VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

Volume 25, Issue 4 December 2006

PVAS Annual Appeal Coming Up

PVAS will launch its annual fundraising appeal on December 15. Please watch your mailbox at that time for an appeal letter and an accompanying annual report that will provide an overview of our activities over the past year.

In the meantime, see the President's Perch column in this newsletter for a preview of some of the changes we're making in this year's appeal.

We couldn't do all the things we do without the financial support we receive from members and friends like you. Thanks in advance for doing whatever you can to support us this year!

Eidolon Informational Meeting Set for December 9

PVAS and The Nature Conservancy will hold an informal informational meeting in Morgan County on Saturday, December 9 to brief interested area residents on current and future plans for the new Eidolon Nature Preserve.

The meeting will be held at 11:00 a.m. at the Panorama Restaurant just west of Berkeley Springs on Route 9. Light refreshments will be served.



The meeting is being coordinated with the Morgan County Ecology Coalition.

Interested PVAS members are encouraged to attend.

As was noted in the November issue of *Valley Views*, PVAS will be managing this new nature preserve for The Nature Conservancy.

Remember United Way, CFC Fund Drives!

Here's a final reminder that the annual fundraising campaigns of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) will continue until December 15.

PVAS receives substantial funding from United Way and CFC each year and encourages its members to give generously to these organizations.

CFC is, of course, the mechanism for federal employees to contribute to their local United Way. PVAS members who are federal employees can designate PVAS as the recipient of all or part of their CFC contribution by entering PVAS's CFC number (5222) on the CFC form that they file with their employing agency.

Contact Kristin Alexander at pvasmail@aol.com or 304-229-9771 to answer any question.

Potomac Arts Festival a Success

The second annual Potomac Arts Festival was a success! The festival hosted 42 artists that specialized in everything from photography to gourd art from across the country. The artists were kept busy answering questions and making sales to over 1,200 shoppers and visitors. A creative art education activity was held in conjunction with the Children's Treehouse Child Development Center. The children learned about eagles while creating a giant nest out of natural materials. The preview party and silent auction on Friday evening were both well received and we thank everyone who participated.



The event would not have been possible without the help of the amazing NCTC staff and the wonderful team of volunteers. A special thank you to Jefferson Security Bank, Premier Bank, City National Bank, NCTC and Eden Design for their help and support to make this festival a profitable fundraiser for PVAS!

President's Perch



Hello, everyone:

As is noted elsewhere in this newsletter, we're launching our annual fundraising appeal on December 15.

We're taking some different approaches to the appeal this year and I'd like to preview those for you so you can be thinking about them in advance.

First, we're aiming to boost our annual fundraising total by 50 percent to nearly $25,000. That sounds like a lot, and it is. But no one gets anywhere by thinking small and the demand for our programs is so strong that we can put every new dollar we can raise to good use.

Second, we're putting a new emphasis this year on multi-year contributions: commitments to donate a specific dollar amount every year for the next three to five years (hopefully five).

These kinds of contributions don't have to be major gifts (although we certainly hope many of them will be). If you can only afford to commit to $10 or $25 a year, that's OK.

The main thing is that multi-year contributions will really help because they'll give us a more dependable fundraising base and allow us to plan future expenditures more reliably. That's important for a growing organization like ours.

To get this ball rolling members of our Fundraising Committee have already committed to contribute a total of $5,000 each year for the next five years, or $25,000 over the period.

That's a good beginning. Many of you are already contributing to PVAS every year anyway; please consider formalizing that giving pattern by making a multi-year commitment of your own.

Finally, to help us reach this year's fundraising goal we've received a challenge grant from a generous donor who has pledged to match up to $5,000 in new contributions to this year's appeal.

The operative word here is "new." The idea is to encourage those who haven't given before to do so now, and to encourage those who have given before to increase their donation level.

If you haven't contributed previously, anything you give will be "new" and it will automatically be matched. If you have contributed previously, any increase over your previous contribution will be matched. For example, if you gave $100 last year and add another $100 this year for a total $200 contribution, the "new" $100 you've added qualifies for a match.Whether you've given before or not we hope you'll pitch in to help make sure we get the entire challenge grant.

That's it for now. Please do keep an eye out for our appeal letter. And please remember that no matter how much you give to PVAS or how you give it, your contribution is greatly appreciated. We couldn't do all the things we do without the support we receive from members and friends like you!

—Peter Smith

Bird Feeding Station Installed at Yankauer



A new opportunity for enjoying wildlife is now available at our Yankauer preserve: Matthew Daly, 17, has put together benches and bird feeders in a clearing at the preserve as part of his Eagle Scout project.

The clearing is on the right, just beyond the pavilion on the trail leading to the Kingfisher Trailhead. Benches will allow visitors to quietly and comfortably enjoy the up close and personal experience bird feeders offer.

If you would like to help keep the feeders filled this winter, or would like to donate bird seed, please contact Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or PVASmail@aol.com.

A special thank you goes to Fiona Harrison and Joy Pardue for donating feeders to the project, to Matthew's father who donated most of the supplies for the project, and to the other volunteers Matthew recruited to help.

We hope you come and enjoy the results of their efforts!

Jefferson County Principals Briefed on PVAS Programs

PVAS's Yankauer Director Kristin Alexander was invited to the November monthly meeting of Jefferson County's school principals to talk about the Watershed Education Initiative and the environmental education programs PVAS has developed for grades K-6.

The programs utilize PVAS's Yankauer Nature Preserve as a field laboratory and include pre- and post visit classroom activities to enhance and reinforce the field experience.

The short presentation was well-received and we have hopes that the schools will choose to participate in our programs.

A hearty thank-you to Shepherdstown Elementary School Principal Suzanne Offutt for setting this up!

Watershed Education Initiative Entering Fourth Year



PVAS's environmental education program for fourth graders, the Watershed Education Initiative, will again be offered in five area elementary schools in 2007.

In all, more than 550 students will participate.

PVAS initiated the program in 2003. It spans 16 weeks from February through May and is focused on watershed protection issues.

The program includes seven sessions of classroom instruction that total 10 hours as well as field trips. The field trips involve a hands-on demonstration of water quality testing in the Potomac River and a tour of a local wastewater treatment facility to learn how waste water is cleaned before it is released back into the river.

PVAS will be hiring the program's instructors in December and training them in January.

Dates Set for Annual Christmas Bird Count



December 16 and 30 have been set as the dates for PVAS's annual Eastern Panhandle Christmas Bird Count. The December 16 count will take place in the Charles Town area. The December 30 count will be in the Inwood area.

Both experienced and novice birders are welcome to join in this season's counts. Those who have more experience will team with novice volunteers.

Christmas Bird Counts have been conducted throughout the western hemisphere every year since 1900 under the auspices of the National Audubon Society. Their purpose is to monitor the status and distribution of early-winter bird populations.



The data collected from this volunteer-based effort have been folded into what is now the longest-running database in ornithology, representing over 100 years of continuous information. This database is used to help spot trends in bird populations which in turn can help identify shifts in environmental conditions. Currently, over 50,000 volunteers across the Americas participate in each year's count.

To register and/or to obtain more information, contact Bob Dean by telephone at 304-754-3042, or by e-mail at bobdean52@aol.com.

Brook Trout Presentation at NCTC

The Rockymarsh Run Watershed Network and the National Conservation Training Center will co-sponsor a community lecture on Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m. in NCTC's Robert C. Byrd Auditorium.

Dr. George Constanz will be speaking on the wonder and beauty found in Appalachian ecosystems including the brook trout, West Virginia's only native trout species.

The Rockymarsh Run Network is the recipient of a Stream Partners grant to promote protection and enjoyment of Rockymarsh Run, a spring-fed stream that defines part of the border between Jefferson and Berkeley Counties. The Run has been named in the eastern West Virginia brook trout habitat restoration plan.

Funding from the Stream Partners grant has supported an educational campaign that included the development of a 2007 calendar describing life in the Rockymarsh Run Watershed. The calendar was created in partnership with the Shepherd University Design Team and our own Potomac Valley Nature Photographers.

The full-color calendar features images along the watershed as well as stewardship messages, conservation facts and local history. Everyone who attends the lecture will receive a free calendar.

For more information about the presentation, calendars, or the Rockymarsh Run Watershed Network, contact Carolyn Thomas at 304-267-3115.

Land Management Plans Bring in New Partners

Work will be getting underway soon on land management plans for both our Yankauer and Eidolon nature preserves.

In preparation for the Yankauer plan, a Soil Science class from Shepherd University's Institute for Environmental Studies has already been in the field at Yankauer to take soil samples. Analysis of these samples will help determine best sites for such things as habitat types, invasive management, a well, bathroom facilities and a future nature center.

The students will be presenting a proposal to members of the PVAS Land and Facilities Management Committee in December as their final project.

We are glad to be able to provide these students with an opportunity for some real, hands-on field experience while we benefit from their research.

Both we and The Nature Conservancy value cooperative efforts of this kind, and we hope to engage in more of them as we develop the land management plans.

New PVAS Secretary Appointed

Secretary Fiona Harrison informed the PVAS Board in October that she will step down to devote more time to her work and family. She has served as PVAS Securetary since spring of 2005 and previously served as Program Chair.

The Board expressed regret at her decision but commended her for her many contributions to PVAS and wished her well in her future endeavors.

Mina Goodrich, previous PVAS Secretary, agreed to return to the post. The Board formally appointed her to fill out the remainder of Fiona's term which expires the end of June 2007. It is hoped that Mina will agree to serve a full term of her own after that.

A native of Shepherdstown, Mina has been a member of PVAS since its early days. She first joined the Board in 2001 and was Secretary until the spring of 2004.

Mina has also been active on the boards of the Friends of the Shepherdstown Library, the Jefferson County Animal Welfare Society and the Shepherdstown Men's Club. She also volunteers regularly at the Shepherdstown Library.

She retired in 1999 after a long career in health care with the Department of Veteran's Affairs, both in Martinsburg and Washington, D.C.

She has a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Shepherd University and an M.B.A. from Frostburg State University in Maryland.

December Meeting Highlights Summer Camp Efforts

Our December meeting will feature our traditional potluck dinner and a new, two-part program designed to highlight PVAS's summer camp efforts.

First on the program, young people who received PVAS scholarships to attend our Audubon Discover Camp at Yankauer and other camps last summer will tell us what they learned from their camp experiences. Last year's winners were: Yankauer scholarships, Ian Livingston and Sarah Fedorchak of Shepherdstown and Mia Nemser of Martinsburg; scholarships to the Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies, Sarah Shadle of Middleway and Zoe Chapelle of Sharpsburg.

Second, camp director Danny Carter will give a presentation on the camp's mission, learning goals, and activities. This will be an enjoyable and informative program for all.

Families who are considering sending their children to Yankauer next summer—and/or are seeking a camp scholarship from PVAS—are encouraged to attend and bring their children.

Everyone will have an opportunity to learn more about this very important and popular facet of PVAS's educational programs.

The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 13 at the U.S. Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center, 11649 Leetown Road (County Route 1), Kearneysville. Please note that the start time is an hour earlier than usual to accommodate the young people who will be attending.

For the potluck dinner please bring a dish to share. Those whose last names begin with the letters A-H are asked to bring vegetables or fruit; I-L, a dessert; M-R, a protein dish; and S-Z, a starch dish. All are asked to bring their own dishes, flatware, etc., so we can be environmentally conscientious.

For more information, contact Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or pvasmail@aol.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count Coming Up

Mark your calendars for the 2007 Great Backyard Bird Count, which is set for February 16-19.



The Count is an annual four-day event that involves bird watchers of all levels in counting birds and reporting their results to create a mid-winter snapshot of the numbers, kinds, and distribution of birds across the continent.

The count provides an excellent opportunity to engage today's children in birdwatching because it revolves around a highly interactive website that's easy and fun to use and chock full of information about birds and birding.

Here's how the count works:

- Participants count birds for as little or as long as they want during the four-day period.
- Using an online checklist they submit their counts at the Great Backyard Bird Count website, www.birdsource.org/gbbc, and can see immediately how their results fit in.
- As the count progresses they can use the website to see what's being reported from their own towns or anywhere else in the U.S. and Canada and how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years.
- Participants may also enter a digital photography contest by submitting photos of birds to the website. A panel of judges choose the best photos and those chosen are displayed with other photos on the website's photo gallery section.

The count has a scholarly purpose, too: scientists analyze the results and post summaries highlighting the year's trends and findings.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is managed by the Cornell University Ornithology Laboratory and the National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.



Report on Annual Birdseed Sale

Many thanks to all of you who purchased Birdseed this year! With your help, we sold 20,305 pounds!! The profits support our Camp Scholarship Program … and our December 13 meeting will highlight our Camp Scholarship Winners from last year's Birdseed Sale. Many thanks also to our Birdseed Sale Team: John and Nancy Ostrowski received, checked and computerized the orders. Our sale day helpers included Wayne Braunstein and Sharon Stephan at the Ranson Pick-up, Kathryn Henry at Williamsport, and Lynne Wiseman, Tess England, Bruni Hadyl, Bill Palmisano and Diana Mullis at Berkeley Springs. Many thanks also to the owners and staff of Gower's Feed Stores in Williamsport, Maryland, and Ranson, West Virginia. In addition to helping us provide you with quality seed they have a great selection of bird feeders, so stop by and see them sometime. Last but not least, many thanks from our feathered (and furry) friends who can't wait to have you fill those feeders.

Potomac Valley Nature Photographers

The program for the Potomac Valley Nature Photographers' December 1 meeting has now been set.

The program will include a members' "Show and Share" session and the screening of a National Geographic video, "The Photographers," which was originally scheduled to be shown at the January meeting. The video follows some of the Society's top photographers in the field, exploring their philosophies of photography as well as the hardships they face.

In January the NCTC auditorium will be closed for installation of new equipment so the group is planning to have a one-year anniversary celebration off-site. The location for that celebration has not yet been determined; those who plan to attend should check the PVNP website at www.potomacvalleynaturephotographers.org for details as they become available.

No Valley Views in January

Please remember that there is no January issue of Valley Views. The next issue will be the February issue.

Since we have not finalized plans for January field trips in time to include information about them in this issue, please watch the PVAS website, your e-mail, and your local paper for that information.

January Meeting Will Focus on Potomac Fish Problems

Our January meeting will focus on fish kills and the increase in intersex fish in the Potomac River and its tributaries; and the possible relationship to "emerging contaminant" issues.

The speaker will be Dr. Vicki S. Blazer, the fish pathologist at the Leetown Science Center's National Fish Health Research Laboratory.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 10, at the Leetown Science Center, 11649 Leetown Road (County Route 1), Kearneysville.

Dr. Blazer explains that emerging contaminant issues involve contaminants only recently recognized as problematic and not routinely monitored. They include pharmaceuticals and chemicals from personal care products which pass through wastewater treatment facilities into natural bodies of water; antibiotics and other substances from animal manures which are carried into rivers and lakes by runoff; and pesticides and herbicides from agriculture and lawn care which are also carried away by runoff.



Dr. Blazer has worked at the Fish Health Research Laboratory since 1992. Since that time she has been involved in numerous fish disease issues in the Chesapeake drainage area as well as national and international fish health issues.

Previously she was assistant leader of the Georgia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit at the University of Georgia, where she taught courses in fish diseases, fish pathology, and fish nutrition and directed graduate student research.

She has a B.S. in Marine Biology from Southampton College of Long Island University and a Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island. She did two years of postdoctoral work at the University of Georgia's Veterinary College.

For more information contact Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmith@frontiernet.net.

Let It Fall!

Autumn is traditionally the time to clear the remnants of spent plants: the lifeless stalks of perennials, dried seed heads, fallen leaves. But all of these things are potential resources for birds, wildlife, and the garden itself. Dry stems provide cover for over wintering insects, perches for birds, and nesting material for next year's breeding season. The seed heads of native flowers provide a fat- and protein-rich food to birds. Fruits that ripen in late autumn and winter provide more food to birds and this helps propagate new plants in the spring. Leaves once destined for a landfill or community compost field can be a valuable addition to a home-based compost pile that can be used to feed the spring garden. Leaves left on the ground provide habitat for insects and prime foraging fodder for birds. So, this year, aim for less maintenance . . . and enjoy more birds that will feel "at home" in the autumn yard.



JOIN PVAS TODAY!

We now offer two kinds of memberships:

1. PVAS Local Membership

Here's what you get:

- Access to a wide variety of PVAS programs and events for adults and children.
- Discounts for selected chapter activities, like children's summer camps.
- A subscription to PVAS's newsletter and e-mail alerts about events and programs of special interest.
- ALL your dues stay here to support local PVAS efforts!

To become a local member: Enclose a check for $20 ($15 for seniors and students). Please make check out to "PVAS." This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year.

2. Dual Membership with National Audubon

You get all the benefits of PVAS membership plus membership in the National Audubon Society, which includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. If you select this option, almost all of your dues will go to National Audubon. To obtain a dual membership, enclose a check for $20 if you are joining NAS for the first time ($15 for seniors and students) or $35 to renew an existing NAS membership. Make check out to "National Audubon Society."

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: (optional): _____

Membership Type (check one):

PVAS Local Membership ____
(For PVAS local membership, check the box following if you do NOT want PVAS to share your contact information with National Audubon: ___)

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I'd like to get *Valley Views* by e-mail___ US mail ___ (check one)

.....(Audubon chapter code Y54; source code 79N7)

Clip and mail this form to:
Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Thank you for your support!

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If a red dot appears on your mailing label, your membership may have expired and this could be your last issue of Valley Views. Take action to renew your Dual membership or Local member-

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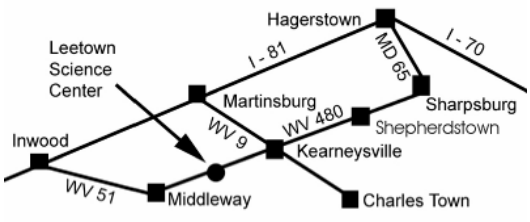
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DATED MATERIALS

A proud partner of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign.

MAIL TO:

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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April, in the auditorium at the USGS Leetown Science Center, Letown/Kearneysville, WV. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please call any of the board members listed her or see http://www.potomacaudubon.org. PVAS serves the Easter Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

PVAS BOARD

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

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