

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

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Winter Solstice: The First Day of Spring?

By Wil Hershberger

What?! How on earth can the winter solstice be the first day of spring? Well, listen! That's right. Go outside and listen to the birds. Very few people have noticed that the birds wintering in our area start to sing on, or shortly after, the winter solstice. Apparently, the lengthening days are a cue to these birds that it will soon be time to select and defend a territory, and this requires that the males sing. It wasn't until I read the words of my good friend Don Kroodsma, clearly stating his appreciation of this phenomenon, that I really noticed what was happening.



Tufted Titmouse
© Wil Hershberger

In our area the Carolina and Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, American Robin, and Carolina Wren are among those that exhibit this post-solstice singing, even though they will not be nesting for months. Within these non-migratory populations it must be important to keep up one's social status. The higher your status the better nesting sites you can defend. Also, more females will want to be your partner. So, the males start their vocal athletics early and keep it up right right through spring and early summer.

You have to listen for songs and not calls. Calls are given year-round and function within the social context of the lives of these birds. Flock contact and organization calls, predator alarms, and food calls all fall into the category of calls. Songs are special, used by the males to defend a territory, attract a mate, and interact with neighboring males. The song of the Carolina Chickadee is *fee-bee-fee-bay* and not the *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* calls. The Black-capped Chickadee's song is *hey-sweet-ie*, and the song of the Tufted Titmouse is *Peter-Peter-Peter-Peter!* American Robins of course carol a bright *cheerily-cheerup-cheerily*. The woodpeckers "sing" by drumming, slamming their bills into a branch, small limb, or unfortunately, at times, a down-spout or tin roof.

So, go out and listen! By the time this Valley Views reaches you, spring will already be here.

Listen to the songs and calls of these birds here:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Carolina_Chickadee/sounds
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Cardinal/sounds
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Robin/sounds
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped_Chickadee/sounds
http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-breasted_Nuthatch/sounds

February PVAS Meeting Focuses on WV Birds

PVAS welcomes back WV State Ornithologist, Rich Bailey, to our February program. Rich has presented to us in the past, and this month's program will address Wild Bird Conservation and Research in West Virginia. The diverse landscape of West Virginia serves as vital habitat for numerous bird species. Rich will explain how WVDNR staff are working with other agencies, academia, nonprofit organizations and volunteers to conserve and protect these birds and their habitats. Among other topics, he will update us about the ongoing WV Breeding Bird Atlas and the status of priority species like Golden-winged Warbler and Cerulean Warbler, as well as efforts to address declines of grassland bird species, especially the Loggerhead Shrike. Rich's duties with WVDNR includes supervising and coordinating the ongoing 2nd West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas and research and monitoring of nongame birds throughout the state, developing management plans for rare and threatened species, and providing education and outreach programs.

PVAS programs are held in Room 151 Instructional West building at the US Fish and Wildlife's National Conservation Training Center near Shepherdstown the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Race for the Birds!

April 20, 2013 at NCTC
www.RaceForTheBirds.org

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

Reflections on PVAS

By Bob Reynolds, PVAS President

Meeting on January 17, 2013, the PVAS Board of Directors voted to give conceptual approval to two exciting new PVAS service initiatives. The Board decisions to create a Backyard Naturalist program and to establish a Grassland Birds Initiative demonstrate our PVAS commitment to both nature education and habitat conservation.



But first a word from our sponsors. In the first month of our annual appeal our members and supporters have donated \$30,000 in support of PVAS, and we are optimistic that over the next two months we will match last year's total. This expression of ongoing support was critical to the Board's decision to move ahead with new programming initiatives, and we are grateful for every donation. Thank for your support.

The Backyard Naturalist program is designed for families and will feature web-based as well as in-person programs. PVAS will seek active partnerships with our local libraries and other family-serving institutions to expand the outreach and venues for service delivery. We plan to develop program components as our time and resources permit – beginning no doubt with a seasonally focused introduction to common backyard birds. I personally hope we can soon add butterflies, mud wasps, and lightning bugs to the list to help me respond to questions from my granddaughters!

Have you noticed hay bales rotting in local fields? Do you miss seeing Meadowlarks? The Grasslands Birds Initiative is designed as a collaborative and voluntary partnership with local land owners and PVAS to preserve grasslands and schedule cutting after grassland birds nest and fledge their young. This program is also attracting support from new partners and we have prospects for some demonstration fields in the forthcoming year.

Kristin Alexander and Ellen Murphy are working on strategies and plans to launch these new programs, and our Board will hold a planning retreat at NCTC on March 2nd to consider implementation decisions for these and other PVAS programs. All of our Board meetings are open to our members, and we welcome your attendance at our meetings.

Director's Notes

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Greetings in the New Year! I hope all of you enjoyed the holiday season and got outside to enjoy the beautiful snowy landscape while it lasted.

In December we sent out our annual report and asked that PVAS members and friends contribute to PVAS so we may continue and expand the programs and services we provide. You have been most responsive and generous! As this is being written in mid January, PVAS' annual fundraising appeal, launched on December 1, has raised \$28,942.50 from 119 families and individuals with an average gift of \$243.21. We are truly grateful for your generosity.

If you have not yet given, don't fret. The annual appeal runs through the end of March. We are hoping to raise at least what we raised last year (\$34,182) so we can continue to offer at least the same level of programming as 2012. We also have some new exciting initiatives that we are hoping to launch with your support.

For those of you who are receiving the newsletter via the mail, you'll note an envelope is enclosed for your convenience. For those reading this electronically, a plain old envelope will deliver your check just as well if you send it to PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443. If you prefer, you can always donate by credit card on our website. Any way you choose to contribute is gratefully appreciated. No amount is too large or too small. More important than helping us meet any goal, you will be supporting PVAS' projects and programs, from managing three nature preserves to delivering quality programs for youth and adults.

I often use these pages to talk about the generosity of our volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without them. But we also can't operate without the support and generosity of our donors. We can't charge nearly enough to cover the true costs of our programs, but with your help we can still deliver affordable, quality programs to help connect people of all ages to the natural world. We truly appreciate your generosity.

Eidolon Cottage Restoration

The restoration of the old stone cottage at the Eidolon Nature Preserve is nearing completion. Hedgesville contractor Duane Householder has been working on the project since mid October with his son, Josh. By now, they've finished the interior post-and-beam structure that was needed to support a new roof, and installed a standing-seam metal roof. They've also reconstructed the porch.



Eidolon Cottage in the 1950s

All the lumber for the project was cut to order from native oak by a sawmill in Waynesboro, PA. Longtime PVAS volunteer Gary Sylvester helped transport the lumber from Waynesboro to Eidolon. The post-and-beam structure was custom fit with mortise and tenon construction throughout. Some detail work and a porch railing remain to be done. For now, the door and window openings will be left unfinished so the building can function much like an open pavilion. That will be enough to allow PVAS to use the building for educational programs for school children. Doors and windows can easily be added later if use of the structure seems to warrant it.

Eidolon's former owners, Louis and Marguerite Zapoleon, built the cottage in 1950-51. They used the structure as a weekend retreat for more than a decade, and they intended to use it as their summer home when they retired. However, the cottage was gutted by fire in 1962 and the Zapoleons never rebuilt it.

Two accompanying photos show the cottage as it looked in the

early 1950s and as it looks today in its restored state. A third photo shows the Householders, with Duane on the left and Josh on the right.



Eidolon Cottage today
Photo by Peter Smith

The Householders have done a fine job on the project, and their level of craftsmanship has been first-rate. Those who appreciate construction details will note that their treatment of the cottage's eaves is much more sophisticated and attractive than the original construction.



Duane and Josh Householders
Photo by Peter Smith

The total cost of the restoration project has been about \$29,000. This includes the cost of special footings to support the post-and-beam structure and some masonry repairs to the cottage. Funds for the project have come from donations, a few local grants, and proceeds from an endowment that Mrs. Zapolon established to help support the Eidolon preserve.

Great Backyard Bird Count – Great Fun for People of All Ages!

By Sandy Sagalkin

Do you watch birds in your backyard? If so, you are one of the 70 million Americans that do so. That's one in four or five Americans! Most of that number watch birds in their backyards. We at PVAS are committed to helping you improve your bird watching skills so you can enjoy these tiny aerial acrobats even more.

Last month, PVAS members Carol Del Colle and Kathryn Henry gave a well-attended presentation at the PVAS monthly meeting on backyard birding. Their presentation highlighted the birds that can be seen at feeders this time of year and how to attract more birds to your backyard. In February, you will have another opportunity.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) takes place between February 15-18. It's the perfect time to get started. The GBBC can be an enjoyable as well as educational family project. It's easy and if you participate, you will be contributing to an important citizen science project. Why count birds? Scientists use the data from the GBBC, Project FeederWatch, and the Christmas Bird Counts, and from data they collect in the field to try to understand what's happening to bird populations. Which birds are in decline? How will weather influence bird populations? How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years? How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?

Starting this year, the GBBC will be global. People will be able to report their sightings from anywhere in the world. It is also an excellent opportunity for teachers at schools with natural areas or feeders on the school grounds. Make it a classroom project for your students! Science teachers can have students do data comparisons from the GBBC website.

And, as an added incentive, if you are a first time participant in the GBBC, you will be eligible for PVAS prizes. There are two grand prizes: a 50 lb bag of black oil sunflower seeds for the person with the highest overall count and a 50 lb bag of black oil sunflower seeds for the most species. All persons that participate will receive a 10% discount coupon on bird seed or bird feeders, one to a family, from Gower's Feed in Ranson and William Gower & Son in Williamsport. (Thank you, Gower's!). You will also be eligible for a GBBC certificate showing your participation in the event.

Now how do you get started? First, you have to create a GBBC account. You can open an account at www.birdcount.org. If you are already registered with eBird, you can use the same login information.

Next, you must count the birds in your backyard for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC. You can count longer if you wish or count on all four days. You just estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period. Then you submit a checklist for each day on the GBBC home page. You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists." The GBBC website contains downloadable instruction for additional details on entering your checklists. And there is an excellent power point slide presentation you will not want to miss that will tell you all about the GBBC.

The GBBC website also contains additional information and tools, including FAQs and rules if you would like to enter the GBBC photo contest.

To be considered for one of the prizes or a Gowers discount coupon, send me an email with the birds you have counted and submitted to the GBBC at monsansagalkin@myactv.net. If you have any questions about how to participate, contact me at the same address. Current PVAS Board members and members of the PVAS Birding Committee are not eligible for prizes.

Nature Writing Group

The Potomac Valley Nature Writing Group was formed in 2009 to promote the art and appreciation of nature writing. It meets September through May to discuss a monthly book selection. Members can also participate by contributing reviews, comments or sharing their own writing online at the PVNWG blogspot. For the 2013 Winter-Spring Season we are reading Henry Beston, *Outermost House*--January 2013, Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*--February 2013, Gretel Erlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*--March 2013, David Carroll, *Swampwalker's Journal*--April 2013 and Tom Brown, *Nature Observation and Tracking*--May 2013. For more details, email pnaturewriters@gmail.com or visit <http://potomacvalleynaturewritinggroup.blogspot.com/>



School Program Update

Watershed programs for this spring are underway in several schools in Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan Counties. Right now, 4th grade students in the classroom are learning about watersheds, erosion and run-off issues, and how to test water quality, but later in the spring, they will travel to a local river or stream to practice what they have been learning in class. Since school began in September, 1050 students have been or are currently part of this program. Other classes from several schools have begun making plans to visit Yankauer Preserve or have PVAS staff visit their classroom. If your class wants (or you'd like your child's class) to take part in one of our grade-specific programs, contact Ellen at 304-676-8739 or Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org.

Spring Preschool Programs

Wee Naturalists, PVAS's outdoor program for preschoolers, will return later this spring. The morning program encourages participants to explore nature together through activities at the Yankauer pavilion, nature walks, circle games, and other activities. The Spring 2013 sessions will be on Monday and Thursday mornings, and plans are underway to expand the Wee Naturalist program to a Saturday morning as well. Dates for the weekday program are April 15 and 18 and May 6 and 9.

Other programs for preschoolers include the Spring Egg Hunt on Sunday afternoon, March 24, Out of the Nest preschool camp, May 28-31, and Just For Fledglings camp for children entering Kindergarten in the fall, June 3-7. Registration for all these programs is available now on the PVAS website.



Photo by Kristin Alexander

Summer Camp Preview

Camp Survivor, Bugs-A-Billion, Art in the Good Ol' Days, Camp, Canoe, Canal, Do You Like Spiders and Snakes?—these are some of the day camp sessions planned for this summer at Yankauer Preserve and the Peter Burr Farm. Once again, children ages 6-13 have the opportunity to spend their day out in the woods and fields exploring and having fun in nature at Audubon Discovery Camp. Sessions will also be offered for preschoolers and for middle school youth. Middle and high school youth may apply to volunteer as junior staff during the summer. The Teen Digital Photo Camp, held at Shepherd University, is also being planned.

The BIG news for this summer is the addition of before and after care for campers. Before camp care will be offered from 7:30-9:00 a.m. for \$5 per child each day (\$25 per week). After camp care will be offered from 3:00-5:30 p.m. for \$10 per child each day (\$50 per week). Before and after care will be available on a pre-arranged, weekly basis. Drop in or occasional care is not available.

Camp sessions and dates will be posted online beginning February 1 when registrations for PVAS members will begin. Registration begins for the general public on February 15th. The fee for most sessions is \$150. A \$50 deposit will secure your child's spot in a session with the balance due in May. T-shirts will be available for pre-order online and will cost \$10. Sizes range from Youth XS to Adult XL. Our shirt "mascot" this year is a frog on a kiwi green shirt. Audubon Discovery Camp has been offered since 2003.

Nature Photography Workshop



PVAS is pleased to announce its Spring 2013 weekend Nature Photography Workshop tailored for the beginner who has used a camera at least a few times. The class also has something useful to offer for more experienced shooters. The focus of the workshop is geared toward 35 mm format (film and digital) equipment and techniques, but point-and-shoot photographers are also encouraged to participate. All aspects of nature photography will be covered through classroom and outdoor field sessions. Topics of discussion will include light, composition, equipment, workflow, and how to find images. The course will be taught by Wil and Donna Hershberger who are both accomplished nature photographers.

The weekend course begins on Friday night (6:30-9:00 p.m.), continues all day on Saturday (6:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.), and concludes on Sunday morning (6:30 a.m.-Noon). Classroom sessions will be held at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center just north of Shepherdstown. Outdoor field sessions will generally be at the NCTC campus, but the class may also go off campus for additional photo opportunities. Everyone should bring a camera to the course and lenses, tripod and flash (if you have them).

Cost for the course is \$150 per person. Class size is limited so that there is time for personalized instruction and answers to questions. The course is open to people of all ages but children younger than 15 must be accompanied by an adult. To register for this workshop, go to the PVAS website, www.PotomacAudubon.org and look for the class in the Upcoming Events list.

Natural History Workshops

Each year, PVAS offers a series of Natural History Workshops that consist of three or more hours of expert instruction on a specific natural history topic. They count as elective or recertification courses for [Potomac Valley Master Naturalists](http://PotomacValleyMasterNaturalists.org) but each session is also open on a space-available basis to members of the general public. Topics are focused on the natural history of West Virginia and the Tri-State area. Cost for each class is \$10 for Master Naturalists and students currently enrolled in the program and \$15 for all others.

This year, several workshops are being offered in the spring. They include Project Wild Aquatic on February 9, Project WET on March 9, Exploring Vernal Pools on April 20, and Ecology and History of the Chesapeake Bay on April 27. Additional topics are often added throughout the year, so check for updates on the PVAS website frequently!

Both Project Wild Aquatic and Project WET are idea for teachers and substitutes or for anyone who enjoys working with youth. Exploring Vernal Pools will be led by Master Naturalist Clark Dixon and will focus on the creatures that live in these springtime habitats. Ecology and History of the Chesapeake Bay features the ultimate classroom trip--aboard the Schooner Sultana.

Spaces for these workshops often fill up fast and registration is now open for the spring classes. To register, go to the PVAS website, www.PotomacAudubon.org and look for the link to register for Natural History Workshops on the mainpage.

Birding 101

If you've been wanting to learn more about birds, but need something that "begins at the beginning", Birding 101 is for you! The class is tailored for beginning birders (although those wanting to brush up on their birding skills are also welcome) and uses both classroom sessions and field trips to teach you everything you need to know to become better acquainted with birds. From bird identification to field etiquette to birding techniques and resources, the class will give you the basis to begin a lifelong hobby or become a better birder if you are already hooked. The course is typically taught by local birding experts Bob Dean, Wil Hershberger, and Matt Orsie. An impressive collection of images and recordings, many captured by the instructors, enhance the course.

The classroom sessions are held at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center just north of Shepherdstown on four evenings in April (April 4, 11, 18, and 25 in 2013.) The Saturday following each class, field trips to various locations around the Panhandle to give class members a chance to practice their new bird identification skills. These trips last from roughly 7 a.m.–12 noon.

Cost for the course is \$75 per person. Class size is limited so that there is time for personalized instruction and answers to questions. The course is open to people of all ages but children younger than 15 must be accompanied by an adult. To register for Birding 101, go to the PVAS website, www.PotomacAudubon.org and look for the class in the Upcoming Events list.

Take a "Wildlife Signs" Walk at Cacapon State Park

PVAS is sponsoring a "Wildlife Signs" walk at the Cacapon State Park in Morgan County on Saturday, February 9. The event is free and anyone is welcome to join in.



Participants should meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park's Nature Center. The walk will begin from there and be led by the park naturalist Renee Fincham and PVAS's Joe Gentile.

This will be a very family-friendly event that will show how to look for tracks and other signs of wildlife in West Virginia forests.

Pre-registration is recommended but not required; to pre-register go to the PVAS website or contact Kelly Wolf at kheldreth@hotmail.com or 304-229-6229.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions.

February Birding Trips

PVAS has scheduled two local birding trips for February. As usual, both the trips are free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of his or her birding skills. Children are welcome. No pre-registration is required.

For each trip, participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. Trips may be cancelled because of bad weather.

Full details can be found on the PVAS website.

The specific dates, destinations, and other details are:

February 6: C&O Canal Bird walk at Harpers Ferry will involve about four miles of level walking along the towpath. Species likely to be sighted include Bald Eagles, peregrine falcons, vultures, migrating waterfowl, and other winter birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. outside John Brown's Fort, where Potomac & Shenandoah Streets meet in Harpers Ferry National Park. For more info contact trip leader Deb Hale at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

February 23: Birding trip to Jefferson County waterfowl hotspots will last about 3 hours and mostly involve driving from place to place by car, with little walking. The trip will focus on ducks, grebes, gull, terns, and any other birds encountered. Areas to be visited will include the Shenandoah river, Country Club Road ponds, and Shannondale Lake. Meet at 8:00 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. Free and open to the public. For more info, contact trip leader Sandy Sagalkin at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

Eastern Shore Birding Trip

PVAS is sponsoring a three-day winter birding trip to the Eastern Shore the weekend of February 16-18. 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, MD.

This will be a great time to visit the area, because 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.

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Those who wish to participate should meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday the 16th at the visitor's center of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The visitor's center is located at 2591 Whitehall Neck Road, Smyrna, DE.

The plan will be to bird the Refuge and the Seashore south to Ocean City on Saturday; spend Saturday night in Ocean City; bird the Ocean City inlet, back bay areas, local ponds and Assateague Island on Sunday; spend Sunday night in Cambridge, MD; and bird the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and the Choptank River in Cambridge before heading home on Monday.

Most will want to travel to the Eastern Shore on Friday and stay there Friday night. The most convenient area to stay will be the Dover, DE, area, and there are a number of lodging opportunities there. David will be staying at the Days Inn at 272 North DuPont Highway, telephone 302-674-8002.

The annual Ocean City Boat show is the same weekend, so advance Saturday night reservations for the Ocean City area are highly recommended. David will be staying at the Comfort Inn at 507 Atlantic Avenue, telephone 410-289-5155. Sunday night, David will be staying at the Days Inn in Cambridge (telephone 1-800-992-2694).

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.

Harpers Ferry Hike Set for March 2

Hikers of all ages and abilities are invited to join veteran hiker Dave Michener for an easy hike along the Appalachian Trail in the Keys Gap area of the Blue Ridge on Saturday, March 2. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Keyes Gap parking lot on Route 9, east of the Shenandoah River, just before the Virginia state line. This parking lot is very small, so carpooling is recommended. The hike will last about one hour over easy terrain. There will be no fee. Participants should wear sturdy hiking

shoes or boots and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions.

Pre-registration is not required, but it is encouraged. To pre-register or get more information, contact Dave at 703-973-6435 or davemichener@msn.com.

Nora Roberts Foundation Grant

PVAS has received a generous grant from the Nora Roberts Foundation to support environmental literacy projects in the Eastern Panhandle. This year's grant will support an exciting new project combining nature and literacy called StoryWalk®. The program, which was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT, are children's stories/books posted along a trail for families to enjoy reading together while walking outdoors in a natural area. It combines physical activity, family time, literacy, and exploring nature. PVAS pilot-tested the idea last fall with several school groups and the response from parents and teachers was very positive. Local libraries and teachers will help us choose the books for the project. We plan to highlight a different book each month in communities all around the Eastern Panhandle.

Part of the grant will be used to develop a new "Explore Packs" for seven local libraries. Librarians have told us that current backpacks (birds, backyard habitats, insects, and reptiles and amphibians) are often used EXCEPT in winter, so this year's theme will be "Nature in Winter." Each backpack will have books and activity suggestions for families to use as they explore nature outside in colder weather. A portion of the money will also be used to support summer camp.

Funding Approved for Composting Toilets at Yankauer

The WV Division of Highways has awarded PVAS \$50,000 to install a two-stall wheelchair accessible composting toilet facility at the Yankauer Preserve.

This new facility will complement the new wheelchair accessible trail at the preserve, while better serving hikers, summer camp, school, Master Naturalists, and other users of the facility. Camp families have been urging PVAS to improve the restroom facilities and to have running water at the preserve for several years. We are so pleased that this grant will finally allow both to happen. Not only will sanitary conditions be improved, but camp staff will be relieved of hauling five-gallon containers of water to camp each day!

PVAS anticipates using a Clivus Multrum composting system which is low-maintenance and self-contained. It comes with a pre-fabricated trailhead building option for quick and easy installation. This option is used often at golf courses and trailheads at National and State Parks. We will work closely with the Berkeley County Health Department on the project to make sure the toilets meet or exceed all codes required by the state.

PVAS is seeking volunteers to help develop a site plan for trailhead facilities to best integrate trails, restrooms, parking lot, and pavilion. PVAS will also need a volunteer to drill a well at the preserve. Both of these volunteer "in-kind" services will be used for the required matching contribution towards grant funds. If you

are interested in helping with either of these projects, please contact Kristin Alexander at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org.

We have not yet received word from the state on when this project can get underway. We will keep you posted as we learn more!

Shepherdstown Rotary Event

PVAS raised nearly \$2,030 through its participation in the Shepherdstown Rotary Club's annual Christmas Charity Ball, held December 7 at the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department Hall. Individual Rotarians help underwrite the Ball's food costs for table guests by sponsoring tables in the name of their favorite nonprofit organization. Sponsors from the community cover all remaining event costs. Thus, all of the proceeds from the sale of tickets to each table go to the designated nonprofit. This year the PVAS table was sponsored by PVAS vice-president Gary Heichel. Susan Brookreson designed a beautiful centerpiece of fresh-cut evergreens that were decorated with small birds and ornaments with words highlighting PVAS's mission. A heart-felt thank you goes to Gary and Iris Heichel, Bob and Linda Reynolds, Mina Goodrich and Larry Dean, Lou and Jake Scavnicky, and Jane and Ray Vanderhook for supporting PVAS's table. Thanks are also due to the Shepherdstown Rotary Club for making this event possible, and to silent auction donors Jeff Feldman of GreenPath Consulting, who donated a gift certificate for a green home consultation, and to Maria Brown of Brown's Auto Care Center, who donated a gift certificate for vehicle maintenance services. The auction of these gift certificates accrued additional income to the PVAS table. Overall, the 2012 Rotary Charity Ball raised \$22,570 on behalf of 20 charitable organizations in Jefferson County.



Summer Camp Scholarships

The Camp Scholarship Committee of PVAS is planning ahead to the summer camp season! This year we're very excited to offer a new camp choice: *Coastal Bird Studies for Teens* at the Audubon Camp on Hog Island, Maine. Other camp choices will include the *Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies*, *Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp*, *West Virginia State Conservation Camp*, *Mountain Adventures Summer Camp*, and our own *Audubon Discovery* day camp. Now is the time to think about eligible youngsters, and to encourage them to apply. As further details become available we'll post them on our web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, and in future issues of *Valley Views*. Check those sources for specifics on camps, dates, ages, and application forms. You may also contact Kathryn Henry, our Scholarship Coordinator at 304-876-6681, or at dhenry@myexcel.com.

Proceeds from our fall birdseed sale support our scholarship program, through which we sponsor several young people to attend nature camps each summer. Thank you to all our loyal birdseed customers!

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

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

To become a local member, send in the form below and enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Make the check out to "PVAS." This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year.

Membership Form

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____
 Phone (optional): _____
 E-mail: _____

To save postage costs, PVAS regularly sends its newsletter by e-mail. You can be assured that we do not share email addresses with anyone. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by U.S. mail check here: ____

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Thank you for your support!



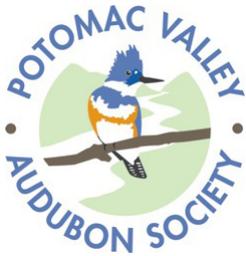
If you'd rather join the National Audubon Society:

Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society's Audubon magazine. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org 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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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 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.

PVAS Officers and Board Members

- President: Bob Reynolds (2015)robert.reynolds40@gmail.com
- Vice President: Gary Heichel (2015) GaryIris.Heichel@frontier.com
- Secretary: Mina Goodrich (2013) larrymina@peoplepc.com
- Treasurer: Lex Miller (2014).....pamandlex@frontiernet.net
- Board Members-at-Large:
 - Don Briggs (2015) 1donaldbriggs@gmail.com
 - Clark Dixon (2013)..... dixonconsultants@aol.com
 - Leigh Jenkins (2013)..... jenkinsleigh@hotmail.com
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 - Kathy Stolzenburg (2013)..... kstolzenburg@gmail.com
 - Jane Vanderhook (2013)..... janehook@frontiernet.net

- Ex Officio Board Member:** Peter Smith pvsmitth@frontiernet.net
- Emeritus Board Member:** Jean Neelyjeaneely@comcast.net

Special Contacts

- Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397)Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
- Program Director: Ellen Murphy (304-676-3397)..... Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org
- Web Master: Kathy Bilton.....kathy@fred.net
- PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-267-3482)..... dianamullis@aol.com