

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society

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President's Note

by Michael Sullivan, PVAS President

On behalf of the Board of Directors at PVAS, it gives me great pleasure to let you know that our organization is flourishing as 2016 draws to a close. Our Annual Report for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 was sent to most members and is readily available on-line at www.potomacaudubon.org/report. The strong financial picture it presents shows a profit for the Fiscal Year that ended on June 30th, and evidence that PVAS funds are effectively managed. It also describes the quantity and variety of programs that we provide to members and the community at large, and the important conservation initiatives we are engaged in. During the year we continued to implement our mission to **“preserve, restore and enjoy the natural world through education and action.”** This is the essence of our organization, what makes us tick. We'll continue to do so in 2017.

PVAS is poised for growth. Our finances are in excellent shape, and we recently received a very generous bequest. Our hard working staff is growing. They are knowledgeable and energetic, and they represent our organization exceptionally well. Our dependable volunteers are always there when we need them, and do more and more each year. The board of directors is fully engaged. From a programmatic standpoint, the demand for our environmental education and conservation programs is very strong based upon our 2016 member survey, requests from school systems, and the many threats to valuable habitat for birds and other forms of wildlife that we are all so aware of. The acquisition of the Cool Spring Preserve, our new property, presents us with great opportunity. It provides PVAS with a headquarters and a base from which we can expand our nature education and conservation efforts.

Your generous support over the years has put our organization in the very positive position it is in. We would not have been selected to receive the property at Cool Spring if it had not been for our strong financials, our ability to manage property, and our well-received programs.

We want to capitalize on acquisition of the Cool Spring Preserve, expand PVAS programs, and begin planning for a nature center. The community is very interested in the things that we do. Your contribution to our **2016 Annual Appeal**, no matter how great or how small, will enable us to move ahead with confidence.

Thank you for your support.

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

My, how we've grown! I had a staff meeting recently and suddenly there were five of us sitting around the table! With our growing programs, our new facility at Cool Spring Preserve, and our commitment to increasing our attention to preserve management and conservation, we are “staffing up.”

To help us meet these additional demands, we will be hiring a site manager and naturalist for our new Cool Spring Preserve. Amy Moore will be living on site at the cottage to help us keep an eye on things at the new preserve, and to increase our presence and programs on the site. She will be directing our Audubon Discovery Camp, teaching our Watershed Education program with schools in southern Jefferson County, and helping to get the Cool Spring Preserve established as a nature center.

Amy first worked for PVAS starting in 2012, first as a camp counselor for three summers and then as camp director in 2015. While studying at Towson University, Amy interned with the National Aquarium and Irvine Nature Center and worked for the University's Office of Sustainability as a Compost Educator. Amy was also very involved in her university's Outdoor Adventure program where she worked as an Outdoor Trip Leader, Kayak Clinic Instructor, Challenge Course Facilitator and Climbing Gym Supervisor.

After earning her BA in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Informal Environmental Education in 2015, she served as a Chesapeake Conservation Corps member, working as a naturalist at Meadowside Nature Center in Rockville, Maryland. Most recently, Amy worked as a field instructor at the Mountain Institute at Spruce Knob, West Virginia, where she led students on backpacking trips and taught Watershed Education programs. In her free time, Amy enjoys backpacking, biking, rock climbing, kayaking and cross-country skiing.

We are very excited to have Amy join our team to help make great things happen at Cool Spring Preserve.



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

Chickadees – Curiously Intelligent

By Wil Hershberger

There are two species of chickadees in our area: Carolina and Black-capped. Over most of the PVAS area, Carolina Chickadees are by far the predominate species seen and heard. In extreme western Berkeley County and Morgan County a few Black-capped Chickadees can be encountered. However, most of the chickadees in this western region are hybrids of Carolina and Black-capped. It is, for the most part, impossible to separate the two species within the region of hybridization.

Carolina Chickadees are small, active birds of forested landscapes. They have gray backs, faintly buffy-colored sides, black on the top of the head, black on the throat, white on the sides of the face and around the ears, and white undersides. They show white edging on the primaries of the folded wing. Black-capped Chickadees are slightly larger with more buffy coloration on the sides, the lower edge of the black on the throat is not as distinct, having a rougher margin, and there is more white showing on the folded wing in the area of the greater wing coverts (see the photo).

Chickadees are easily attracted to feeders and nest boxes. Carolina Chickadees are sometimes found nesting in the most interesting places – in the top of metal signposts and wash line crossbars. Both the male and female will excavate a cavity in a dead tree or old rotting wooden fence post. Once the cavity is ready, the female will build the nest from moss, bark strips, and animal hair or fine plant material. The female will lay 6 eggs that are incubated for about two weeks. The nestlings are completely dependent on the parents for warmth and food and will fledge at around 17 days after hatching. The female alone incubates the eggs and broods the young. Both parents feed the nestlings and recently fledged young.

The song of the male Carolina Chickadee is often compared to, “Fee-bee, fee-bay.” However, in our area many males sing five or even six-syllabled songs. <http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/84821>. True Black-capped Chickadees sing, “Hey-sweetie!” This simple “two-syllabled” song is very distinctive. The last note, sweetie, has an almost imperceptible pause creating the two-syllabled sweetie sound. <http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/163374>. Hybrid chickadee songs are either a mixture of the parent species songs or they sound more like the Black-capped song except the pause within the sweetie syllable is more pronounced and easily heard. <http://natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Hybrid%20Chickadee%20Morgan%20Co%20WV%2020150402.wav>.

There is a growing body of research that indicates that the calls of chickadees may well form a simple language. The classic, “Chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee,” calls are highly variable and appear to be context dependent (*“Information” and the chick-a-dee call: Communication with a complex vocal system.* J.R. Lucas and T.M. Freeberg. In: *The Ecology and Behavior of Chickadees and Titmice – An Integrated Approach.* Ken A. Otter editor. 2007). Seemingly, chickadees can relate information to other members of the flock regarding food, shelter, water, predators, aggression level, and more through their calls – amazing! These “Chick-a-dee” calls are composed of four note types; A, B, C, and D. The note type “D” appears to be key in flock-mate recognition. That is, each flock of chickadees has a unique type of note D. When flocks are artificially rearranged, the flock will adopt a new form of the D note within a week. These new findings make the phrase, “bird brain,” a complement rather than a jab.

Listen to the chickadees in your area. Look for flocks (which are composed of a few to more than a dozen individuals), listen to them and watch them interact. Can you tell who the dominant individual is in the flock? Does he or she always come to the feeder first or visit more often than other members of the flock? There is still a lot to learn about these amazing and curiously intelligent songbirds.



Black-capped Chickadee (left),
and Carolina Chickadee (right);
Photos © Wil Hershberger

PVAS Events

Join PVAS as we celebrate 30 Years of Birding 101!

Birding 101 has been part of the fabric of PVAS for 30 years. Instructors have included Wil Hershberger, Bob Dean, Matt Orsie, Jean Neely, Lynne Wiseman and Jim Keel. Bob Dean and Wil Hershberger have been part of the team for each of the 30 years!

This incredible milestone demands celebration! We will be holding a Birding 101 Reunion and Celebration on December 1, 2016 from 6-9pm at NCTC. Join us in "The Commons" of NCTC at 7 pm around the fireplace in the Roosevelt Room to reminisce, share stories, roast an instructor or two, and celebrate the years of introducing the community to birding by sharing the passion and knowledge of these incredible instructors.

We've arranged with NCTC the option for PVAS guests to purchase a meal prior to the program, between 6-7pm. A cash bar will also be available that evening.

Whether a Birding 101 alumnus or simply a fan of the instructors, please feel free to join PVAS as we celebrate 30 years of Birding 101.

This is a significant milestone in PVAS history, and to celebrate generosity of those instructors who have helped PVAS achieve it. Please help us reconnect with folks who have taken the course. We have the most recent 15 years of participant registrations, but registrations from earlier years are proving difficult to track down. Please help us spread the word far and wide - in particular reaching those who were part of Birding 101 in the early days.

Registration is required due to NCTC Security so please visit potomacaudubon.org to register. Hope to see you there!

Winter Tree ID Event Set for January 28

PVAS will offer a winter tree-identification field trip at Jefferson County's Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area on Saturday, January 28. Larry Stritch, a retired U.S. Forest Service botanist, will lead the trip. He will show how to identify trees through such clues as their branching habits and overall shape, twigs and buds, and bark.

The Wildlife Management Area is located on the east side of the Shenandoah River, about four miles east of Charles Town. Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the parking lot by the Wildlife Management Area boat launch site off Mission Road. The trip will last about two hours, and involved about two miles of walking over moderately even ground.

There will be no fee, and anyone with an interest is invited to attend. This is intended as a family-friendly event, and children

will be welcome. Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available at www.potomacaudubon.org. For more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

If there has been a major snow the day before or the weather is especially inclement on the day of the trip, it will be rescheduled. Those who participate should be sure to dress warmly and wear sturdy footwear.



Volunteer Spotlight

Have you met Nan Johnson?

If not, we know you want to, because Nan is a PVAS volunteer extraordinaire! No job is too complex or difficult for Nan. She is phenomenal at managing events from behind a computer and is the first one to roll up her sleeves in the field.

From her role as the Race Director for the Race for the Birds, or a caretaker at the Yankauer Nature Preserve, or managing the Day of Caring events for PVAS, Nan is a volunteer you can count on. Her heart is made of gold! Not only does she share her time, energy and expertise willingly to PVAS, but also to many other people and events around our community. Nan is one of those people who always 'has your back;' taking care of people comes naturally to her. Nan has a knack for anticipating what needs to be done next and taking immediate action. It is a pleasure to write this brief introduction to Nan and highlight her contributions to PVAS.

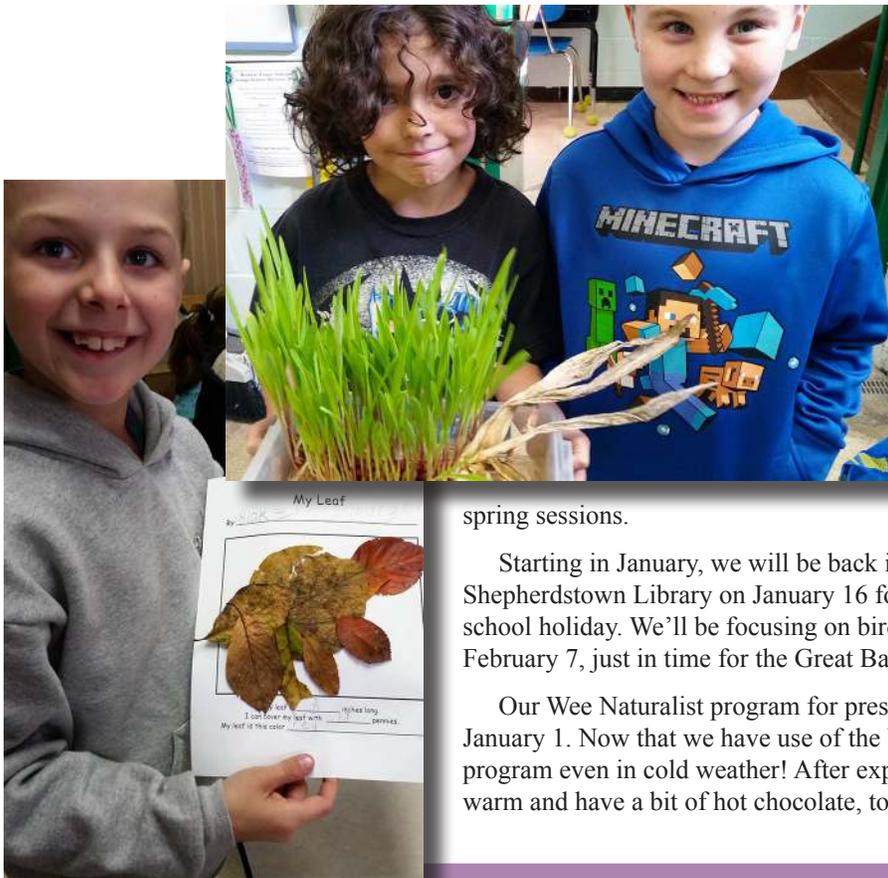
Thank you Nan for all you do, you are truly an amazing asset!

We know all of our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone who others should meet, please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

(Unfortunately, Nan is always in motion, so no photo was available!)

Family and Youth Programs

Looking to Spring Youth Programs After A Busy Fall



This fall, PVAS has been busy in the local schools! Not only did we spend September and October teaching the new fifth-grade sustainable energy program, but we were also in many other school classrooms.

We reached 510 students in 25 classrooms with our nature-oriented classroom programs. 72 students visited Yankauer Preserve. We reached another 1550 students in special programs like the Potomack Intermediate PEP (environmental) program, sustainability programs at two schools, and over 1,000 students at the Jefferson County Science Olympiad for sixth graders. Almost 700 students are participating in our fourth grade watershed program, with more signed on for the

spring sessions.

Starting in January, we will be back in many schools, and we'll also be at the Shepherdstown Library on January 16 for a special program on the Martin Luther King Jr. school holiday. We'll be focusing on birds at a program at the Brunswick MD library on February 7, just in time for the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Our Wee Naturalist program for preschoolers and a caring adult will begin again after January 1. Now that we have use of the building at Cool Spring Preserve, we can offer the program even in cold weather! After exploring outside, the Wee Nats can come inside to get warm and have a bit of hot chocolate, too!

Summer's Coming... Camp Preview

Every year, about this time, we mention our summer camp. This year, we are especially excited to note that we will have programs at both Yankauer Preserve and Cool Spring Preserve in June and July! Even more exciting is that Audubon Discovery Camps have a new Camp Manager! Amy Moore, who has been both camp staff and camp director at Yankauer Preserve will be in charge of the PVAS camping program beginning in January. She has some exciting new sessions planned for the summer!

We will, of course have sessions of Camp Survivor, but there will be new themes as well that focus on mammals, insects, birds, and nature art. Older campers (ages 11-13) will have opportunities to explore and discover more about nature with sessions designed especially for them. Preschoolers will have half-day camping opportunities. Since we don't know what the winter weather will bring, we try to offer a camp session early in June, even if public schools are not yet finished for the year. These sessions can be extra-helpful if you have a student in a private school or your child is homeschooled.

Registration for all sessions begins on February 1. The camp brochure with full information about sessions and dates will be posted on the PVAS website in late January. Most sessions will remain \$150 per camper, per week, although fees are higher for those who are not current PVAS members. You can avoid those fees by renewing your membership now (www.PotomacAudubon.org/member). T-Shirts will be available for an extra charge.

As in years past, we are able to provide scholarships to both our Audubon Discovery Camp and several quality overnight, nature-focused camps, thanks to the proceeds from our Fall birdseed sale. These camping opportunities include: Junior Nature Camp at the Schrader Nature Center in Wheeling, Burgundy Wildlife Center in Hampshire County, and the WV Junior Conservation Camp at Cedar Lakes in WV, as well as the National Audubon Society's Family Camp at Hog Island, Maine. In addition, teens can apply for scholarships to the Student Climate and Conservation Congress. The scholarship application is online on the PVAS website (www.PotomacAudubon.org/scholarships)

Camp can truly change a child's life, and PVAS offers some spectacular opportunities for all ages. Save a spot on your family's calendar in June and July for a week of day camp and consider a sleep-away camp for older campers (ages 11-17). Summer will be here before you know it!

Family and Youth Programs

Library Program

AmeriCorps volunteer Alison Zak hosted her first PVAS library program ‘Bear Hair: Animal Pelts and Poetry’ in Shepherdstown on Election Day. She talked about rhyming words, read silly animal poems, and brought animal skins for the children to see and feel.

Fourteen kids attended the program and enjoyed the opportunity to touch skunk, beaver, rabbit, and bear fur. The program concluded with a craft activity: bear mosaics made from a variety of natural materials. Alison is planning her next library program for MLK day (January 16, 2017). She is excited to share her love of primates and yoga with an active-participation, animal-themed folktale and monkey craft!



Watershed Program

The year-long watershed program is wrapping up its fall semester this month. Fourth grade classes in Berkeley County have continued to study watersheds of different scales, from the entire country to their own schoolyards. Classes got outside and became watershed scientists for lesson four, during which they filled out data sheets and mapped the flow of water on the land behind their schools.

We concluded the first half of the program with a lesson about trash: what it is, where it goes and why, and how it can be reused/recycled. Students applied their math skills AND their creativity in making a ‘trash pizza,’ a crafty activity that demonstrated the percentages of various trash materials present in our waterways.

Sustainable Energy Program Wraps Up

At the end of October, PVAS finished the pilot program for our new, multi-session, fifth grade program focused on sustainable energy. A detailed report was delivered to the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation in early November, which provided information about the project and lesson plans, as well as the results of the student assessments (knowledge acquired).

The teachers who participated rated the program a 5 on a scale of 1-5 and felt that it was age-appropriate and a good match with the WV learning standards. Teachers especially liked the sessions dealing with solar and wind power, but it was hard for them to ignore how captivating the Sockett soccer ball and Pulse jump ropes were because these “toys” have the capability of providing several hours of light or charging a cell phone. Teachers told PVAS: *“We loved this program. My students were engaged, excited, and enjoyed the hands-on experiences.”* *“I loved Energy and would love to have you more!!!”* *“It was all enriching, engaging, and thought provoking. Students loved it. They were exposed to ideas they wouldn’t know otherwise. I do plan to utilize and build on the information provided to enhance future lessons.”*

Just for fun, here are some of the questions we asked students on the Pre-and post-assessment. You can answer true or false for each and see how you do on your knowledge of alternative energy.

1. You can save money by changing the type of lightbulbs you use.
2. Greenhouse gases are caused when large amounts of carbon dioxide are released into the Earth’s atmosphere.
3. Things that are a dark color absorb more heat and stay warmer longer than things that are light colored.
4. Windmills (turbines) produce electricity only when the wind moves the blades.
5. All 60-watt light bulbs use the same amount of energy.
6. When it is cloudy, solar energy panels don’t produce electricity.

(All are true except the last two.)

The program is available to any fifth grade classroom in the Eastern Panhandle, either as a complete, 4-part program or as individual sessions. The hand-cranked generator is also being used in school science night programs this fall. If you are interested in learning more about this program, contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org)



Birding News and Events

December 3 Bird Walk for Late Risers at Cool Spring Preserve

PVAS is sponsoring a bird walk for late risers at its new Cool Spring Nature Preserve on Saturday, December 3. The walk, led by local birding expert Joette Borzik, will start at 9:00 a.m. and last about two-and-a-half hours. It will cover about 1.5 miles of rolling trails. Possible species to be sighted will include wintering Sparrows, Woodpeckers, Finches, Brown Creeper, Tufted Titmouse, Nuthatch, and year-round resident birds.

The event will be free and all are welcome, especially beginning bird watchers. Pre-registration is encouraged, but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress for the prevailing weather, and bring drinking water. The trip may be cancelled if weather conditions are poor.

The Cool Spring Preserve is located at 1469 Lloyd Road in Jefferson County, about six miles southwest of Charles Town. For more information, contact Joette at pep4223@comcast.net or 240-440-4221.

Christmas Bird Counts Set for December 17 and January 2

PVAS has set Saturday, December 17 and Monday, January 2 as the dates for this winter's annual Christmas Bird Counts in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. These local-area counts are part of a massive, historic 116-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. Alternatively, 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 17 Charles Town count encompasses a circle that is centered near Charles Town, and stretches from the Shannondale area to the east to near Middleway to the west. The circle for the January 2 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 304-671-4995.

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>. 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.

Join December 17 Bird Walk at Hagerstown Kiwanis Park

PVAS, the City of Hagerstown, and the Washington County Bird Club will sponsor a bird walk at Hagerstown's new Kiwanis Park on Saturday, December 17. The walk, led by local birding expert Sandy Sagalkin, will start at 8:00 a.m. and last one and a half hours.

It will be free and open to everyone, regardless of their birding experience or skills, but pre-registration will be required. Register and get full information on the City of Hagerstown's website at www.hagerstownmd.org/birdwalks.

The Kiwanis Park is located at 371 Dynasty Drive in Hagerstown, behind the medical professional buildings on Opal Court, off Eastern Boulevard. For more information, contact Sandy at sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com or 240-291-6465.



Photo © North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Birding News and Events

PVAS Sponsoring December 11 C&O Canal Bird Walk

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk along the C&O Canal towpath in the Williamsport MD area on Sunday, December 11. The walk, led by local birding expert Sandy Sagalkin, will begin at 8:00 a.m. Canal Visitor Center at Cushwa Basin, and it will last about three hours. The Canal towpath offers good birding opportunities, since it is a major stop for migrating birds.

The walk will be free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of their birding skills. It will involve easy walking over level ground, and children and families will be welcome. Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. Registration is



available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring along insect repellent and drinking water. Binoculars will be provided if needed. Directions to the Williamsport Canal Visitor Center can be found on the Canal website at www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/williamsportvisitorcenter.htm.

The walk may be canceled or postponed if weather conditions are poor. For more information, go to the PVAS website or contact Sandy at sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com or 240-291-6465.

Antietam Bird Walk Set for Dec. 24

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk along the Final Attack Trail on the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, MD on Saturday, December 24. The walk will be 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 1/2 to 3 hours, and cover mostly level terrain. 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 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 sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com or 240-291-6465.



December 21 Bird Walk at Harpers Ferry

Join Deb Hale for an early winter bird walk in the Virginius Island section of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on Wednesday, December 21. There is no fee, and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome. Species likely to be sighted include raptors, waterfowl, and other winter birds. The walk will last about 3 hours and involve about 2 miles of walking along level ground, including some railroad tracks. Afterwards, participants are welcome to join Deb for a light lunch at her home in Harpers Ferry.

Participants should plan to meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the intersection of Shenandoah Street and Route 340. 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.

Pre-registration is recommended but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website. For more information, or to check on possible weather cancellation, contact Deb at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

Birding News and Events

2017 “Birding 101” Course Open for Registration

We are now accepting registrations for our 2017 “Birding 101” course for beginning birders, which will be held during April. This course is always very popular, and enrollment is limited to 24, so those who are interested are encouraged to sign up soon. The course is open to people of all ages, but children younger than 15 must be accompanied by an adult, throughout the program.

The course will be taught by two leading local bird experts: Wil Hershberger and Lynne Wiseman. It will utilize both evening classroom sessions and daytime field trips. Participants will learn everything from bird identification, to birding techniques and resources, to field etiquette. It will focus on bird species that are found in the region.

To register for the course, go to the PVAS website and look for “Birding 101” under “Birding” or “Events Calendar.” You can also contact Krista Hawley at 703-303-1026 or adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.

The evening classroom sessions will start on Thursday, April 6 and be held each of the following three Thursdays (April 13, 20 and 27). All of these sessions will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Conservation Training Center just north of Shepherdstown. The field trips will be held at various locations around the Panhandle from roughly 7:00 a.m. to 12 noon on the Saturdays following the Thursday evening sessions (April 8, 15, 22 and 29).

Tuition for the full course package of four classroom sessions and four field trips (a total of 28 hours of instruction) is \$90 for PVAS members and \$110 for nonmembers. The higher fee for nonmembers includes a one-year family membership in PVAS.

This course is part of PVAS’s “Natural History Workshop” series. The series is 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. That program can take a year or more to complete.



Birding 101 Class of 2016

Conservation

Chimney Swift Project Update

Shepherdstown’s biannual Chimney Swift migration will continue to be a treasured natural phenomenon. Upon learning about the anticipated demolition of the largest documented Chimney Swift roosting site in West Virginia, community members and local stakeholders sprang into action! To ensure Chimney Swift roosting habitat remains, Shepherd University is collaborating with PVAS, the WV Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

While roosts are vacant this winter, Sara Cree’s chimney will be closed and the Knutti Hall Chimney will be uncapped. In previous years Knutti Hall was a popular roosting site for the Chimney Swifts, hosting over 1,000 individuals simultaneously. Re-opening Knutti Hall’s chimney top will provide roosting habitat in lieu of the existing Sara Cree’s chimney that faces demolition. Plans are also being drafted to build additional roosting structures elsewhere on Shepherd’s Campus. These chimney-like structures will offer supplemental roosting habitat in order to accommodate large numbers of Chimney Swifts.

A community meeting to talk about the Shepherd University Chimney Swift Project will be held December 13th, at 5pm in the auditorium of the Robert C. Byrd Congressional History and Education Building in the auditorium, which is located on the main floor. This meeting will give community members more information about the Chimney Swift Project on campus, and allow any questions or feedback to be shared.

PVAS is proud to partner with Shepherd University on this conservation effort. Chimney Swifts are a species of concern due to their dramatic population decline over the past few decades. They are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. To learn more about Chimney Swifts please visit www.chimneyswifts.org. To donate to the local Chimney Swift Conservation Project please visit www.potomacaudubon.org and click on “Support PVAS” and “Donate Now.” Your contribution will help with the construction expenses for the roosting habitat at Shepherd University.

Conservation

Reshaping the Vulture Visage

Guided by curiosity, amusement, and adoration, nearly 200 people attended the educational vulture events in Bolivar on November 4, 2016. The goal was to provide better understanding and appreciation for vultures. Both Black and Turkey Vulture species commonly congregate in the Harpers Ferry and Bolivar Communities as they migrate between their northern and southern territories. Unfortunately, their presence is not always well received, and citizen complaints have dubbed vultures a “problem species” in previous years. To address this, PVAS organized a special vulture event to raise awareness and inform community members about the virtues of vultures.

An evening Vulture Walk was led by local birding expert Deb Hale, who guided participants along Bolivar Heights and to Nash Farm where the vultures, diurnal birds, rest at night. Gathered together at Nash Farm, participants observed over fifty vultures gracefully assemble and soar against the crisp autumn sky. Those who attended concurred that it was an impressive display.

Katie Fallon, our featured guest, held two presentations. First she spoke with 130 students at Harpers Ferry Middle School Friday morning. Throughout the presentation students eagerly shared their questions and comments as Katie demystified vultures using humor and tact. During a later event at the Bolivar Community Center, Katie spoke to a second audience of comparably curious and entertained participants. The highlight of both presentations was Katie’s friend Boris, an educational Turkey Vulture. Boris sustained permanent injuries to her left wing after she was shot in the wild; she was later rehabilitated by the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, in Morgantown. Boris is forever unable to fly and live independently, but has proven herself to be patient and superbly amusing during public presentations. Both Katie and Boris were very engaging presenters.

PVAS is elated by the turnout and support of our first ever Vulture Program. Thank you to those who participated. If you would like to learn more about our presenter Katie Fallon, an esteemed author and bird expert please visit: www.katiefallon.com or visit www.accawv.org to learn about Katie’s avian rehabilitation center. Katie Fallon’s upcoming book, *Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird*, is available now for pre-order on Amazon.com.



Katie Fallon and Boris the educational Turkey Vulture

Downsizing? Renovating? Remodeling?

Help PVAS furnish and equip the Cool Spring Cottage! Amy Moore is coordinating the furnishing effort. She can be reached at Amy@PotomacAudubon.org or (240) 818-4714. All donations are tax deductible!

PVAS seeks the following items for the hopefully in time for January habitation:

Furniture (couch, chairs, desks, tables); Kitchen appliances (microwave, toaster); Kitchen utensils, plates; Tools (screwdrivers, hammers, ladder, tape measure); Bed (double); Washer/Dryer; Vacuum Cleaner (with tube attachments).

Notes from the Preserves

Cool Spring Preserve Open House

November 13th was a perfect fall day to celebrate and explore PVAS’s new Cool Spring Preserve. Over 100 guests joined the festivities including children’s activities, guided walks, tree plantings, and a presentation by the studio’s builder, Al Cobb.

All enjoyed delicious soups, snacks and cookies prepared by our amazing events committee. An enormous thank you to all who helped PVAS put its best foot forward at our newest preserve. It was a wonderful opportunity to see familiar faces from PVAS’s past as well as meet new acquaintances.

Hope to see you all again there soon!



Photos of Cool Springs Open House by Stan Oaks



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 3 and there are brief special seasons for antlerless deer December 15-17 and December 26-31.

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 3.
- On all other days from November 28 through December 2, 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.

- 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.

Notes from the Preserves

Nature Preserve News

Our Nature Preserves receive fewer visitors during the winter months, but they remain important habitat for countless wildlife species. A change in seasons brings new species, and with snow, a new lens to observe the natural world. Without a foliage covered canopy, birds and their nests can more easily be spotted. With snow covered ground, animal tracks can be identified and followed. Put your naturalist skills to the test and explore our nature preserves this winter. We are confident your adventures will be rewarding!

Yankauer has been hosting a monthly maintenance work event on the first day of every month. December 1, 2016 will be an “End of the Year Gathering at Yankauer” from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. With warm drinks, cookies and great company, we will congregate to celebrate Yankauer, and also to accomplish some trail clearing and to create some winter wildlife habitat. Everyone is welcome, and all necessary tools will be supplied on site. Maintenance days for 2017 may begin again in February or March, depending on the weather.

Eidolon has also hosted maintenance days with the help of Mary Youngblood and Sylvia Thompson. Trail clearing and invasive species removal is an ongoing task there, and additional hands are always welcome! Work will be done this winter to remove standing dead trees and to re-establish trail markers.



Stauffer's Marsh is a phenomenal bird watching site during the winter months. With discreet viewing stations, open terrain and the wetland area, Stauffer's Marsh is a favorite site for birdwatchers. Future management efforts plan to expand grassland habitat at Stauffer's Marsh, improving the quantity and quality of the biodiversity there.

Cool Spring Preserve, our newest property, is open to all nature enthusiasts and hikers during daylight hours. A “Late Risers” bird walk will be held at Cool Spring Preserve (CSP) on December 3 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. CSP is a well-known birding hotspot, and the creation of a bird list there is an ongoing effort. If you visit Cool Spring Preserve and have a unique sighting, please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org so that we can continue to build the bird list.

All of our nature preserves are open to the public during daylight hours. Please check our calendar of events to attend the many organized and educational programs held at the preserves.

Volunteers Wanted for December 1 Yankauer Work Day

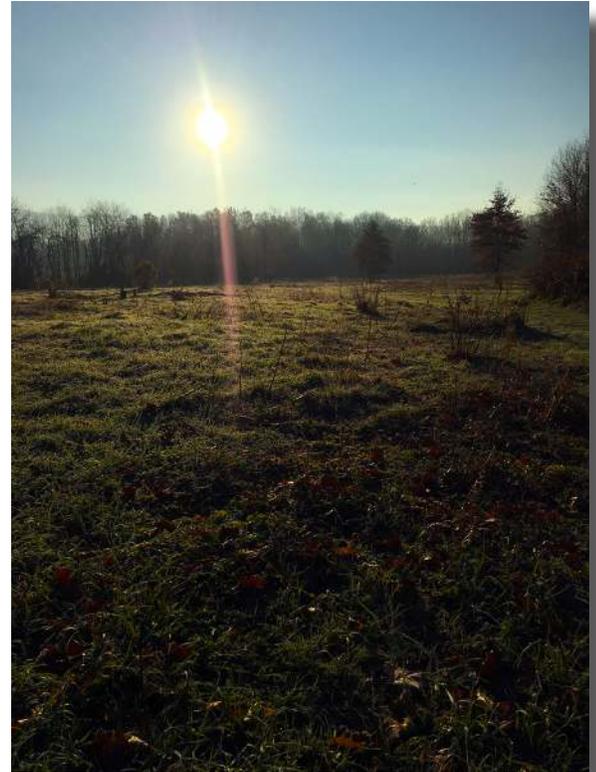
We're looking for volunteers to help with maintenance work at the Yankauer Nature Preserve on Thursday, December 1. The work will include clearing hiking trails, removing invasive Autumn Olive shrubs, and building brush piles to enhance winter habitat for wildlife. Anyone willing to pitch in is welcome.

The work will start at 9:00 a.m. and last until about noon. All necessary tools, hot drinks, water, and some snacks will be provided. Participants should plan to bring gloves and a refillable water bottle or cup.

The removal of invasive shrubs will be supervised by a certified herbicide applicator, and will offer a good learning experience for anyone interested in managing invasive plants on their own properties. Those who want to help with this should bring protective eyewear, waterproof gloves and shoes, and be sure to wear long pants and shirts with long sleeves.

If the weather is inclement on December 1, the work day will be shifted to Monday, December 5. If there is snow on the ground, the work day will be cancelled and rescheduled to some other time.

The Yankauer Preserve is located on Whiting's Neck Road, just off Scrabble Road, about seven miles north of Shepherdstown. Detailed directions can be found on the PVAS website. For more information, contact Bridget Tinsley at 304-261-6016 or bridget@potomacaudubon.org.



Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Sign Up Now for 2017 Master Naturalist Program

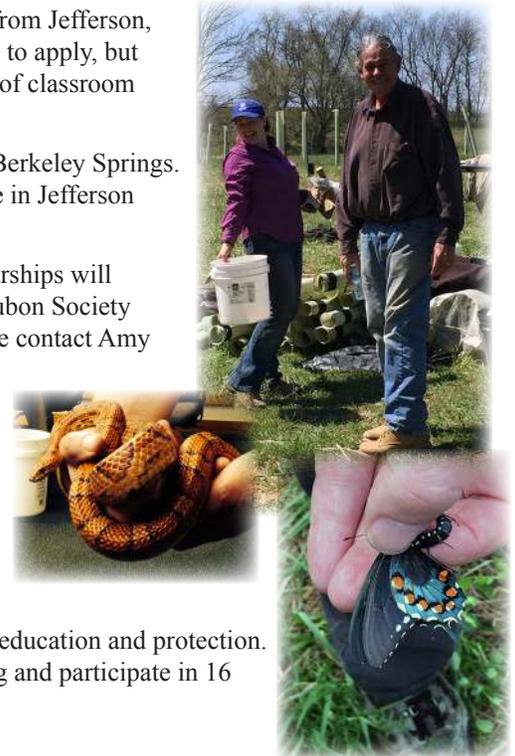
The Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is now accepting applications for its 2017 classes. Instruction will begin the weekend of April 1-2, 2017 and continue monthly through October. Applications must be postmarked by January 31. Enrollment is strictly limited to 20 persons each year.

Established in 2007, the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is sponsored by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society and is a chapter of the State of West Virginia Master Naturalist Program. Its classes are open to anyone who wants to be certified as a Master Naturalist by the state of West Virginia. 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, 64 hours of classroom time and 30 hours of volunteer work are required to complete the certification cycle.

Classes are held at several locations in Jefferson County and at Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Springs. This year, the first weekend of classes will be held at our new Cool Spring Nature Preserve in Jefferson County.

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. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Evrard at 301-800-1459 or amyyoung4@gmail.com.

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. To remain certified they must take 8 hours of training and participate in 16 hours of volunteer activity annually.



Master Naturalist Open House & PVAS Program Set for January 11

Please join Potomac Valley Master Naturalists for an Open House on January 11, 2016 at 6 p.m., at Hospice of the Panhandle. The Open House will precede the monthly PVAS program.

This will be an opportunity to meet Master Naturalists, see examples of volunteer projects, and have your questions answered about the volunteer and training opportunities offered by West Virginia's Master Naturalist Program. There is no charge, and anyone 16 years or older is welcome to attend.

Master Naturalist programs are patterned after the long-established Master Gardener program, and operate on a state-by-state basis. They train individuals in the fundamentals of natural history and nature interpretation as a way of promoting responsible stewardship of natural resources. West Virginia's Master Naturalist Program is one of the first in the nation, and the local Potomac Valley Chapter, which was established by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society in 2007, is one of the first chapters in the state.

Immediately following the Open House, at 7:00 p.m., the Potomac Valley Audubon Society will hold its public program, which will feature the showing of an award-winning documentary, *Green Fire*, about the famous American Naturalist Aldo Leopold. Afterwards, a panel of Master Naturalists from the Eastern Panhandle will discuss a visit they made this past summer to the Aldo Leopold Foundation, in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

The Hospice facility's address is 330 Hospice Lane, Kearneysville. The Audubon events are 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 the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Report from the Owl Prowl

by Joette Borzik

I didn't see it coming. I had a list with 27 registered participants. It's rare when they all show up, but the cars kept coming and coming. I realized I had just become a parking tender. Amazingly, we got all the vehicles parked without obstructing the driveway, and by the time it was all done, I had 43 smiling faces who showed up for the Owl Prowl, sponsored by PVAS, and hosted at the historic Claymont mansion property. When it rains, it pours!

I was thrilled to see Lynne Wiseman in the crowd, and she immediately became assistant trip leader positioned at the middle to back of the line. (Thanks Lynne!) She helped me get binoculars to those that needed them, and then we were off.

I had arrived early to do some logistics, and had started the bird list. Those interested in seeing birds were directed to the front of the line, and those who joined for the scenery, fresh air and companionship joined the back of the line. Thank you to all who participated: everyone was terrific, cooperative, engaged, and especially quiet when we looked for owls. Our young naturalist, Noah, spotted 4 Whitetail Deer as we started up the driveway. The sunset was lovely, as was the barn with the tile silo that we walked past.

As it got dark, the White-throated Sparrows were very active and vocal, singing "Old Sam Peabody," plus their loud chip notes. We had flyovers of Canada Geese and European Starlings, and I documented a Cedar Waxwing flock while folks were arriving. No Eastern Screech-owls responded to playback in two locations (one location was where I had experienced them before). A little later, we heard two Barred Owls doing a duet, which may have been the reason no screech-owls vocalized. No Great Horned Owls were seen or heard, although they had a nest on the property this past breeding season. The Barred Owls responded when I called for the Great Horned Owl.

As we neared the end of our walk, we could see the glow and sparks from a campfire, attended by Larry Smith and Clark Dixon, who I jokingly called "Lewis & Clark." Clark, Master Dutch Oven Chef Supreme, had his famous peach cobbler, already cooked over the red-hot coals, for the group to enjoy. (Thanks Clark!) The marshmallows were also in supply, and the line formed for the treats.

Stars were visible, and I could faintly see the Milky Way. By quitting time, the Milky Way was nicely visible, for the Eastern Panhandle. I realized how few places we have left in Jefferson County where you can get away from light pollution. Claymont is one of those places. As the evening progressed, the humidity increased, and the temperature dropped to 45 degrees F. You could feel it when you left the comfort of the campfire.

When stomachs were full from warm cobbler and marshmallows, the crowd trickled slowly back to their vehicles via the path marked with glow sticks, placed earlier by Larry. (Thanks Larry!) It was the end of a perfect evening. We had 21 species total from 5:00 PM to 8:15 PM.

Our bird list: Canada Goose: 15 flyover; Mallard (Northern): 2, in the wetland at the start of walk; Turkey Vulture (Northern): 4; Red-shouldered Hawk (*lineatus* Group): 1, heard while birders were arriving; Mourning Dove (Mainland): 7; Barred Owl (Northern): 2, singing a duet in the distance; Red-bellied Woodpecker: 1; Blue Jay: 2; American Crow: 1; Carolina Chickadee: 1; Brown Creeper (*americana/nigrescens*): 1, heard as birders were arriving; Carolina Wren (Northern): 1; American Robin (*migratorius* Group): 2; Northern Mockingbird: 1, heard as birders were arriving; European Starling: 300; Cedar Waxwing: 21, flew over as birders were arriving; White-throated Sparrow: 12; Northern Cardinal (Common): 1; House Finch (Common): 2, seen as birders were arriving; Purple Finch (Eastern): 1, seen in the wetland as birders were arriving; House Sparrow: 1.

Did You Know...?

West Virginia Master Naturalists are now holding their annual conference in different parts of West Virginia. At the 2016 conference at North Bend State Park, during the business meeting, Chief Logan Lodge and State Park was selected as the site for the 2017 conference. The dates will be June 9-11, and the Kanawha Valley Chapter will host the conference.

Looking ahead to 2018, it was decided that the host site for the 2018 conference will be Cacapon Resort State Park in Berkeley Springs. The dates will be June 15-17, and PVMN will serve as host chapter.

A planning committee has been formed for the 2018 conference. As we get closer to the date, we will need many volunteers to make the conference a great experience for Master Naturalists visiting the Eastern Panhandle. Stay tuned for more information.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists Honor Graduates and Members on October 29

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists marked another great year by gathering for their annual meeting. In addition to conducting a short business meeting, they shared a delicious potluck lunch, honored new and recertifying Master Naturalists, and raised money for scholarships through a silent auction.

Students from the current and previous classes, who completed all 64 hours of coursework and 30 hours of volunteer service, were recognized as Certified West Virginia Master Naturalists: Sandy Sagalkin (2009), Linda DeGraf (2013), Andrew Obringer (2015), Paul Breitenbach (2016), Pamela Ellis (2016), Gretchen Kemman (2016), Lance Strait (2016), Sylvia Thompson (2016), and Charles “C.J.” White (2016). Each received a certification of completion, a West Virginia Master Naturalist patch, and a Potomac Valley Master Naturalist name badge.

Thirty-two Master Naturalists who completed their annual eight hours of training and sixteen hours of volunteer service were acknowledged with recertification cards for 2015: Ora Dixon (2006), Cheryl Jennings (2006), Wanda Miller (2007), Ellen Murphy (2007), Mary Youngblood (2007), Laura Clark (2008), Carol Del-Colle (2008), Kathryn Henry (2008), Eldon Winston (2008), Virginia Winston (2008), Nan Johnson (2009), Kelly Wolf (2009), Vicki Blazer (2010), Susan Fluharty (2010), Mary Beth Grove (2010), Louis Scavnicky (2011), Joette Borzik (2012), Jennifer Jones (2012), Mary Lynn Robinson (2012), Marie Van Valkenburgh (2012), Keith Jones (2013), Diana Pavlik (2013), Lynne Wiseman (2013), Mary Etta Boesl (2014), Phil Folk (2014), Charlotte Fremaux (2014), Gail Berrigan (2015), Aileen Curfman (2015), Amy Evrard (2015), Christine Marshall (2015), Karlin Sink (2015), and Larry Smith (2015). Master Naturalists have until the end of the year to complete and turn in their training and volunteer hours, so more recertifications are expected.

Five individuals who have been active Master Naturalists for five years were honored, receiving a certificate and field bag: Lou Scavnicky, Joette Borzik, Jennifer Jones, Mary Lynn Robinson, and Marie Van Valkenburgh. Two individuals were honored for ten years of service: Ellen Murphy and Wanda Miller. Five Master Naturalists who have gone above and beyond with volunteer service hours (100+) to the Potomac Valley Audubon Society were honored with the Chairman’s Century Club award: Joette Borzik, Charlotte Fremaux, Mary Lynn Robinson, Lou Scavnicky, and Lynne Wiseman. Congratulations to all graduates and honorees this year!

The silent auction and book sale were once again a highlight of the day, raising \$566.25 in just under two hours. The money collected from this event goes towards scholarships for the Master Naturalist Program.

During the business meeting, Coordinating Committee Chair Clark Dixon shared the successes of the year, including a number of events celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the chapter, and announced that the Potomac Valley chapter will host the West Virginia Master Naturalists annual conference in 2018. Elections for the Coordinating Committee were held, with three new at-large representatives elected: Paul Breitenbach, Pamela Ellis, and Flo Wilbik. The committee said goodbye to Mary Etta Boesl, who finished her two-year stint as Volunteer Coordinator on the committee, and at-large representatives Diana Pavlik and Wanda Miller.

More information about the PVAS Master Naturalist Program, including application and recertification forms, can be found at www.potomacaudubon.org/masternat.



Ellen Murphy and Wanda Miller receive 10-year honors.



The newest Master Naturalists include (top row): Andrew Obringer, C.J. White, Paul Breitenbach; (bottom row): Gretchen Kemman, Pamela Ellis, Mary Ellen York, Sylvia Thompson.

Shepherdstown Christmas Parade

Join PVAS as we march down German Street on December 3rd at 10am!

Line up begins at 8:30am on Church Street. PVAS will have a banner, some signs, stuffed animal puppets, and even a few animal costumes to don if you choose!

Parade volunteers will be stationed along Church Street and will tell you the order in which we'll march down the street.

Hope to see you there!



JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

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

Details available at potomacaudubon.org/member

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

Membership Form

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



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.

Mark your calendars! Race for the Birds is scheduled for Saturday, April 8, 2017

We are very excited announce that Carolyn Seen and Jay Clemens, the new owners of Wild Goose Farm, have generously offered to continue to host Race for the Birds.

Race registration will be open at runsignup.com on December 1, 2016.

Please make sure to visit our website raceforthebirds.org and like us on Facebook!



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 CFC#29061



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MAIL TO:

December 2016

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Volume 35, 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.

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

- President: Michael Sullivan (2018) msullivanwv@gmail.com
 Vice President (*acting*): Jane Vanderhook (2017)..... janehook@frontiernet.net
 Secretary: Diana Gavia (2018) jpikester@comcast.net
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