

President's Perch

by Jane Vanderhook, PVAS President

Potomac Valley Audubon Society is an organization with a lofty goal. We are people dedicated to preserving, restoring and enjoying the natural world through education and action. Our goal is to get people of all ages outside to explore and learn about the natural world. It is our belief that in doing so, we will empower others to ensure that there *will* be a natural world for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. We offer a wide variety of programs for children, adults and families and none of that is possible without your support.

December marks the beginning of our Annual Appeal campaign. Very soon you will be getting a letter from us asking for your help. While we receive grants and funding from foundations and other outside sources, it just doesn't cover all the costs of what we do. There is always a gap between programs fees and actual expenses, and grants rarely cover the real day-to-day expenses of "keeping the lights on."

This is where you come in. Last year, 193 of you contributed to the Annual Appeal enabling us to raise \$38,050. We are extremely grateful to you and we hope you will continue to support us. We are frugal and careful stewards of your gifts. For those of you who have not yet given to the Annual Appeal, please take a few moments to consider it. By making a donation, no matter how small or how great, you are saying to us, "We like what you're doing and we want to help you keep doing it." Please help us match or exceed last year's total so that we can keep doing it. We thank you in advance for your financial "vote of confidence."



Pyrrharctia isabella, Woollybear

Director's Report:

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Every year it seems like we can't be any busier. But somehow we keep doing more. We are successful in providing unique services to our community because of the support of our members and friends. THANK YOU!

As it is the last newsletter of 2014, it's only fair to highlight a few of the year's accomplishments. This year, PVAS:

- Was fortunate enough to continue employing Krista Hawley, our part-time adult program coordinator. Krista has helped us grow the adult program offerings and provides critical support to the volunteers who present our programs.
- Served over 4,500 children in the PVAS service area – either in schools, scouts, summer camps or other programs. This included our foray into Washington County where we offered our watershed education program for the first time.
- Improved each of the three preserves PVAS manages by expanding trails, infrastructure, and invasive plant removal efforts. Stauffer's Marsh was a focal point this year to help improve the visitor experience with a kiosk, bench, new parking lot, and mulched trail along the dam.

The 2014 annual report will have more details about these and many more PVAS activities. It will arrive in your mailbox very soon, and I hope you will take the time to read it. It provides a great summary of what PVAS has accomplished for the year thanks to the support of members, volunteers, and friends. We could never accomplish this much without you!

With that annual report will be our annual appeal letter, asking you to support PVAS. 2015 will be just as busy, if not more so! Your support provides the financial foundation that every non-profit needs to survive and thrive.

Thank you in advance for your support in 2015! We look forward to another great year.

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

Vultures: Misunderstood and Under Appreciated

by Wil Hershberger

Vultures are often maligned, considered the villains, ne'er do wells, and are therefore often-unwelcome visitors. However, and this is a big however, vultures are just the opposite. These guys are the sanitation department, cleaning up dead and decaying carcasses of all kinds of animals. If it weren't for vultures, we would be surrounded by a really smelly mess!

Turkey Vultures are the most widespread species of vulture in the New World. Some populations are fully or partially migratory.

We have Turkey Vultures in our area year 'round. They prefer to hunt in open habitats from woodlands to fields. They breed in dark, protected areas under boulders, or in caves and abandoned buildings. Eggs, typically 2, laid in April will hatch in May. The young are dependent on their parents for months, and may not have left the nest even 60 days after hatching. Once the nestlings are large enough to fend off intruders they have the curious habit of regurgitating their last meal at the potential predator. I can only imagine this being a very effective deterrent to an animal looking for something to eat.

While hunting, Turkey Vultures soar, seemingly aimlessly over the countryside. They teeter back and forth as if they are unsteady, ready to fall out of the sky. However, they are following their highly developed sense of smell. They are capable of detecting a rotting carcass from long distances and can even detect and locate potential food sources that are completely hidden from view under a forest canopy. This gives them an advantage over their more aggressive cousin, the Black Vulture.



Turkey Vultures, © WilHershberger2012

Black Vultures lack the incredible sense of smell of Turkey Vultures, but they are stronger, with heavier bills that are capable of tearing into thicker-skinned animals. Black Vultures will watch the behavior of Turkey Vultures and follow them into a newly located food source. The more aggressive Black Vultures will often displace the Turkey Vultures from their find. In our area, they seem to be more cooperative and both species are often found on the same carcass together.



Black Vulture, © WilHershberger2012

Black Vultures also lay 2 eggs in early March, usually on bare ground in similar haunts as used by Turkey Vultures. Pairs remain together year-round and may begin courtship flights in late February. The young are in or near the nest until they are 75-80 days old when they might take their first flight.

Communal roosting is an important part of vulture social life. In these roosts, young learn how to interact with other roost members as well and how to locate and acquire food. Black Vultures, especially, will form large communal roosts in the evening where lots of interesting behaviors take place. These roosts are the assembly areas for foraging groups to form and head out for the day in search of a meal.

Human behavior can make vultures appear to be bad neighbors. Over-running dumpsters with trash and food scraps strewn around, roadside dumps, and the remains from field-dressing wild game will certainly attract a wide variety of scavengers, including vultures. Once a large and steady food source is found, vultures will continue to hang around in hopes that the easy food source continues to be available. As with any animal, sitting around quietly allowing your food to digest gets boring. Individuals will often start to explore their surrounds using the only tool they have — their beaks. They might pick at roofing materials, siding, or anything they can pick at. This, unfortunately, causes damage furthering our dislike for the species.

Vultures are an essential component of our natural world. We should embrace them as valuable neighbors and respect their behavior and needs. Only we can improve the sanitation around our homes, farms, stores, and businesses if we do not want to defer to the Vulture Sanitation Guild.

PVAS Receives Grant Funding for Stauffer's Marsh

We just received word that PVAS will be receiving about \$5000 from the WV Division of Environmental Protection's Stream Partners Program. The monies will be used for various infrastructure improvement projects to help achieve education and land management goals.

The monies will be used to purchase and install geotextile fabric for the parking lot to control weeds, reducing the need for herbicide use and holding the gravel in place; gravel for the parking lot (telephone poles were recently placed to outline the parking area, but gravel is needed to reduce erosion); timbers or stones to line the trails to hold mulch in place and reduce runoff and erosion as trail use increases.

Funds will also be used to develop signage and brochures that will provide important information for all visitors to appreciate the marsh and Back Creek. Two interpretive signs, three directional trail signs, and preserve brochures will all be funded as part of this grant.

2015 will be another busy year at Stauffer's Marsh in this next phase of preserve improvements! If you would like to volunteer at Stauffer's Marsh, please contact board member Lou Scavnicky at captainlou@comcast.net. He'll happily put you to work!

Join December 7 Trip to Stauffer's Marsh

Jim Farley will lead a birding walk at our Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Sunday, December 7.

The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. This event is free and open to anyone with an interest. Children will be welcome. Meet in the gravel parking area at the north end the marsh.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website.

The Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve is located in Back Creek Valley in Berkeley County, one-half mile south of Shanghai, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7).

The marsh is an excellent birding site any time of year. Species likely to be sighted in December include winter birds, waterfowl and raptors.

The preserve is only 46 acres in size, so the distances to be walked are not great. However, the terrain will include wet meadows and marshlands, as well as dry areas, so waterproof footwear is strongly recommended.

Ticks can be an issue at the preserve year round, so tick spray is also recommended. Participants should dress for the prevailing weather and bring water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

The trip may be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

For more information go to the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at 703-303-1026 or adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.



Stauffer's Marsh in winter, Peter Smith

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists Honored at Annual Meeting

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists held their Annual Chapter Meeting on Saturday, November 8. More than forty-five Master Naturalists enjoyed an afternoon that included a potluck lunch, a silent auction, a short business meeting and a certification ceremony.

Twelve members of the 2010, 2013 and 2014 classes, who had completed all sixty-four hours of coursework and thirty hours of volunteer service, were recognized as Certified West Virginia Master Naturalists. Those members are: Mary Beth Ross, Charlotte Fremaux, Mary Etta Boesl, Philip Folk, Richard Himes, Darlene Kestler, David Miller, Keith Jones, Lynne Wiseman, Emily Gross, Kathy Ann Clowe, and Margie Knott. Each received a certification of completion, a West Virginia Master Naturalist patch, and a Potomac Valley Master Naturalist name badge. In addition, Debbie Maiorano, a transfer from Virginia, received her recognition as a certified West Virginia Master Naturalist.

Susan Fluharty, Melanie Snyder, Mary Beth Grove, and Vicki Blazer were recognized for five years of active membership and service with a certificate and a field bag.



Twenty-three Master Naturalists who had completed their annual eight hours of training and sixteen hours of volunteer service were acknowledged with a recertification card for 2014. Master Naturalists have until the end of the year to complete and turn in their training and volunteer hours so more recertifications are expected.

Congratulations to all Master Naturalists for their hard work, commitment, and service!

The silent auction and book sale was once again a highlight of the day. \$679.00 was raised in just under two hours. The money collected from this event goes towards scholarships for the Master Naturalist Program.

More information about the PVAS Master Naturalist Program can be found at www.PotomacAudubon.org/masternat.

Start the New Year With a Hike at Cacapon State Park

PVAS invites its members and friends to join a New Year's Day hike at Cacapon State Park in Morgan County. The hike is being sponsored by the Park, and it will be led by the Park's Naturalist, Renee Fincham.

Participants will gather at 10:00 a.m. at the Park's Nature Center. The hike will follow the Park's Ridge Trail, which is about 1.5 miles long with a few hills.

Anyone who wishes to carpool to the park from Jefferson or Berkeley counties can meet up with Clark Dixon and Debbie Maiorano of PVAS at the Food Lion parking lot in Inwood at 8:30 a.m. The Food Lion is located at 4803 Gerrardstown Road, just off I-81.

Participants should wear comfortable footwear, dress for cold weather, and bring water.

After the hike, the PVAS group will proceed to the Park's Lodge and those who choose can purchase lunch at the restaurant before heading home.

The hike will be free and no pre-registration is required. However, those who plan to carpool with PVAS are encouraged to register on the PVAS website so that Debbie and Clark will know how many carpools to expect.

For more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Sign Up Now for 2015 Master Naturalist Program

Our Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is now accepting applications for its 2015 classes. Instruction will begin in March 2015 and continue monthly through October. Applications must be postmarked by January 31. Enrollment is strictly limited to twenty persons each year. Its classes are open to anyone who wants to be certified as a Master Naturalist by the state of West Virginia.

Established in 2007, the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is sponsored by the PVAS and is a chapter of the State of West Virginia Master Naturalist Program. The Master Naturalist program is patterned after the long-established Master Gardener program. It trains individuals in the fundamentals of natural history and nature interpretation as a way of promoting responsible stewardship of natural resources

Graduates of the program become part of a corps of highly qualified volunteers who assist government agencies, schools, and non-government organizations with research, outdoor recreation development, and environmental education and protection. Most who enroll come from Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan Counties. Interested persons who live outside this area are welcome to apply, but they must commit to completing all their volunteer work in West Virginia.

In all, sixty-four hours of classroom time and thirty hours of volunteer work are required to complete the certification cycle. Classes are held primarily at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown and Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Springs.



Opening weekend, 2014 Master Naturalist program

To remain certified Master Naturalists must take eight hours of training and participate in sixteen hours of volunteer activity annually.

Tuition is \$300 per person for the full course of instruction. A limited number of scholarships will be available.

Application forms and more details are available on the Potomac Valley Audubon Society website. Scholarship applications are also available there. Or contact Melanie Snyder at 703-973-5419 or littleowl48@hotmail.com.

Mark Your Calendars for January 10 “Safety in the Woods” Workshop

PVAS is organizing a Natural History Workshop on “Safety in the Woods” for Saturday, January 10.

The workshop will be held from 10:00 am to 12 noon at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville.

It will be led by Kathy Dilley, Associate Professor of Nursing Education at Shepherd University.

The workshop will be open to everyone with an interest, but pre-registration will be required and there will be a fee. The fee will be \$10 for PVAS members and members of the Society’s Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, and \$15 for the general public.

Details were still being developed as this newsletter went to press. The PVAS website will have full information as it becomes available.

PVAS’s Natural History Workshops are intended for people who are interested in learning about particular natural history topics in considerable depth but cannot commit to pursue the much more comprehensive natural history education available through PVAS’s Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, which can take a year or more to complete.

Annual Christmas Bird Counts Set

PVAS has set Sunday, December 14 and Saturday, January 3 as the dates for this winter's annual Eastern Panhandle Christmas Bird Counts.

These local-area counts are part of a massive, historic 115-year-old citizen science project: a volunteer-based Christmas Bird Count that has been conducted throughout the western hemisphere every year since 1900 under the auspices of the National Audubon Society.

The purpose is to monitor the status and distribution of early-winter bird populations.

Count volunteers join teams that go out in the field and follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day.

Experienced and novice birders are always welcome to join these teams. Novice volunteers will be teamed with those who have more experience.

Or, people who live within the circle areas can simply count the birds they see at their feeders during the day and submit a record of their sightings to PVAS.

The December 14 count, the Charles Town count, encompasses a circle that is centered near Charles Town and stretches from the Shannondale area at the east to near Middleway at the west.

The circle for the January 3 count, the Inwood count, is centered near Shanghai in Berkeley County and includes the west side of Martinsburg and Inwood to the east and the Stotler's Crossroads/Greenwood section of Morgan County to the west.

To get more information about participating, either as a field team member or by recording birds at home feeders, go to the PVAS website.

All those who participate as a field team member must register beforehand with PVAS.

To register, or to get additional information, contact Bob Dean at bobdean52@gmail.com or 304-754-3042.

The data collected from each year's Christmas Bird Count are 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.

In the Eastern Panhandle, the Charles Town count has been held every year since 1952, and the Inwood count has been held every year since 1953.

The data from previous year's counts are available online through the National Audubon Society website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcoobservation/#>. Once there, click on "Historical" and "Results by Count". To view data from the Eastern Panhandle counts enter their official 4-letter Count Codes, WVCT and WVIN, in the appropriate field.



Winter birding. Peter Smith

No Date Yet for Annual C&O Bird Count

An exact date is still pending for this coming January's C&O Canal Midwinter Bird Survey, but it's expected the survey will be held toward the end of the month.

The survey, which is coordinated by the District of Columbia Audubon Society, is now in its seventeenth year. It is designed to provide a snapshot count of birds present along the entire, 185-mile length of the canal.

Anyone with an interest is welcome to join in.

Locally, PVAS has historically counted the birds on a three-mile section of the canal between Antietam Creek and the Rumsey Bridge at Shepherdstown.

Keep an eye on the PVAS website for the date and details.

Claymont Bird Walk Set for December 20

Joette Borzik will lead a PVAS bird walk at the historic Claymont property outside Charles Town, WV on Saturday, December 20.

The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. It is free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the Society's website at <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>.

Walk participants should plan to meet Joette on the Claymont entrance road where a wetland meets the access driveway. The entrance is located at 667 Huyett Road; it is marked by a street sign that reads "Claymont Mansion."

The walk will involve about two miles of moderate hiking. It should offer opportunities to see various winter birds, including sparrows, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and other woodpeckers; waterfowl, and wild turkeys.

A tour of the mansion will be offered after the walk.

Participants should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather and bring drinking water and trail snacks.

Binoculars will be available for those who need them.

The trip may be cancelled in the event of heavy weather.

For more information, go to the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.



Unveiling our plans for summer camp each year is almost like Christmas — new session themes to captivate our campers, and old reliable ones that stay popular year after year! Without giving away too many surprises, we can tell you that Camp Survivor will be back as well as new themes at Yankauer Nature Preserve and the Peter Burr Farm. Our Teen Digital Photo Camp and special weeks for preschoolers are on the schedule, too. A new, amazing session for middle school campers will blow your socks off! The camp shirt will be a dark red, and this year's mascot is the fox. Full camp information will be posted on our website in late January and registration will begin February 1. Returning campers know that to get a spot you can't wait, so keep watching the website for updates and full details on camp sessions. Summer will be here before you know it!

Join December 27 Bird Walk at Antietam

PVAS is sponsoring a bird walk along the Final Attack Trail on the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, MD on Saturday, December 27.

The walk is being cosponsored by the Washington County Bird Club, and it will be incorporated into this winter's Washington County Christmas Bird Count.

The walk is free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website.

Participants should plan to meet walk leader Sandy Sagalkin at the Burnside Bridge at 8:00 a.m.

The walk will last about 2 ½ to 3 hours, and cover mostly level terrain.

Birds likely to be sighted will be winter resident species.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water. PVAS will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own. Various trip details could change depending on weather or recent bird sightings.

The walk may be cancelled in the event of bad weather. Those who register on the PVAS website will be notified by email by 9 p.m. the previous evening if cancellation is anticipated.

The trail the walk will follow is in the area where the Union Army made its final advance to drive the Confederate Army from Maryland on September 17, 1862, only to be turned back by A.P. Hill's final Confederate counterattack.

It is also the site of an extensive effort by the Antietam National Battlefield to restore and preserve native grasslands on the Otto Farm fields in the Battlefield's southwest corner.

For more information, contact Sandy at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

Audubon Discovery Camp Preview

January 14 Program Will Focus on Attracting Pollinators to Yards and Gardens

Our monthly program for January will feature a presentation on attracting pollinators to yards and gardens.

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 14 at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville. Admission will be free and everyone is welcome to attend.

The speaker will be Steve Carroll, Director of Public Programs at the State Arboretum of Virginia and Bland Experimental Farm in Boyce, VA. He will discuss the importance of pollinators, the threats they currently face, and steps property owners can take to help support their populations.

Pollinators provide crucial services in gardens, agriculture, and natural landscapes. Countless plants depend on pollinators to produce seeds and fruits, which are important food sources for birds, mammals, and other wildlife. They are also crucial for humans, as 30 percent of our food depends on pollinators.

Despite this, many pollinators are in trouble from habitat loss and degradation, use of pesticides, disease, and other threats.

Carroll is a botanist, ecologist, and gardener who speaks and writes frequently about plants and gardening. Before moving to the Arboretum, he taught ecology, botany, and evolutionary biology for 15 years at Truman State University, in Kirksville, MO. He is the co-author of "Ecology for Gardeners," published by Timber Press, and he has written for gardening and outdoor publications.

The Hospice facility's address is 330 Hospice Lane, Kearneysville. The Audubon program will be held in the main meeting room of the facility's Main Office building. There is plenty of parking at the facility.

For more information go to www.potomacaudubon.org or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.



Registration for Next Year's Race for the Birds Opens Dec. 15

We will begin accepting online registrations for our 14th annual "Race for the Birds!" on Monday, December 15.

The race will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2015 on the campus of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) just north of Shepherdstown.

To register, and to get more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. Or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

The 2015 race will include a new distance event: a professionally timed 15K (9.32-mile) trail race that will replace the 7.7-mile trail race held in recent years.

There will also be an 8K (4.97-mile) professionally timed trail race; a self-timed, 2-mile community jog/walk for families and individuals who prefer a slower pace; and a 1-mile "Fun Run" for children under 10 years of age.

The 15K and 8K races will follow trails that wind through the forests and fields of the 538-acre NCTC campus.

The 2-mile jog/walk will follow a course that will be very user-friendly for families with small children, and trail-friendly baby joggers will be appropriate and encouraged.

The trails on the NCTC campus are not normally open to the general public so this will be a good opportunity to visit and enjoy the facility's beautiful trail network.

The two races will begin at 9:00 a.m. The jog/walk will begin shortly afterwards and the children's Fun Run will be held at about 10:45 a.m.

The children's Fun Run will be free. Fees for the other portions of the event will range from \$15 to \$30.

All proceeds will be used to support PVAS's programs.

Our School Programs Are Being Updated!

Because PVAS provides environmental education programs in the public schools, we work hard to serve as partners with the teachers and keep our programs accurate, on grade level, and current with the learning standards for West Virginia schools. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and future adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Ellen Murphy has been kept busy updating our program plans. One way she does this is by attending educational conferences like the National Science Teachers Association Regional Conference in Richmond VA (in October) and The Mountain Institute (last July).

At these conferences, Ellen has gotten new ideas, learned ways to adapt our existing curriculum to make the sessions more STEM focused, and had a bit of fun at the same time (she's hand feeding a Monarch Butterfly in the picture!) At the Richmond NSTA Conference, she came away with three ideas for camp sessions and an awesome addition to our second grade program "Plants v. Animals." For this program, she has introduced Mexican Jumping Beans as a science investigation, challenging the students to decide if the mysterious object on their desks is a plant, an animal, or both. By using scientific techniques (observing, asking questions, and conducting an experiment), the 8-year olds learn to think as scientists. (Most come to the conclusion that the beans are both plant and animal—what do you think?)



Ellen is also currently adapting our elementary field programs to focus on wetlands education for use at Stauffer's Marsh. A grant from the WV Division of Natural Resources has funded this process so PVAS can provide a quality, educational discovery experience, similar to the educational experience currently available at Yankauer Nature Preserve. Several classes in the spring of 2015 will help us pilot test these programs at the marsh.

Before the end of December, however, there are still classes that are scheduled to experience our programs. Once those classes have been served, we will have visited an estimated 920 students in 46 classes. (Visits to Yankauer Preserve and our Watershed program in both fourth and fifth grades add an additional 932 students in 79 classes to that total!)

Programs for Kids and Families, Coming In Spring 2015!

Although the winter months are upon us, we're busy planning programs for children and families in spring 2015. Our popular Spring Egg Hunt for Preschoolers uses eggs painted like wild bird eggs to help children learn about camouflage. It's scheduled for Sunday afternoon, March 29, but you can be a true "early bird" and register on the PVAS website now.

A new, monthly Family Story Hour will begin at Yankauer Nature Preserve after the first of the year. These events will feature a read-aloud story followed by a family-friendly, guided nature exploration along one of the trails. Each month will feature a different book and theme for families to explore together. This program will be appropriate for families with children of all ages (although strollers may be a challenge on the trails).

This spring "Audubon on the Road" will preview at several local libraries. This new program, funded by the Nora Roberts Foundation, will provide nature activities focused on a specific children's book during a one-hour program. The libraries will be helping us advertise these events. Also coming to several of our local libraries will be a new PVAS Explore Backpack, scheduled to be available in late spring. This new backpack's theme is Mammals.

StoryWalks® will be posted at various libraries in the Eastern Panhandle, at Shepherd University's Little House, and at Yankauer Nature Preserve on several weekends to help with local celebrations and events. Several new books have been prepared to help celebrate spring.

We hope that Wee Naturalists, also for preschoolers and a caring adult, will reappear, perhaps even in late winter. Winter walks in the woods are a chance to see the tree "bones" and sometimes even find animal tracks if there is snow! We'll be posting status updates on the website as they become available.

Finally, a new, "Sharing Nature With Children" workshop designed to help adults learn new ways to share nature with their children or grandchildren will be offered on Sunday afternoon, April 19 at Yankauer Preserve. This session is being designed to make you look like "Mother or Father Nature" by providing specific techniques and activities for exploring the out-of-doors to use when the kids come to visit. Designed for adults, but not just grandparents, registration is open now.

Watch the PVAS website for updates on all these programs!



Join Deb Hale for December 17 Bird Walk at Harpers Ferry

Join Deb Hale for an early winter bird walk in Harpers Ferry on Wednesday, December 17.

The trip is free and open to everyone, regardless of their birding skills. Children will be welcome.

As an added, pre-holiday treat, Deb will offer a light lunch at her home in Harpers Ferry for any trip participants who would like to join her.

Pre-registration for the walk is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on our website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Participants should plan to meet at 8:00 a.m. at the John Brown Fort in Harpers Ferry National Park. Parking may be available along Potomac Street near the train station.

From there, participants will walk across the Potomac River and follow the C&O Canal for a few miles. Species likely to be sighted include raptors, waterfowl, and other winter birds.

Participants should bring water and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions. The Society will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own.

The walk may be cancelled in the event of heavy weather.

For more information, go to the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Reminder: Eidolon Hunting and Hiking Schedule for December

If you're planning to visit the Eidolon Nature Preserve in December, please remember that the main firearm season for deer continues through December 6 and there are brief special seasons for antlerless deer December 18-20 and December 29-31. Please keep the following rules in mind:

- In accordance with state law, no hunting is permitted on Sundays, and hikers can use Eidolon's trails freely on those days during hunting season.
- During the early December portion of the main firearm season for deer, the trails will be closed to hikers on Saturday December 6.
- On all other days between December 1 and December 5, the trails will be open to hikers from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. only.

The preserve will be closed to hikers during the two special antlerless deer seasons (December 18-20 and December 29-31).

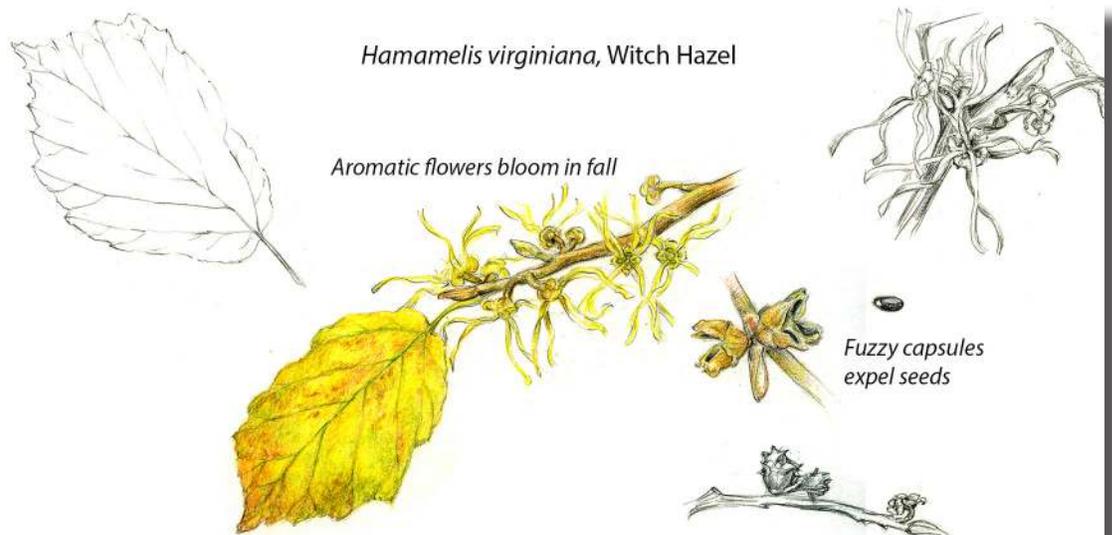
- Hunters must be licensed by the state and follow all applicable state laws and regulations.
- For their part, hikers should exercise appropriate caution at all times during hunting season and wear at least one item of blaze orange clothing.

Full details can be found on the PVAS website.

Hamamelis virginiana, Witch Hazel

A small tree or shrub of the understory, *Hamamelis virginiana* is a long-lived, multi-trunked, medium sized (usually 10-15') fall-flowering plant. It is tolerant of varied growing conditions, but likes rich, well-drained, acid-based soil (clay loams to sandy loams), in shade to part-shade, making it an easily grown, ornamental native (it will tolerate all but driest conditions, and will grow in poor soil and under polluted conditions).

The inch-long flowers are fragrant and persist after the leaves drop; the fruit is a fuzzy brown four-part capsule that, when dry, contracts and can eject the seeds as far as 30 feet. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds; deer and beaver browse it; and it is also useful as cover. It is a traditional medicinal plant, the aromatic bark, twigs and leaves used to sooth poison ivy, skin rashes, insect bites, and burns; commercially, an alcohol extract of the bark is used as an astringent, liniment, or as an aftershave. First Nations people (Cherokee, Chippewa, Iroquois, Menominee, Mohegan, and Potawatomi tribes) made tea from the leaves, and used it as a fever-reducer, cold medicine, eyewash, kidney and gynecological aid, as did early European settlers. The common name, Witch Hazel comes from the folk use of forked twigs as divining rods ("water witching").



Hamamelis virginiana, © C.Fremaux, 2013

Join January 26 PVAS Trip to National Weather Service Office

PVAS is sponsoring a tour of the National Weather Service's Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office in Sterling, VA near Dulles Airport on Monday, January 26.

The tour will begin at 10:00 a.m. and last about an hour.

Participants will get a first-hand look at the facility, meet its meteorologists, and learn how the Weather Service uses hardware and software programs to create forecasts. They will also learn about the equipment that is used to gather and monitor data and the Office's quality control methods.

There is no fee but everyone must register beforehand on the PVAS website. Federal regulations require that all participants must be U.S. citizens, and all adults must have a photo ID. Children are welcome but they must be at least 12 years old.

The tour is being organized for PVAS by Debbie Maiorano.

Anyone interested in carpooling should plan to meet her by 8:45 a.m. in the parking lot of the Charles Town Walmart store on Route 340 just east of Charles Town. The meeting point will be in front of the store's Market entrance, in the southeast portion of the parking lot, on the Route 340 side.

For those who prefer to drive to the Weather Service Office on their own, the address is 43858 Weather Service Road, off Old Ox Road (VA Route 606) just west of the Dulles Greenway toll road (VA Route 267). There are two gates to enter into the facility; either can be used. Drivers will be asked to ring a buzzer at the gate; let the guard staff know you are there for the Potomac Valley Audubon tour. Parking is available.

For more information contact Krista Hawley at 304-876-8471 or adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.



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): _____

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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:

Membership Chair, PVAS

PO Box 578

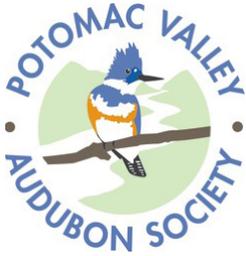
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Thank you for your support!



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 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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 bined Federal Campaign.
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MAIL TO:

December 2014

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 33, Issue 4

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 meet-
 ings take place the
 first Thursday of
 the month (Sep-
 tember through
 June). Meetings
 are open to all
 PVAS members.
 Please contact
 the President or
 Vice President if
 you would like to
 attend.

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