waiting lists) and full fees are due by May 15.

The camp T-shirt for this year will have a blue crow mascot on a daisy yellow shirt. Shirts, which are \$10 each, should be ordered when campers register. If you are on a waiting list, but still want to order the T-shirt, you may do so, however all shirts that are ordered are paid for in advance. Full information about what to bring to camp and other things parents want to know is found on the PVAS website at [www.PotomacAudubon.org/discovercamp](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org/discovercamp).

Camp scholarships are available to Audubon Discovery Camps and forms can be found online at [www.PotomacAudubon.org/scholarships](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org/scholarships). If you have questions about camp sessions or need help with the online registration process, contact Ellen Murphy at [Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org) or 304-676-8739.

## Still Time To Apply For Summer Camp Scholarships!



Scholarship applications must be post-marked no later than **April 8, 2014**, so act now! Scholarship offerings include the camps listed below, with ages and dates given. Our web site [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org) provides additional details about each camp.

- Audubon Discovery Day Camp: our own local camp at Yankauer Nature Preserve, Peter Burr Farm, and CraftWorks at Cool Spring; pre-school to grade 12; a variety of week-long sessions in June and July 2014.
- Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp: at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; July 20-26, 2014 and/or July 27 - August 2, 2014.
- Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies: at Capon Bridge, WV;

ages 11-15; June 22-July 5, July 8-22, or July 29 – August 11, 2014.

- Mountain Adventures Camp: at Mountain Institute, Spruce Knob, WV; ages 12-17; June 22-28, 2014.
- West Virginia State Conservation Camp: at Camp Caesar, Webster County, WV; must be age 14 by January 1 and not past age 18 on June 1; June 9 - 14, 2014.
- Student Climate & Conservation Congress (SC3): at the National Conservation and Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV; Rising grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 22-28, 2014.
- Digital Photo Camp: at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 23-27, 2014.
- Family Camp: at historic Audubon camp, Hog Island, Maine; families with children ages 8-12; August 12-17, 2014.

**Please check our web site** for scholarship application forms and links to the camps' web sites, providing lots more exciting information, great pictures, and camp descriptions! You may also contact scholarship coordinator Kathryn Henry at 304-876-6681 or [dhenry@myexcel.com](mailto:dhenry@myexcel.com).

All young people within the PVAS membership area are eligible to apply for camp scholarships, which are supported by our fall bird seed sale and by additional individual and community sources. Many thanks to these loyal supporters of our summer camping programs!

## Outdoor Explore! – Family Hikes for Spring

Now that spring is on its way, take your family and go out for a hike! *Outdoor Explore!* hikes and programs for families will be offered this spring on a monthly basis. All events are on Saturdays.

*Hike The Hills*, up the Maryland Heights Trail near Harpers Ferry, on April 19 will give spectacular views of the surrounding area. (See article on page 3.)

*Muddy Sneakers* at Stauffer's Marsh on May 17 is a chance to explore a true wetlands area.

*Creek Sneak* (Berkeley County) on June 7 is one of our most popular programs.

Jan Hummer, an experienced, children's environmental educator is leading all the outings and encourages families and children to explore nature. Pre-registration is required and there is a small fee for each child. Register at [www.PotomacAudubon.org/outdoorexplre](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org/outdoorexplre). Jan Hummer can answer questions at [janhummer@hotmail.com](mailto:janhummer@hotmail.com) or 304-839-5128.

## Spring School Programs

Once the weather warms, school classes and homeschool groups start calling PVAS to schedule a program focused on nature. This year, several classes and groups have already made plans for an outing to Yankauer Preserve, and there are still a few dates available in April and May.

Each program is geared for a specific age and focuses on an appropriate theme that helps teachers meet some of their teaching objectives. Most programs include an interpretive hike on a trail at the preserve as well as hands-on program activities designed to get kids out and about exploring nature. Many classes bring lunch and have a picnic before returning to school. Themes for classes include *Insect-igations*, *Scientific Senses*, *Plants vs. Animals*, *Amazing Animal Adaptations*, and *My Life as a Scientist*. Custom programs are also available with advance planning.

All programs are led by PVAS staff and volunteers and it's not uncommon to hear students say, "This is the best day of my life!" If your class, school, or group would like to schedule a program, contact Ellen Murphy at [Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).

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## Preschool Program Reminders!

Our Spring Egg Hunt, for children ages 3-6, will be held April 13 and there are a few spots remaining. Two preschool summer camp sessions, *Out of the Nest* and *Nature Buddies*, are held at Yankauer Preserve. Both camps explore insects, mammals, birds, and the forest through hands-on activities. *Out of the Nest* is designed for ages 3-4 and an adult partner. *Nature Buddies* is offered for ages 5-6 who attend camp on their own, but for a shorter day. Suzi Taylor leads both these camps, with help from staff and volunteers.

Fees for the camps are \$50-125 per child. To register for any of these preschool programs, visit the Calendar of Events at [www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org). If you have questions, contact Ellen Murphy at [Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).

### Volunteers Are Needed!

PVAS' spring programs depend on volunteers like you! We have something that interests everyone who'd like to help, from working with kids to leading walks and hikes, to getting your hands dirty. Here's a list of activities that need your help in the next few months.

Watershed Field Trips: April 8, 9, 10 (Morgan County); April 22, 24, 25 (Berkeley County); April 29, May 2, May 14, May 16 (Washington County MD); June 4 (Jefferson County). Watershed Rain Garden Plantings: April 1, 2, 3, 4 (Washington County MD). School Field Trips to Yankauer: April 4, April 11, May 5

If you'd like to help, contact Ellen Murphy:

[Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org)

## Mark Your Calendars For Migratory Bird Day Activities

PVAS has teamed up with other organizations on a series of local events in May to mark the 22nd annual observance of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), an international program that aims to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the importance of migratory birds in North, Central and South America. It was initiated in 1993 by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. This year's IMBD theme is "Why Birds Matter."

All the local events are free, and anyone with an interest is invited to participate. Pre-registration is required for the Birdathon event; it is encouraged but not required for all the other events. To register and get more details go to the PVAS website at [www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org). For additional information about specific events contact the individual(s) mentioned in the event description(s) or contact Sandy Sagalkin at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

In addition to PVAS, this year's local IMBD sponsors include: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Black Dog Coffee; the Washington County Bird Club; the Wild Bird Garden, in Frederick, MD; and Progressive Printing, in Martinsburg, WV.

The schedule of local events follows below.

**Wednesday, April 30:** Children's birding workshop and bird walk at the Wind Dance Farm and Earth Education Center in Morgan County from 8:00-11:00 a.m. For more info see the School website at [www.winddancefarm.org](http://www.winddancefarm.org) or contact Leslie Milbourne at 304-258-4672.

**Saturday May 3: Fifth Annual Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon** (rain date May 4). Teams and individuals will compete to identify the highest numbers of bird species they find in the area within any 24-consecutive-hour-period during the weekend. Free and open to anyone who is interested, but all must pre-register. This year, those who participate are encouraged to seek pledges from neighbors and friends to help raise funds for a project to improve wild bird habitat at PVAS's Stauffer's Marsh preserve. (See article on page 6.)

**Saturday, May 3: "Big Sits" at three area locations.** An adjunct to the Birdathon, these will be friendly gatherings, hosted by local birding experts, to see how many bird species can be identified from a 50-foot diameter circle. A great family activity and an easy way to learn about birds in our area. Go to the PVAS website for details. (See article on page 6.)

**Monday, May 5: Bird Walk on the C&O Canal, across from Shepherdstown.** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the large C&O Canal parking lot on River Road, just south of the railroad bridge. For more info, contact walk leader Lynne Wiseman at 304-676-2725.

**Tuesday, May 6: Bird Walk at Sideling Hill in Maryland.** Co-sponsored by PVAS and the Washington County Bird Club. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the upper parking of the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration at 18306 Col. Henry K. Douglas Drive, Hagerstown (off Route 65, just south of U.S. 70). For more info contact trip leaders Sandy Sagalkin at 240-291-6465 or [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net), or Anna Hutzell at 301-797-8454 or [amp8185@aol.com](mailto:amp8185@aol.com).

**Wednesday, May 7: Bird walk at Stauffer's Marsh**, in Berkeley County. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the marsh, which is located on one-half mile south of Shanghai, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7). For more info contact trip leader Jim Farley at 540-686-2056.

**Thursday, May 8: Bird walk at Murphy's Farm at the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park**. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the park's Visitor Center off Route 340. For more info contact trip leader Deb Hale at 304-535-2346.

**Friday, May 9: Bird walk at the Claymont Mansion Property** outside Charles Town. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the entrance road to the mansion. For more info contact trip leader Joette Borzik at 240-440-4221.

**Saturday, May 10: "Birding Through History Walk" with Nick Lund at Antietam National Battlefield**. Sponsored by the Washington County Bird Club. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Battlefield visitors' center. For more info contact Anna Hutzell at 301-797-8454 or [amp8185@aol.com](mailto:amp8185@aol.com).

**Wednesday, May 14: PVAS program at the National Conservation Training Center** outside Shepherdstown. 7:00 p.m. in Room 105, Instructional East Building. The speaker will be naturalist and author Katie Fallon, of Morgantown. Her topic will be: "The Vulture: Invaluable Friend; Unfortunate Underdog." Free and open to the public.

**"Pheature Creature"  
The Phoebe**



- In 1804, the Eastern Phoebe became the first banded bird in North America when John James Audubon attached silvered thread to a Phoebe's leg.

- Human-built structures -- eaves, decks, bridges, and window frames -- serve as common sites for cup-shaped nest of mud pellets and plant fibers; thus phoebes grow tolerant of human presence and easy to observe.

- Unlike most birds, phoebes often reuse their nests in subsequent years, even adopting and renovating a robin nest or a barn swallow nest!

- Sitting upright on a low perch, flicking its tail, and spying a flying insect, this alert bird darts out, grabs the flying food morsel, and returns to its perch for lunch.

- The phoebe sings its name, *peee-yerr* and area birders have already heard the song of this early spring arrival!

Sources: Ehrlich, Paul, et al., *The Birder's Handbook*, 1988, Simon and Schuster; Kaufman, Kenn, *Field Guide to Birds of North America*, 2000, Hillstar Editions; [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/eastern\\_phoebe/lifehistory](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/eastern_phoebe/lifehistory)

**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:

- Access to a wide variety of PVAS programs and events for adults and children, including field trips, special events, workshops and courses, and environmental projects.
- A subscription to Valley Views, the PVAS newsletter
- E-mail alerts about events and programs of special interest
- Satisfaction of supporting conservation efforts, youth and adult nature education, individual and family recreation, and a wide array of programs in your community.

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.

**Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*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:**

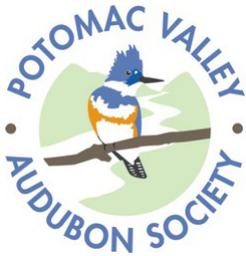
**Membership Chair, PVAS  
PO Box 578  
Shepherdstown, WV 25443**

**Thank you for your support!**



**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**  
 The PVAS Board meets every other month on the first Thursday of the month (Sept.-June). Meeting location and time will be announced prior to meetings. These meetings are open to all PVAS members.

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

- President: Diana Mullis (2014)..... DianaMullis@aol.com
- Vice President: Jane Vanderhook (2015)..... janehook@frontiernet.net
- Secretary: Mina Goodrich (2014) ..... larrymina@peoplepc.com
- Treasurer: Lex Miller (2014)..... pamandlex@frontiernet.net
- Board Members-at-Large:
  - Clark Dixon (2014)..... dixonconsultants@aol.com
  - Diana Gaviria (2014) ..... jpikester@comcast.net
  - Tanner Haid (2016)..... Tanner.Haid@gmail.com
  - Leigh Jenkins (2014)..... jenkinsleigh@hotmail.com
  - Lou Scavnicky (2015)..... captainlou@comcast.net
  - Michael Sullivan (2014)..... msullivan@limno.com
  - Amanda Whitmore (2016)..... Tremba01@gmail.com

**Ex Officio Board Member:** Peter Smith (past president)..... pvsmitth@frontiernet.net

**Emerita Board Member:** Jean Neely ..... jneely@comcast.net

**Special Contacts**

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- Program Director: Ellen Murphy (304-676-8739)..... Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org
- Adult Prog. Coord: Krista Hawley..... AdultPrograms@PotomacAudubon.org
- Web Master: Kathy Bilton..... kathy@fred.net
- PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-267-3482)..... dianamullis@aol.com
- Valley Views editor/publisher: Don Henry (304-876-6681)..... dhenry@myexcel.com
- VISTA volunteer: Melanie Snyder..... Admin@PotomacAudubon.org