

The First Signs of Spring — Skunk Cabbage

By Wil Hershberger

Ah winter. Cold, gray, windy — not very inviting conditions for a walk outside. However, now is exactly the right time to go looking for the very first signs that Spring is on its way.

Hidden within the leaf litter of deciduous woodlands and wetlands, in wet, low lying areas, the most unusual of flowers may be found. These are the flowers of the primitive plant, Skunk Cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus* (simply translated: “foul smelling with connected fruit”). What is really amazing about this plant is it has the ability to melt its way up through the snow and ice that often covers the ground at this time of year. In fact, Skunk Cabbage can generate temperatures that are 50-95°F above the ambient air temperature. How on earth can a plant generate such heat? They use “cyanide-resistant cellular respiration.” Well? In short, the cells of these plants use a respiratory pathway that is insensitive to cyanide, and this alternative pathway generates more heat than does normal respiration. Amazing!



Skunk Cabbage melting its way through the snow
Photos ©Wil Hershberger, Nature Images and Sounds, LLC

So why the name, “Skunk?” To attract flies and other early emerging insects, these plants produce the same small polypeptides that can be found in rotting flesh. With descriptive names such as putrecine and cadaverine, these small volatile molecules, more highly concentrated in the flower, attract flies, beetles, and other insects that help pollinate the hidden flowers. These nasty smelling compounds also protect the plants from being eaten.

The “flower” that we see coming up through the snow is actually

the spathe, a modified leaf that protects the actual flower within. The spathe is typically splotched and spotted with patches of green and purple. As the plant emerges from the ground and the spathe unfolds, the flower head, or spadix, becomes visible. Often dark-purple in color, the spadix is covered with tiny yellow flowers, the true flowers of the Skunk Cabbage. The spadix releases more of the odor producing chemicals than the rest of the plant and therefore attracts most of the flies and other insects that are active early in the year. The heat within the spathe may also attract these pollinators, as it is much warmer within the “flower” than outside.

Another fascinating aspect of the Skunk Cabbage is that the roots contract, pulling the plants ever deeper into the wet soils where they live. The older the plant, the deep it is in the soil, thus protecting it from being eaten or damaged.

Soon after the flowers have withered, the leaves emerge from the wet soil and grow at an amazing rate. Soon the plants are thigh-high with broad leaves that can be a couple of feet across. Walking through a thicket of these plants will release some of those same foul-smelling compounds that were protecting the flowers. The patch will soon smell as if a skunk were nearby. Hopefully, you are walking in front of the rest of your group.

Native Americans regarded the plant as medicinal and magical. Most of the plant is toxic or irritating when fresh. Drying the leaves reduces the presence of some of these toxic or irritating chemicals (calcium oxalate, the same chemical that makes persimmons uneatable before frosts). These people used the plant to treat a number of internal and external ailments including the flu and skin irritations.



The true flowers are hidden inside

You'll have to keep a sharp eye out for these well-camouflaged, late-winter flowers of the Arum family. Searching in wet low lying areas of woodlands, stream sides, and in wetlands will be most productive. If the spathe has unfolded enough, use a small flashlight to look within so that you can examine the actual flowers that adorn the spadix within.

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

Director's Notes

By Kristan Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Happy New Year! I hope everyone has weathered the extreme temperatures the last month has featured. It makes one appreciate the amazing adaptations of our wild neighbors that keep them warm whatever the weather!

In December you received PVAS' Annual Report as well as our request that our members and friends contribute to PVAS. This appeal allows us to offer the programs and services we provide. You have been most responsive and generous! As of January 15 we have received \$30,095 from 130 families and individuals. We are truly grateful for your generosity.

The annual appeal runs through the end of March so if you've forgotten, it's not too late! We are hoping to raise at least what we raised last year (\$36,140).

If you are receiving this newsletter by USPS mail, 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: <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/support>. 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.

We depend on the support and generosity of our donors to deliver affordable, quality programs to help connect people of all ages to the natural world. We can't charge nearly enough to cover the true costs of our programs, so we appreciate your generosity.

Shepherdstown Rotary Event

PVAS raised over \$2,000 through its participation in the Shepherdstown Rotary Club's annual Christmas Charity Ball, held December 6th at the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department Hall. Individual Rotarians helped underwrite 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 PVAS's table was once-again sponsored by Gary Heichel. Susan Brookreson designed a beautiful centerpiece of fresh-cut evergreens. Silent auction donations included Jeff Feldman of GreenPath Consulting, who donated a gift certificate for a green home consultation, and For Love of Children's Outdoor Education Center who donated race fees for their Harpers Ferry Half Marathon and 4 mile races.

An enormous thank you goes to Gary Heichel for organizing and sponsoring PVAS' table, and Mina Goodrich, Diana Mullis, Jane Vanderhook, Lou Scavnicky and Tanner Haid for supporting and/or attending this event. Thanks also to the Shepherdstown Rotary Club for making this event possible.

Stauffer's Marsh Trail Established

On January 18, Eagle Scout Shawn Hogbin organized a workday at Stauffer's Marsh to mulch (and therefore formally establish) our first official trail at our newest preserve! The trail meanders along the base of the dam, and concludes at the top of the dam with a view of the open water at the marsh.

The mulch was donated by Berkeley County's Recycling Center and was hauled by volunteers with pickup trucks.

In addition to the trail, Shawn has built a kiosk and bench that will be installed at a later date near the trailhead. This site will provide an opportunity for visitors to be welcomed, see a map of the trails, learn about some of the wildlife they may see at the preserve, and learn about the history of the marsh and the generosity of Stauffer and Elinor Miller who donated the property.

We truly thank Shawn Hogbin for choosing Stauffer's Marsh to benefit from his Eagle Scout efforts and for building this trail.



Working on the trail: (l to r) Shawn Hogbin, Peter Callahan, Clint Hogbin. Photo by Lou Scavnicky

Thank You, Joe!

A sincere thank you goes to Joe Gentile, Volunteer Caretaker at the Eidolon Preserve. Joe has been caretaking the property since it became a preserve – building, marking and clearing trails, leading walks, opening the gate for contractors and other groups, maintaining the cabin, and many other jobs too numerous to list.

Joe is "retiring" from his volunteer job to pursue some other interests, but we thank him for his years of tireless work, hundreds of hours, and attention to detail.

Kristin Alexander (PVAS Executive Director) and Lou Scavnicky (PVAS Board member) will be seeking Morgan County volunteers to help with the Eidolon Preserve to help PVAS fill Joe's shoes this spring. If you'd like to be involved, please contact Kristin at 304-676-3397 or Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org.

Sign Up for Birding 101

PVAS is still accepting applications for its 2014 "Birding 101" course for beginning birders, which will be held in April. This will be the 29th year we have offered this course, and it continues to be very popular. Space will be limited so those who are interested are encouraged to sign up soon.

The course will to be taught by leading local bird experts, including Bob Dean and Wil Hershberger, and 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. The focus will be on bird species found in the Eastern Panhandle area.

The evening classroom sessions will start on Thursday, April 3, and be held each of the following three Thursdays (April 10, 17, and 24). All 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 5, 12, and 19 and 27).

Tuition for the full course package of four classroom sessions and four field trips (a total of 28 hours of instruction) is \$95. Registration is required. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org and look for "Birding 101" under "Birding" or "Events Calendar." Or contact Krista Hawley at 304-876-8471 or adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.

PVAS Program on Amphibian Population Declines

Our monthly evening program for February will feature a presentation about the worldwide decline of amphibian populations. The speaker will be Dr. Laura Robertson, Assistant Professor of Biology at Shepherd University.

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 12 in room 337, Snyder Hall, on the Shepherd University campus. Admission will be free and everyone is welcome to attend.

The decline of amphibians is of great concern to biologists. First noted in the 1980s, the problem has been increasingly well-documented since then. A major 2004 study found that 43 percent of amphibian species were declining in abundance, with 32 percent possibly facing extinction. Those proportions may well be higher today. Species in Central America, the Caribbean, and Australia have been particularly hard-hit. Many different causes have been cited but climate change and an emerging disease called chytridiomycosis are currently believed to be the greatest threats.

Dr. Robertson joined the Shepherd faculty last fall. Previously, she was a researcher at the U.S. Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center from 2005-2013 and an editor for Incyte Corporation from 1999 to 2005. She received a Ph.D. in biology from MIT in 1999. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the U of Georgia.

Christmas Bird Count Results

By Bob Dean

The 114th running of the Christmas Bird Count was one of surprising numbers. The two local counts had a total of 16 species observed in record numbers. The Charles Town count was held on Dec. 15th with 12 species topping former record highs: Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Great Blue Heron, Ring-billed Gull, Common

Raven, Horned Lark, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina and Winter Wrens, Eastern Bluebird, Dark-eyed Junco, and Rusty Blackbird. Bald Eagles were 1 shy of their record of 13 in 2011. The post count tally rally was held at La Mezzaluna.

The 4 record breaking species for the Inwood count were Wild Turkey (68 in one flock), Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, and Red-shouldered Hawk. There were also 3 first time encounters on this count. Nancy and Elliot Kirschbaum and Bill Telfair had the good fortune to find a large flock of Canada geese with a single, well documented Cackling Goose keeping company. Excellent spotting! Lynne Wiseman and her usual team of Tess England, Bruni Haydl, and Susan Jones found the first Greater Scaup on West Quarry in Martinsburg—the site for 2 of my lifers, Lesser Scaup and Horned Grebe, in the late '70s. Wil Hershberger, Gabby and Mackie Martin, and yours truly observed a Golden Eagle while checking an active feeder on the eastern foot of Third Hill Mountain near Jones Spring. Gabby happened to look up at the right moment to spot the young bird as it flew low over the open field where we were parked. A good lesson in keeping an eye to the sky. The tally rally was kindly hosted by Sarah and Stan Corwin-Roach. There were many wonderful dishes from which to choose.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated or helped behind the scenes and commend the Charles Town participants for their amazing show of flexibility in switching days at the 11th hour. We lost only two participants, but gained one so it was relatively painless.

Thanks also to PVAS for their willingness to underwrite the counts and provide website access at www.potomacaudubon.org for count forms and other information. The dates for next season's counts are Dec. 14, 2014 for the Charles Town count and Jan. 3, 2015 for the Inwood count. In the meantime I hope to see you in the field.

Great Backyard Bird Count in February

From the Great Backyard Bird Count news release (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/press/news-stories/2014-gbbc-news-release>):

New York, N.Y. and Ithaca, N.Y.—From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell [Lab of Ornithology](http://www.cornell.edu/lab/ornithology) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org) with partner [Bird Studies Canada](http://www.birdstudiescanada.com).

The editor/publisher of *Valley Views* thanks Kathryn Henry for her excellent work proofing articles for the newsletter and writing the occasional "creature feature" articles.

PVAS Master Naturalist Program

The PVAS's eighth Master Naturalist Program is set to begin in March with coursework and fieldwork scheduled throughout the year. The courses, which will consist of three or more hours of expert instruction on a specific nature studies topic, are offered on Saturdays (and a few Sundays) at a variety of venues including; the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), For the Love of Children (FLOC) Outdoor Education Center, CraftWorks, and Cacapon State Park.



Each student enrolled in the West Virginia Master Naturalist Program will receive a total of 48 Core and 16 Elective hours of instruction.

When space is available, each course is open to members of the general public who are interested in learning about specific topics. In addition, the elective courses can be counted as re-certification hours by Certified Master Naturalists. Application forms and full details are available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org or email your questions to Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.

Natural History Workshops

If you have been thinking of signing up for one of PVAS's Natural History Workshops, 2014 is your year! The calendar is filling up with some amazing workshops that offer numerous opportunities for you to learn more about the natural history of your area as well as try your hand at a variety of exciting outdoor skills. All workshops are open to the public and we encourage you to sign up. These workshops are also excellent ways for Master Naturalists to complete their re-certification class hours.

We open our 2014 workshop calendar with a Tree Nurturing Workshop at Morgan's Grove Park on February 15. Pruning concepts and techniques will be taught and then practiced under the guidance of local arborist, Shawn Walker.

Exploring Vernal Pools Workshop with Clark Dixon will take place on March 8. Background information will be covered in the classroom before the 'real fun' begins when students explore 3-4 vernal pools around the Eastern Panhandle.

Birding 101 returns again this year with birding experts Bob Dean and Wil Hershberger. This popular Introduction to Birding Workshop will take place on four consecutive Thursdays and Saturdays beginning April 3.

May 10 brings the Geology of Hardy County Workshop. Enjoy a day road trip with course leader Mike O'Donnell as he guides students to various significant geological sites and areas of interest.

We have two more spring workshops 'in the making'. Susan Brookreson will be leading a Sketching Workshop at CraftWorks in April, and Captain Lou and Clark Dixon are planning an Introduction to Fly Fishing Workshop for April or May. Stay tuned for more

information on both of these unique opportunities!

Natural History Workshops tend to fill up fast. To register, visit our PVAS website at www.PotomacAudubon.org, and look for the link to our Events Calendar.



*Clark Dixon explores a vernal pool
Photo by Don Henry*

Race for the Birds



Join us as we race, run, jog and walk our way through the trails of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC). Race for the Birds is set for Saturday April 5, 2014 at NCTC near Shepherdstown WV. Registration and information can be found at the race website, www.raceforthebirds.org or

feel free to contact race directors Nan Johnson or Krista Hawley at the race email, race4birds@potomacaudubon.org.

As in years past, Race for the Birds offers two professionally timed races, a self-timed 2 mile community walk/jog and a 'fun run' for children under 10 years of age. The timed races include a 4.9 and a 7.7 mile trail run that wind through the beautiful fields and woods of NCTC's 538 acre campus. The 2 mile walk/jog is set on roads and trails that are very user friendly for families with small children and baby joggers.

The trails on the NCTC campus are not normally open to the public so this race offers a wonderful opportunity to visit and enjoy the facility's beautiful trail network.

The two timed races will begin at 9:00 a.m., the jog/walk will begin shortly after 9:00 and the Children's fun run will begin at approximately 10:45.

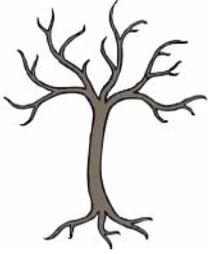
The Children's Fun Run is free while the fees for the other portions of the event range from \$15 to \$25.

All proceeds from the event go towards supporting PVAS's children's programming and all fees are tax deductible.

If running does not interest you but you would still like to be part of the fun, we are looking for volunteers who are able to help with the advertising of the event (hanging posters and passing out flyers), help with race set up or volunteer the day of the race. Please email race4birds@potomacaudubon.org to let us know you are available!

Winter Tree ID At Cacapon State Park

PVAS will offer a winter tree-identification field trip at Cacapon State Park in Morgan County on Saturday, February 8. West Virginia state forester Ben Kunze, the trip leader, will show how to identify trees through such clues as their branching habits and overall shape, twigs and buds, and bark. Participants will meet at 12 noon at the Park's Nature Center.



There is no fee, and anyone with an interest is invited to attend. Space is limited and pre-registration is essential. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. For more information, contact Kelly Wolf at mkheldreth@hotmail.com or 304-229-6229. The total time of the trip will be about two hours.

If there has been a major snow the day before or the weather is especially inclement on the day of the trip, check the PVAS website to make sure the trip is still on. If the trip is snowed out, it will be rescheduled to February 22.

Those who participate should dress warmly and wear sturdy footwear.

Harpers Ferry Bird Walk

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk on the C&O Canal near Harpers Ferry on Wednesday, February 5.

There is no fee and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children will be welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Participants should plan to meet at 8:00 a.m. outside John Brown's Fort, where Potomac and Shenandoah Streets meet in Harpers Ferry National Park. Parking is available along Potomac Street near the train station. From the Fort, 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 raptors, waterfowl, and other winter birds.

Participants should bring water and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions. Binoculars will be available for those who do not have their own. The walk will involve about 4 miles of level walking along the towpath. The walk may be cancelled in the event of heavy weather.

For more information, contact trip leader Deb Hale at mdeb-hale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

NCTC Birding Trip

PVAS is sponsoring a birding trip to the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown on Saturday, February 8. The trip will start at 8:00 a.m. and last about three hours. It will involve walking about two miles over moderate terrain. The trip is free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along. Children are welcome. However, space will be limited and pre-registration is required. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org no later than February 6.

Since the Center's 538-acre campus is not normally open to the public, this is a good opportunity to visit the campus and enjoy the trails while birding. The campus contains a mix of fields and forest, providing good habitat for a rich variety of bird species such as sparrows, juncos, raptors, bluebirds, woodpeckers, waterfowl and other birds of winter, including a good possibility of seeing NCTC's resident Bald Eagles.

Everyone should plan to wear comfortable walking or hiking boots that can protect against possible cold, muddy or snowy trails 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 bad weather. For further information or to check on possible weather cancellation, contact Sandy Sagalkin at mmonsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

Eastern Shore Birding Trip

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is sponsoring a three-day winter birding trip to the Eastern Shore on President's Day weekend, February 15-17. The trip will include visits to the Bombay Hook, Prime Hook, and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuges, the Indian River Inlet, and Assateague Island National Seashore. 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. David will be staying Friday night at the Day's Inn at 27 North Dupont Highway in Dover, DE.

Participants should plan to meet the trip group in the Inn lobby at 6:30 a.m. Saturday morning or at the nearby visitor's center of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge at 7:00 a.m.

For more information about the trip or carpooling possibilities, contact David by email at mdkmyles@comcast.net. Please email if you are coming in case the weather is bad and we need to cancel.

Don't Miss Workshop on Winter Tree Care

PVAS will sponsor a workshop on winter tree care on Saturday, February 15.

The workshop will be held at Morgan's Grove Park, Shepherdstown. The group will meet at 10:00 am in the lower parking lot near the railroad tracks. The workshop will last about two hours.

The workshop, led by local arborist Shawn Walker, will provide an overview of pruning concepts and techniques and offer hands-on instruction. The focus will be on recent riparian plantings at the park and on some specimen trees.

Everyone is welcome but pre-registration is required and there will be fee of \$10 per person. Register on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. Pruning supplies will be provided but participants should feel free to bring their own if they wish.

Claymont Birding Trip on Feb. 22

PVAS will sponsor a birding field trip on the historic Claymont property outside Charles Town on Saturday, February 22. It is free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of birding skills. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the Society's website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

The trip will begin at 8:30 a.m. Participants should plan to meet the trip leader on the Claymont entrance road, where a wetland meets the access driveway. The entrance is located at 667 Huyett Road, marked by a street sign that says "Claymont Mansion."

The trip will involve about three miles of moderate hiking. It should offer opportunities to see waterfowl and wintering birds. This trip will be conducted snow, rain or shine. Participants should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather and bring drinking water. Those who need binoculars should let the trip leader know ahead of time, as loaner binoculars can be provided. For more info, contact trip leader, Joette Borzik, at 240-440-4221 or mpep4223@comcast.net.

Charles Town "Tree Walk" Set For March 1

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society will sponsor a late winter Tree Walk along the streets of Charles Town on Saturday, March 1. The walk will be led by local arborist Shawn Walker. Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Library.

The walk, lasting about two hours, will offer a close-up look at the town's diverse tree population, with a special emphasis on evergreens. Species will be identified by bark, branching habits, and other winter characteristics. There will be a prize for the winner of a tree-height guessing challenge.

The event will be free and open to the public but space will be limited and pre-registration is essential. To pre-register or get more information, go to the PVAS website. For more information, contact Kelly Wolf at mkheldreth@hotmail.com or 304-229-6229.

Coming Soon: Summer Camp Scholarships

The Camp Scholarship Committee of PVAS is planning ahead to the summer camp season. 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 and possibly other camp opportunities become available we'll post them on our web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, and in future issues of *Valley Views*. Check those sources soon 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, as well as individual and community donors, support our scholarship program. Each summer

throughout our history we have sponsored several young people to attend nature camps. Thank you to all our loyal birdseed customers and other donors!

Audubon Discovery Camp Preview

In just four months, our 12th season of Audubon Discovery Camp will begin, featuring programs at Yankauer Preserve, the Peter Burr Farm and CraftWorks. Sessions will include the ever-popular "Camp Survivor" as well as "Deep Woods Detectives", "Back in the Good Ol' Days", and "Mystery Week!" A new week at CraftWorks, called "Tails in the Woods," will focus on drama and puppetry but will also include camps games, crafts, and nature exploring. Special sessions for older campers (ages 11-13) include "Adventure: Walkabout." Middle schoolers interested in becoming camp leaders, may apply to become Junior Staff. Our popular "Out of the Nest" session for preschoolers and a caring adult returns this year as well as a new short-day session for younger campers (ages 5-6) called "Nature Buddies."

Fees range from \$50-\$200, depending on the session. The camp T-shirt for this year will have a blue crow mascot on a daisy yellow shirt. Shirts can be ordered when campers register. Camp begins in June but registrations begin in early February. PVAS members always have the opportunity to sign up in advance of the general public. Since many sessions fill quickly, you want to make sure your membership is up to date!

Spring School Programs Preview

Our new watershed initiative in Washington County MD has begun with a total of 17 classes. Participating schools are Pleasant Valley Elementary, Greenbrier Elementary, Boonsboro Elementary/Magnet, Fountain Rock, Lincolnshire Elementary, and Sharpsburg Elementary Schools. A rain garden site has been identified at each school and students at the schools will be growing native plants for the gardens as part of the program. (We are working with Cacapon Institute to plan and install each garden.) Watershed programs are also underway at South Jefferson, North Jefferson, and Driswood Elementary Schools in Jefferson County and Warm Springs Intermediate and Pleasant View Elementary in Morgan County.

Other school programs, either at Yankauer or classroom-based, resumed in January. Students at Back Creek Valley and Tuscarora Elementary in Berkeley County and Ranson Elementary in Jefferson County have already scheduled a visit from PVAS. Several of these classroom programs are being funded by a generous grant from *Ecolab*. Teachers who would like to learn more about or schedule a program in the spring of 2014 should contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org. Volunteers to help with these programs are always welcome!

Youth and Family Programs for Spring 2014

Once winter begins to fade and warmer weather returns, our Spring 2014 programs will return as well. The popular Wee Naturalists, for preschoolers and a caring adult, will resume in April. The Spring Egg Hunt, featuring eggs painted like real bird eggs,

will be held on Sunday afternoon, April 13. Registration for these events is now open.

StoryWalks® are being set up with local libraries, schools, churches, and recreation centers, so look for those as they are advertised in the PVAS calendar and in local papers. This program, funded by the Nora Roberts Foundation, features children’s books that are posted page-by-page along a trail to combine literacy and family fun in nature.

The Nora Roberts Foundation is also funding additional “Nature Explore Packs” for seven local libraries. The new packs, focusing on “Exploring Nature in Winter,” are now available for checkout at Shepherdstown, Martinsburg, South Jefferson, Sharpsburg, Boonsboro, Old Charles Town, and Berkeley Springs libraries.

Outdoor Explore hikes and programs for families will be offered this spring on an occasional basis and will be listed in the Calendar of Events on the PVAS website. If you have a favorite place that is ideal for families with younger children to explore, let us know! Perhaps your family would even like to host a hike for other families!

Finally, the PVAS Wildflower Festival at Yankauer Preserve will be held on Saturday April 12th. Families are invited to spend a bit of time wandering the trails as the wildflowers are showing off their finery. Guided tours are also offered during this event. For more information about any of these programs, contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org.

Smithsonian Certified Coffee

By Diana Mullis, PVAS president



Great Coffee News: The [Black Dog Coffee Company](#) is now carrying a Smithsonian Certified Coffee called *Peru la Florida*. It is Organic, Fair Trade, Smithsonian Bird Friendly, Altitude 1,200-1,400 M, Wet Processed and Sun Dried. What more could we ask for? I haven’t tried it yet, but I will as soon as I can get over there. Check their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackDogCoffeeFans>.

Nest Box Cleaner

At the January PVAS meeting, speaker Judith Lilga informed us that the manufacturer and wholesale distributor of a bird nest box spray cleaner had kindly offered to let PVAS members order directly from them until such time as they can get their distributors to offer the product on-line. If you would like to purchase the spray, contact Lynnell Carleton at lynnell@carefreeenzymes.com. The product is now called *Birdhouse, Nesting Pocket, and Gourd Cleaner*.



PVAS Announcements Via Email

If you would like to receive email announcements from PVAS, please write to kathy@potomacaudubon.org.

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

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

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

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

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: ____.

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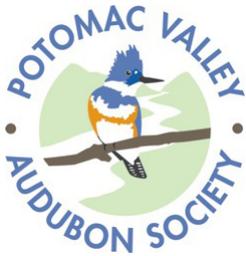
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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please contact any 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
 The PVAS Board meets every other month on the first Thursday of the month (Sept.-June). Meeting location and time will be announced prior to meetings. These meetings are open to all PVAS members.

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- President: Diana Mullis (2014)..... DianaMullis@aol.com
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Emerita Board Member: Jean Neely..... jeaneely@comcast.net

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