

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

VALLEY VIEWS

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February 2012

New Website Coming On Line!

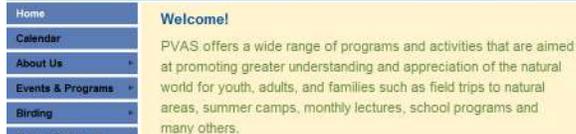
On February 1, PVAS is planning on launching its new website! The new website will allow members to join (or renew) online, register for programs/events on line, view well-organized information, an interactive calendar of events, and more!

The birding committee is even including a birding map that features birding “hot spots” in the panhandle, listing how to get to each location, the natural history of the site, and what birds you might see there.

The banner of the website will change with each season, and will



feature photos by Wil Hershberger that he is generously allowing us to use.



We're very excited about this upgrade. Kristin Kaineg, of Kaineg Designs, has been working on the website for several months and we are excited to launch it! We welcome your feedback on ways to continue to improve this “gateway” to PVAS and its programs!

Summer Camp Preview —It's Our 10th Anniversary!

In just a few weeks, registration for our summer day camp programs will begin as campers anticipate another fun-filled summer of nature programming! This is our tenth year and promises to be the best year yet! Online registrations are scheduled to begin on February 1 for members of PVAS. Open registration for non-PVAS members begins February 15.

Sessions this year will be held at Yankauer Nature Preserve, the Peter Burr Farm, and a new site near Shannondale. Camp dates are May 29-July 20. The first two weeks are for preschoolers; traditional day camp sessions for ages 6-13 begin June 11. The base price for sessions is \$150 per camper, but fees range from \$50 up to \$250 for the teen high adventure sessions.

See *Summer Camp*, Page 2

Coming Soon: Summer Camp Scholarships

It may be winter outside but it's time to start spreading the word about this year's PVAS summer camp scholarship program!

Every year throughout its history PVAS has provided scholarships to help area youngsters attend nature-oriented summer camps. The scholarship program is supported partly by our fall birdseed sale. Additional community sources also support scholarships to our own day camp program at the Yankauer Nature Preserve.

Last year we provided scholarships for children to attend the Mountain Adventures Summer Camp near Spruce Knob, West Virginia; the Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp near Wheeling; and our own Audubon Discovery summer day camp at Yankauer.

See *Camp Scholarships*, Page 2

We Still Need Your Help With Our Annual Fundraising Appeal!

As this is being written in mid January, PVAS's annual fundraising appeal—which was launched on December 1—has raised \$22,612 from 123 families and individuals.

That's \$1,433—or about 7 percent—more than we'd raised by this time last year. And that's a great result given our region's continuing economic problems.

Thanks to all of you who have already contributed!

But we've still got a long way to go to at least match last year's annual appeal total of \$31,596.

If you haven't contributed yet, please consider doing so now if you can. No gift is too small and any amount will be appreciated.

You can contribute to our annual appeal anytime through the end of March.

If you've received this newsletter by regular mail, a return envelope is included for your convenience (be sure to add your own postage). If you receive our newsletters by email, you can send contributions to: PVAS, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

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



Hello everyone:

It's time for me to make a fundraising pitch again, so here goes.

First, thanks to all of you who've helped make our annual fundraising appeal such a success so far.

We know times are still tough for a lot of households, and we're grateful for any and all contributions we receive.

In the end, last year's annual appeal raised \$31,596. Right now, we've raised about 72 percent of that amount. We'd like at least to match last year's total this year and based on the response we've had so far we're hopeful that we can—but we've only got until the end of March to do it.

So if you've been planning to give but just haven't gotten around to it, we hope you'll do so soon.

Or if you haven't really thought about giving, we hope you'll consider it.

Your support really does matter. As you read this newsletter, look at all the different services PVAS is providing to the community. For example:

- The programs we offer in area schools are continuing to evolve. Our fourth grade Watershed Education program—which teaches youngsters about the importance of protecting our streams and rivers—is beginning its ninth year.
- Registration is about to open for this year's PVAS summer camp programs. Once again, in addition to our traditional camp sessions at the Yankauer Nature Preserve, we'll be offering a special, history-focused camp at the Peter Burr Farm in Jefferson County.
- Our Master Naturalist Program for adults is going strong and will begin its sixth year of instruction in March.
- A group of volunteers is already at work at our new Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County, helping to maintain the property and determine future trail routes.

The funds we raise through our annual appeals are critical to sustaining these kinds of activities.

Please do help if you possibly can.

—Peter Smith

Camp Scholarships (continued from page 1)

Scholarships to other camps are usually available as well.

Please start thinking now about eligible youngsters, and be sure to encourage them to apply. For further details about specific camps, dates, ages, and application forms, watch future issues of Valley Views and check our web site, www.potomacaudubon.org.

Kathryn Henry will once again be our summer camp scholarship coordinator. You may contact her at 304-876-6681, or at dhenny@myexcel.com.

“Race for the Birds” Is April 21, Not April 12

The December issue of *Valley Views* contained the wrong date for PVAS's 11th Annual Race for the Birds in April. The race will be held on April 21, not April 12. We regret the error.

The event will be held on the campus of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) near Shepherdstown, in conjunction with the Center's 2012 open house.

To register, and for more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. Or contact the race directors, James and Suzy Munnis, at jmunnis@earthlink.net or 304-876-6784.

As before, the Race for the Birds will include two professionally timed races—one 4.9 miles long and another 7.7 miles long. There will also be 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 4.9- and 7.7-mile 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 \$25.

All proceeds will be used to support PVAS's programs for children, and all fees will be tax deductible.

Summer Camp (continued from page 2)

Sessions at Yankauer will feature “Nature Detectives”, “Hop, Slither, Sneak!”, and the always popular, “Camp Survivor.” A special 4-day week over the Fourth of July holiday will be “Camp Surprise.” The Peter Burr site will host “The Simple Life” and “Nature Detectives.” Sessions for middle school teens include “Wild Wings” at Yankauer, which will include an afternoon of caving, and “Life on the Frontier” at Peter Burr Farm which will feature a day trip to Old Bedford Village in Pennsylvania. Teen sessions at For Love of Children Outdoor Education Center, located in Shannondale, include “Into the Wild,” (hiking on the Appalachian Trail), “Adventure Challenge” (ropes and rock climbing), and “Camp Survivor, Part Deux.”

Campers ages 13 and older can apply to be Junior Staff by requesting an application at pvasmail@gmail.com. Junior staff will be selected from those who apply.

Also returning this year is our Digital Photo Camp for high school students. Those details are still being worked out, but we promise to get the dates to you ASAP! If you would like to be among the first to know, or have other questions about camp, send Ellen Murphy an email at pvasmail@gmail.com or call 304-676-8739.



School Program Update

PVAS continues to have a presence in the public and private schools through numerous nature programs. In Fall 2011, we reached almost 1,500 students in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties through nature programs at school or at Yankauer AND an additional 475 at the Jefferson County Science Olympiad AND an additional 800 students in Kindergarten, First, Fourth, and Fifth grades through special funding from WV DNR. That's a bunch of kids!

Our spring Watershed program continues in seven schools in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties and will start soon in Morgan County. This spring, we will begin piloting our new "Bugs and Beasties!" preschool program which is being funded by the Two Rivers Giving Circle. This program will bring nature into preschool classrooms through a series of half-hour programs with themes like "Our Furry Friends," "Spectacular Spiders," "Rockin' Reptiles," and "Birds of a Feather." Suzi Taylor will be instructing these sessions.

St. Joseph's Parish School continues its monthly service projects at Yankauer Preserve. In December, the fourth- and fifth-grade students made treats for the birds and left them at the preserve after taking part in a series of birding activities led by volunteers Nancy Kirschbaum and Carol Del Colle.

Teachers have also begun reserving spots for spring field trips to Yankauer Nature Preserve, including schools from Washington County, Maryland. Schools interested in visiting Yankauer should contact Ellen Murphy at pvasmail@gmail.com.

Wee Naturalists Program Returns in March with Online Registration!

The popular Wee Naturalists program, aimed at preschool children ages 3-5 and a parent, returns after a break for the winter. The program is designed to provide regular opportunities for small children and loving adults to explore nature together safely under the guidance of an experienced PVAS instructor. Children must be accompanied by a parent, grandparent, other adult relative, or guardian.



All sessions are held at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. Each session will last from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Dates for this spring are March 21 and 22 and April 25 and 26. In March, children will explore the theme "Let's Go Outside," a call to start exploring outside as winter is ending and spring is beginning. The April theme is "What Do April Showers Bring?" and children will explore the trails, looking for changes in nature brought about by spring rains.

The new PVAS website will allow parents to sign up for the programs and pay online! Families may register for one or both months. The fee is \$5 per child/adult team session. To ensure that everyone receives close, personal attention, enrollment will be limited and pre-registration is required.

The program is led by Suzi Taylor, of Sharpsburg, Maryland, a veteran PVAS camp director who has a degree in environmental education. Information and the registration portal are available on the PVAS website. For more information, contact Ms. Taylor at 301-432-1908 or tomandsuzi506@cs.com. Wee Naturalists was established in 2009 with support from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's Two Rivers Giving Circle.

Master Naturalist Workshops Announced

PVAS's Potomac Valley Naturalist Program is once again offering a series of Master Naturalist Workshops in the Eastern Panhandle during 2012. The workshops, which generally consist of three or more hours of expert instruction on a specific nature studies topic, count as recertification classes for Certified Master Naturalists. They can also be used as elective hours for the current students enrolled in the Master Naturalist Course. All sessions are also open to members of the general public who are interested in learning more about certain topics but do not want to commit to a full course of Master Naturalist instruction.



Enrollment for each workshop is limited to 20 persons and registrations are accepted in the order they are received. The cost of attendance for each workshop is \$10 for Certified Master Naturalists and current Master Naturalist students and \$15 for others. Registration for this class is now online, although you can also print off the forms and mail them in with your check. Our new PVAS website has more information and the registration portal. Just go to www.potomacaudubon.org, choose the "Events and Programs" link, then "Adults" and "Master Naturalist Program." In all, a total of six workshops on a variety of topics are being offered. Not all dates have been finalized, but the topics are as follows:

- Edible Wild Plants of the Spring, March 31, 10 a.m.-noon.
- Beavers and Their Habitat, June 23, 10 a.m.-noon.
- Hunting Mushrooms, date TBA (late August/early September)
- Project Underground, date TBA
- Natural History of Dolly Sods, date TBA
- Geology of the Eastern Panhandle, date TBA

Certified Master Naturalists are reminded that they may also take other natural history related classes, offered by other Master Naturalist chapters and other recognized organizations, for recertification credit. For questions or more information contact Wanda Miller at 304-263-7320 or PVMN54@gmail.com or Ellen Murphy at 304-676-8739 or pvasmail@gmail.com.

New Grants in 2012!

As the new year begins, we are happy to announce that three new grants have been received so far: The Nora Roberts Foundation, Friends of the Cacapon River, and the DEP's Stream Partners Program.

The Nora Roberts Foundation has provided \$6,700 in funding this year for some of our youth programs including Audubon Discovery

Camp, Nature Explorer Packs, and Wee Naturalist Programs.

Friends of the Cacapon River have agreed this year to provide \$3,000 to sponsor both Warm Springs Elementary School's fourth-grade classrooms and Pleasant View Elementary School's fourth and fifth-grade classrooms with our watershed program. Each student in these grades will be able to participate in our complete Watershed Education Initiative free of charge thanks to this sponsorship. The program will include a trip to the Cacapon River in the spring to learn about the Cacapon River and do water quality testing there.

Finally, the WV Department of Environmental Protection's Stream Partner's Program is funding \$3,200 to support PVAS' efforts at Flowing Springs Run including PVAS' watershed field trips that take place there as well as our continued partnership with the City of Ranson in the development of the property as a natural park.

We are very excited and grateful for these funding sources and the programs and projects the funds will help us accomplish.

Update on Developments at Stauffer's Marsh

As you may recall from the December Valley Views, PVAS received Stauffer's Marsh from Stauffer and Elinor Miller of Charlottesville, Virginia. The preserve is located in Back Creek Valley in Berkeley County, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7), one-half mile south of Shanghai.

The property is 45.7 acres in size. Much of it is wetland, with shallow ponds and marshy areas. It also includes some woods and edge lands. It has long been a favorite spot for Eastern Panhandle birders and is extremely important to migrating birds that pass through this area.



Since the dedication in November, PVAS volunteers have begun to take action to maintain the property and plan for its future. In December, Bob and Robin Dean and Steve Hartman went out to the preserve to open up the overflow weir which had been clogged with plants and sedimentation, causing the water level to be higher than intended. They removed literally hundreds of pounds of vegetation and saturated soils by hand, exposing the weir that had been overgrown and covered with sediment over several years. The same day, the group also removed an old beaver dam and debris that had clogged a secondary overflow that had backed up water to unintended levels. This outlet is now clear and the field has been restored to its intended state rather than the flooded field it had become. PVAS can't thank these hardy volunteers enough for their backbreaking, effective, and prompt efforts!

In addition to these improvements, a committee has formed to help envision a future plan for the preserve. Volunteer Joette Borzik, now retired from NCTC with a forestry and land management background, has volunteered to develop a land management plan

for the site. She has already begun researching the sensitive species at the preserve and how to best manage for them as well as human use of the site. Kieran O'Malley of the WVDNR visited the site with the group to make recommendations on how to develop trails without impacting the wood turtle, a species of concern in West Virginia, that is known to use the marsh property as well as Back Creek. The group will continue its discussions, evaluations, and research so the Land Management Plan adequately balances the needs of wetland birds, wood turtles, and other wildlife while also allowing human visitation to the site for education and enjoyment of the natural world.

We are currently planning a trash removal day between the marsh and Back Creek Valley Road in the spring, coordinated by volunteer Steve Hartman. If you are interested in helping with that project, please contact Steve at (304) 263-8785. We will also post the date and details on the website and send out a "heads up" note as we get closer.

PVAS Benefits From Shepherdstown Rotary Event

PVAS raised \$2,390 through its participation in the Shepherdstown Rotary Club's annual Christmas Charity Ball, which was held December 2 at the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department Hall.

In all, the event raised more than \$20,000 for 17 different non-profit organizations in the region.

Individual Rotarians help underwrite the Ball's overhead costs by sponsoring tables in the name of their favorite nonprofit. Outside sponsors cover all remaining event costs. This means all of the proceeds from the sale of tickets to each table go to the designated nonprofits.

PVAS's table was sponsored by PVAS president Peter Smith.

Thanks are due to Beth Batdorf, John Bresland, Gary and Iris Heichel, and PVAS Board members Bob Reynolds, Mina Goodrich and Jane Vanderhook for supporting PVAS's table.

Thanks are also due to Shepherdstown Rotary for making this event possible.

Don't Forget Backyard Bird Count!

Here's a reminder that this year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is scheduled for February 17-20.

The annual GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada.

The four-day event is free and is open to bird watchers of all ages and skill levels. It's an especially great activity for families with children.

Participants watch birds for any length of time on one or more days of the count and enter their tallies at www.birdcount.org. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species.

Participants in last year's count submitted more than 92,000 bird checklists from across the United States and Canada.

More information is available on the GBBC website at www.birdcount.org.

Birding 101 Dates Are Set

Birding 101 will be offered again in 2012! The course consists of four weekday-evening classes at the National Conservation Training Center, from 7-9 p.m. The course will also include four Saturday morning field trips around the area so you can practice identifying the birds you learned about at the previous class. (These trips are optional, but strongly encouraged.) The entire course is only \$75! Dates for this year's evening classes are April 5, 12, 19, 26 with the field sessions on each of the following Saturdays.



Registration for this class is limited, but you can now register and pay for it online! You can also print off the forms and mail them in with your check. Registrations are accepted in the order they are received, so registering online is the fastest way. Our new PVAS website has more information and the registration portal. Just go to www.potomacaudubon.org, choose the "Birding" link, and then Birding 101. If you are interested in the course but have questions that aren't answered by the website, please contact Ellen Murphy at pvasmail@gmail.com or 304-676-8739. We will make sure you have the information you need!

View from the Eagles' Nest

By Sandy Sagalkin

In the last PVAS newsletter, I mentioned some exciting news about our plans for next year's International Migratory Bird Day, or "IMBD" as it is commonly called. IMBD was the brainchild of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, which recognized that a public program would allow thousands of people to learn about migratory birds, their migration and their conservation. This year is the 20th anniversary of the IMBD and this year's theme is "Connecting People to Bird Conservation."

Our kickoff event will be a talk by Scott Weidensaul, author of "Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds," at the National Conservation Training Center on May 2, 2012, at 7 p.m. The book was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in the nonfiction category. The Wall Street Journal said "Weidensaul translates difficult scientific concepts into understandable English while artfully interweaving personal experiences with the larger natural-history story." The book also discusses the fragile nature of bird migration and the problems of declining bird populations and their habitats.

In later columns, I'll mention some of the other activities we have planned for IMBD. But for the rest of this article, I want to tell you about my experience with two classes of homeschoolers I took out birding last year. Last September, I got a call from Leslie Milbourne, head of Wind Dance Farm homeschool. She said she wanted to bring two of her classes to Washington Monument State Park to observe the hawk migration. One class was ages from 6-9 and the other class was 10-16. We arranged to meet at the upper parking lot at the monument on two successive days. I told Ms. Milbourne I would give the children a brief orientation and then we would walk up to the monument. To tell the truth, I was a little worried that the homeschoolers would lack discipline and interest to spend more than a half hour at the monument.

I couldn't have been more mistaken. The children came prepared, having studied hawk silhouettes on a card put out by the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary with the Hawk Migration Association of North America. We discussed why hawks migrate and where. They asked intelligent questions about the migrating hawks. When we finally went up to the monument, we watched hawks and vultures fly by for about an hour and a half. They often spotted the hawks before the official hawk counter. They learned that the Turkey Vultures flew with their wings bent in a slight V and Bald Eagles flew on flat wings, among other things. I was impressed by their interest, enthusiasm and quick grasp of the information.

I wanted to share this experience because I believe that as long as we have school programs with teachers like Ms. Milbourne and students like those from Wind Dance Farm there is hope for the future of migratory birds.*

Please join us in February when we return to the Eastern Shore with Dave Myles to look for wintering waterfowl.

*PVAS has a number of programs to instill a love of nature in our children.

C&O Canal Bird Walk Set for February

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk on the C&O Canal near Harpers Ferry on Wednesday, February 29.

The event is free and no pre-registration is required. Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills, and children will be welcome.

The walk will involve about 4 miles of level walking along the towpath.

Participants should plan to meet at 8 a.m. outside John Brown's Fort, where Potomac & Shenandoah Streets meet in Harpers Ferry National Park. Parking is available along Potomac Street near the train station.

From there, participants will take the footbridge over the Potomac River and walk about two miles northwest along the C&O Canal towpath and back. Species likely to be sighted include Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, vultures, migrating waterfowl, woodpeckers, kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Winter Wrens, and Brown Creepers.

Participants should bring water and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions. The walk may be cancelled in the event of snow on the ground or steady rain.

For more information, or to check on possible weather cancellation, contact trip leader Deb Hale at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-1528 or Sandy Sagalkin at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

Sign Up Now for February 4 NCTC Birding Trip

PVAS is sponsoring a birding trip at the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown on Saturday, February 4.

The trip is free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children will be welcome.

The trip will last about 3 hours and involve walking about 2 miles over moderate terrain.

The Center's 538-acre campus is not normally open to the public, so this is a good opportunity to visit.

The campus contains a mix of fields and forestland, and it provides good habitat for a rich variety of bird species. This particular trip will focus on winter visitors, such as Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and waterfowl on the Potomac River; and on year-round birds, including raptors.

Participants should plan to meet at 8:00 a.m. at the visitor's parking lot in front of the Center's Main Building.

Please note that because the Center is a federal facility, pre-registration will be required. To pre-register, contact trip leader Sandy Sagalkin at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465 no later than Monday, January 30.

Everyone should plan to wear comfortable walking or hiking boots, bring along bug spray to ward off ticks, and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions.

PVAS will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own.

The trip may be cancelled if there is snow on the ground or steady rain. For further information or to check on possible weather cancellation, contact Sandy.

Sign Up Now for Eastern Shore Birding Trip

PVAS is sponsoring a winter birding trip to the Eastern Shore the weekend of February 18-19.

The trip will include visits to the Bombay Hook and Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuges, the Indian River Inlet, Assateague Island National Seashore, Ocean City, the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, and Cambridge, Maryland.



Snow geese at Bombay hook

This will be a great time to visit the area as waterfowl will be staging there for their migration north.

The trip will be led by veteran birder David Myles. Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate. There is no fee but each participant will be responsible for his or her own travel arrangements and expenses.

Those who wish to participate should plan to meet at 8 a.m. Saturday the 18th in the visitor's center of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, which is located at 2591 Whitehall Neck Road, Smyrna, DE 19977.

The plan will be to bird the Refuge and the Seashore south to Ocean City on Saturday. Sunday will include a quick check of the Ocean City inlet and head to Assateague Island, Blackwater NWR

and the Choptank River in Cambridge, Maryland, before heading home.

There are a number of lodging opportunities in and around Dover. David will be staying at the Holiday Inn Express, North DuPont highway; rooms can be booked there at www.holidayinn.com or by calling 877-816-1740.

For more information about the trip or carpooling possibilities, contact David by email at dkmyles@comcast.net.

This trip can be brutally cold and windy. Participants should be prepared to bundle up, and should bring binoculars and scopes if they have them.

Stretching eight miles along Delaware Bay and covering 16,251 acres, Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge provides abundant habitat for wildlife. Four-fifths of the refuge is tidal salt marsh with a mix of cordgrass meadows, mud flats, tidal pools, rivers, creeks, and tidal streams. The upland area includes forests, freshwater impoundments, brushy and timbered swamps, and fields of herbaceous plants. Most conspicuous are seabirds, shorebirds, wading birds, raptors and waterfowl.

The Assateague Island Seashore is also home to the "Chincoteague Ponies," descendants of colonial horses brought to the island in the 17th century by Eastern Shore planters. The ponies are wild and have adapted to their environment.

For more information about the Bombay Hook NWR go to www.fws.gov/northeast/bombayhook. For more information about the Assateague Island National Seashore go to www.fws.gov/northeast/chinco/assateague.html.

Join Shenandoah River Birding Trips February 8 and 22

PVAS will sponsor two birding trips to various Shenandoah River sites in Jefferson County on Wednesday, February 8, and Wednesday, February 22.

Both trips are free and no pre-registration is required. Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills, and children will be welcome.

Each trip will last about 3 hours.

For each trip, participants should plan to meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot in front of the Martin's Supermarket in the Jefferson Crossroads Shopping Center off Route 340 in Charles Town.

The trips will focus on ducks, grebes, gulls, terns, and any other birds encountered.

Both trips will mostly involve driving from place to place by car, with little walking.

Everyone should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions and bring along water.

PVAS will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own.

In the event of snow on the ground or steady rain, the trips may be cancelled. Various trip details could also change depending on

weather or recent bird sightings.

For more information or to check on possible weather cancellations, contact the trip leader, Sandy Sagalkin at monsansaglakina@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.



Sign Up Now for Landscape Gardening Conference

As we noted last November, PVAS has joined a variety of other area organizations in cosponsoring a landscape gardening conference that will be held at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia, on April 14.

The one-day conference is entitled "Tomorrow's Landscapes: More Birds, Butterflies, and Bees for YOUR Garden."

It is being organized by the Piedmont/Blue Ridge Horticulture Society and Shenandoah University's Environmental Studies Department.

Experts will provide valuable advice on ways homeowners can improve birds and butterfly habitat with plant choices suited to the mid-Atlantic climate and soils. The conference speakers will be:

Doug Tallamy, popular speaker and author of *Bringing Nature Home*.

Janet Scott Davis, owner of native perennials nursery, Hill House Nursery, in Rappahanock, and designer of sustainable landscapes in Virginia.

Vincent Simeone, director of Planting Fields Arboretum on Long Island and expert on shrubs and trees that thrive in the mid-Atlantic.

Jeff Lowenfels, author of *Teaming with Microbes* about the abundant and largely unknown life in the soil and a very entertaining speaker.

Jim McCormac, a passionate wildlife expert from Ohio and author of *Wild Ohio*.

Stephen Orr, author of *Tomorrow's Garden* about how gardeners across the country are looking at landscape in new ways. He is also very busy in his current position as garden editor of *Martha Stewart Living*.

Space will be limited and preregistration is required. The registration fee will be \$99, which includes lunch and drinks. For more information and to register, go to www.tomorrowlandscapes.org. If questions remain, contact Genie Cate at info@pbrhs.org or call 540-877-2002.

February Program Will Focus on Rain Gardens

Our February program at the National Conservation Training Center will feature a presentation about the landscaping features known as "rain gardens."

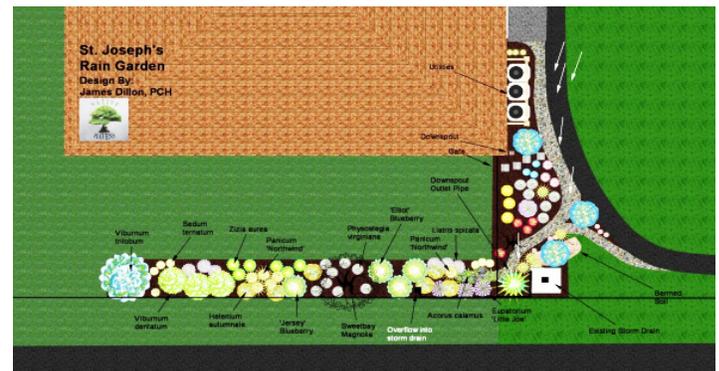
The program will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, in Room 151 of the Instructional West Building.

Admission is free and anyone is welcome to attend.

The speaker will be local landscape designer James Dillon. He will provide practical advice about the design and construction of rain gardens, and also discuss their environmental benefits.

Rain gardens are a versatile and increasingly popular tool for controlling rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces like parking lots, turf areas, and rooftops.

They consist of shallow depressions that are typically planted with deep-rooted native plants and grasses. Thus, they not only help control non-point source pollution but also enrich habitat and food sources for local wildlife.



Design for St. Joseph's School Garden

They can be constructed in conjunction with or as a substitute for traditional retention ponds, and can also be used in small-scale areas where ponds would not be appropriate.

Mr. Dillon operates Native Havens Landscape Design, www.nativehavens.com, of Kearneysville. A certified horticulturalist with over 10 years experience, his designs emphasize native plants, environmental benefits and low maintenance.

Berkeley County Recycling News

January 21, 2012
Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority
304-267-9370 Office
304-671-2925 Recycling Hotline
berkeleycountyswa@msn.com
www.berkeleycountyrecycling.com

Plastic #3, #4, #5, #6, #7 Now Accepted at Grapevine Road Recycling Center!

Lone exception, Styrofoam Still Not Accepted

Effective immediately, the Grapevine Road Recycling Center (GVRC) will now accept plastic containers that are labeled #3 through #7. However,



there is one significant exception. The new collection will not include Styrofoam or polystyrene (often marked with #6).

The plastic containers with the #3 through #7 markings can be commingled together, placed in any colored plastic bag and deposited in the road trailer marked for this collection. All plastic containers must be empty and clean of food material. Lids and caps do NOT need to be removed. Plastic material without the designated recycling symbols are not acceptable.

It is important to not mix these items with the current collection of plastic #1 & #2 containers. Plastic #1 & #2 containers will need to continue to be collected in a separate clear bag that is provided at the center. It is also important to not place plastic bags in the mixed plastic collection.

Should any questions or comments arise, please feel free to call the Recycling Hotline at 304-671-2925.

Bats Still In Peril

In November 2010, PVAS in conjunction with NCTC presented a program on the threat to bats by white-nose syndrome. White-nose is a fungus that attacks wings and other membranes of common bat species. In 2009 the estimated death toll of bats was slightly more than a million and the potential threat was beginning to register as both a natural disaster and an economic blow for food agriculture and forest management.



As recently as last year, there seemed to be a glimmer of hope. In a December 21 Washington Post article, Darryl Fears reported that scientists in Vermont and Pennsylvania were monitoring populations that seemed to have a resistance to white-nose syndrome. This was especially important in Pennsylvania because the overall population was reported as dropping by 90 percent. As Fears reported at that time, "The recent discovery raised hopes that bats in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions where the disease is established have somehow developed an immunity to *Geomyces destructans*"

It now seems that potential for optimism was based on isolated observations or a mistaken hope that it might indicate a trend.

Less than a month later Fears has come back with another report. In his January 17, 2012, article he reports that a newly released study estimates 5.7 to 6.7 million bats have succumbed to white-nose syndrome. That is an order of magnitude greater than the 2009 estimate. He quotes Mylea Bayless, conservation programs manager for Bat Conservation International in Austin, Texas, as saying, "We're watching a potential extinction event on the order of what we experienced with bison and passenger pigeons for this group of mammals..." She goes on to put the perspective in this way, "The difference is we may be seeing the regional extinction of multiple species."

In terms of human impact, this event has the potential to increase food prices—no doubt organic foods will be even more affected. Forest products may also be impacted because pests such as the emerald ash borer proliferate in the absence of bats.

No one is talking about remediation programs at present. There seems to be little we can do. The things we might do to help the situation are keep informed and let the scientists do their work.

Oldest Tree East of the Mississippi Burns

Famous as a Florida tourist attraction and a natural wonder, The Senator, burned down on Monday, January 16. The tree is a cypress that is estimated to be around 3,500 years old. Strangely, experts are at a loss to explain the fire.

The fire that destroyed The Senator was different than most forest fires in that the tree burned from the inside out.

According to a January 18 article on Tecca, the Yahoo technical news blog, the Florida Division of Forestry has a number of possible theories: the fire was caused by a weeks old lightning strike, or that the tree's swaying in the wind generated a spark. In any case, arson has been ruled out and some sort of internal or spontaneous combustion seems to have occurred.



Photo credit: Anthony Scotti, "The Senator Tree Longwood Florida," Wikipedia Commons

Sadly, like the Humpty Dumpty fairytale, mortal man lacks the means to restore The Senator to its previous natural wonder.

Snowy Owl Irruption in Progress

According to the best birding information to date, a Snowy Owl irruption takes place every three or four years. What that usually means is that there are sightings in the lower 48 states that are out of season and regionally specific. In other words a relatively few number of these birds are sighted beyond the margins of their usual range. Sightings are also usually confined to a relatively small locality.

This year sightings have been reported in extraordinarily large numbers and as far south as Missouri and Kansas. Where only one or two have been sighted in a past year, there have been multiple sightings with more than one in the same locale. This



Snowy Owl at Indian Springs Metropark, White Lake, MI, December 28, 2011

has been such an unusual event that it was picked up and covered in an Associated Press piece on January 5. According to that article the owls have been seen regularly at Boston Logan Airport and one was even reported after Thanksgiving in Hawaii.

The AP article explains that last year’s bumper crop of lemming, Snowy Owls’ main food, allowed a surge in owl population and now they are expanding their territory in search of food. They’ll go for voles, field mice, rats, rabbits and shore birds, i.e., anything they can manage.

For birders this has been a rare and exciting event, unfortunately the stress on the current population of owls may not make for happy times for them in the long term.

ASK AUDUBON—LED Lights

Reprinted from Audubon Newswire-July 2007. Inspired by the recent actions of our Congress to forestall implementation of mandatory energy reduction from household lightbulbs.

Until recently, LED (light emitting diode) lights were only available for low wattage applications such as holiday lights and flash-lights. Noting their extremely low energy requirements, scientists developed higher wattage versions of these bulbs-they are now available at most home product stores, in varying sizes and colors, suitable for standard light fixtures. According to the Alliance to Save Energy, LED bulbs use almost 90 percent less energy than standard incandescents. The Seattle city government estimates that ten strings of holiday lights burning 8 hours a day for 30 days cost \$0.72 for the new LED lights vs. \$7.20 for standard incandescent mini lights. The initial cost of LEDs may be higher, but the extremely low energy usage saves money over time. LEDs are expected to last upwards of 10 years, with dimming rather than total failure toward the end of their lifespan. Safety is another benefit- since the bulbs do not heat up, there is no chance of combustion. Furthermore, there is no mercury contained in these bulbs.

The Department of Energy has estimated that LED technology could cut national energy consumption for lighting as much as 29 percent by 2025. Cities across the United States and Canada have been replacing traffic lights with the new LED bulbs and auto manufacturers have embraced LEDs for applications such as brake lights. Now the average consumer can benefit from LEDs’ long lifespan and low energy usage in their own homes: as holiday lights, porch lights, reading lights or just about anywhere else you want to shed some light.

Calendar

- Feb 8: Shenandoah River birding trip
- Feb 8, 7pm: PVAS program at NCTC, “Rain Gardens”
- Feb 18-20: Birding trip to Easternshore
- Feb 22: Shenandoah River birding trip
- Feb 29: C&O Canal bird walk near Harpers Ferry
- Mar 14, 7pm: PVAS program at NCTC, Wil Stolzenburg on his book, *Rat Island*
- Apr 1, 2-3:30pm: PVAS Egg Hunt at Yankauer
- Apr 11, 7pm: PVAS program at NCTC, “Spring Wildflowers”
- Apr 14, 11am-4pm: PVAS Wildflower Festival at Yankauer
- Apr 21: PVAS Race for the Birds
- Apr 21: NCTC Open House

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.
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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.

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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: ____.

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**Membership Chair, PVAS
 PO Box 578
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Thank you for your support!

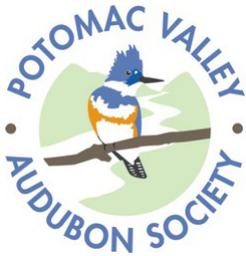


If you’d rather join the National Audubon Society:

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.

RED TEXT - DOT ALERT

If red text or a red dot appears on your mailing label, your membership may have expired and this could be your last issue of Valley Views. Take action to renew your Local membership. If you are a National Audubon Society member, the National Society will notify you directly when your membership is up for renewal.



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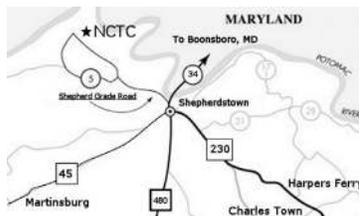


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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April, at the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV, in the Instructional West Building. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please call any of the board members listed her or see <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>. PVAS serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

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

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