

# VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac  
Valley  
Audubon  
Society

Volume 33, Issue 5

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## President's Perch

by Jane Vanderhook, PVAS President

Happy 2015!

We have a very full calendar this year. School programs continue to connect young people to the natural world and we are already planning for this summer's Discovery Camp. Registration will open mid-February so be on the lookout for that if you are interested. This very popular program will fill up quickly, so register early and don't forget members of PVAS get a discount.

The calendar is full of outings and educational opportunities for adults. Take a look; new events are added frequently. Registration for This Race is for the Birds opened December 15 and applications for the Master Naturalist program are due January 31.

Our Annual Appeal campaign is underway and off to a good start. We have received over \$27,000 thus far which puts us  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way to our goal of \$36,000. We thank all of you who have contributed. If you have not already made a donation to the Annual Appeal, please give if you can. With your help PVAS can continue to offer the programs that benefit us all. We directly solicit donations from you only once a year so please help make this the most successful campaign ever.

Thank you for your support.

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## National Audubon Biennial Convention Near Leesburg! Save the Date! July 10-13, 2015

Prepare to join Audubon's amazing network of dedicated chapter, centers, state and national leaders to celebrate One Audubon! The next biennial Audubon Convention will take place at the Lansdowne Resort on the banks of the Potomac River, near historic Leesburg, VA. Enjoy four full days of exciting field trips, inspiring speakers, in-depth hands-on workshops and camaraderie. Keep an eye on the NAS website for details: <http://www.audubon.org/audubon-convention-2015>.

## Director's Report:

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Happy New Year! I hope everyone has enjoyed the snow and the adventures and beauty it brings!

Early in December you received PVAS' Annual Report as well as our "appeal" to friends and members to make an annual contribution.

Funding from this annual request is what allows PVAS to offer the varied and excellent programs and services it provides. As always, I am impressed and touched with the generosity of the PVAS community. Thank you!!! We are approaching our goal and we are grateful to all who support PVAS this way.

If you missed the annual appeal but would like to contribute, it runs through the end of March. So it's not too late! An envelope is enclosed for your convenience if you are receiving this by mail. 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.

You can always donate by credit card on our website, too: [www.potomacaudubon.org/support](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/support). Any way you choose to contribute is gratefully appreciated. No amount is too large or too small.

Your contributions support PVAS' efforts to provide access to beautiful nature preserves as well as quality programs for youth and adults. The programs and preserves are geared 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 (and access to the preserves is free), so we truly appreciate your generosity.

## PA Bluebird Conference in March

PVAS Members are invited to the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluebird Society of PA Conference in Lancaster, PA on March 27-28, 2015. Go to [www.thebsp](http://www.thebsp) for details on speakers and lodging options.

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

## Summer Means Camp!

Our Audubon Discovery Camp returns in early June and continues through mid-July. Registration for all programs begins in early February. PVAS members may register at a lower fee (but you can become a member at any time, so why not join or renew your membership now?).

Session themes this year include “Bugs, Slugs, and Other Ughs,” “I’m Flying,” “Camp Survivor,” “Butterfly...Flutter By,” and “Pioneer Adventure.” Preschool sessions include “Out of the Nest,” and “Nature Buddies.” Teens can choose from “Outdoor Adventurer: Build A Techno Trail,” “Junior Staff,” or our “Teen Digital Photo Camp.” Sites this year are Yankauer Nature Preserve in Berkeley County and the Peter Burr Farm near Kearneysville, WV. “I’m Flying” will feature a special evening program at the end of the week. Scholarships are available for all these sessions.

Since our day camps begin in early June, parents often ask what we do if schools are still in session when camps are scheduled to begin. We keep watch on the school calendars and make decisions based on session registration numbers. Although it is possible that the first sessions in early June will be postponed, we won’t make any decisions before late April.

Our day camp mascot this year is the red fox, who will appear on the camp shirts. Shirts must be pre-ordered by May 15 and are \$10 each. Full information about each session is on the website: returning campers know that to get a spot you can’t wait to register. Summer will be here before you know it!

In addition to our day camps, PVAS encourages youth ages 11 and older to consider attending an overnight camp. These quality nature camps can be life-changing and provide campers with an in-depth nature experience. PVAS offers scholarships to several including Junior Nature Camp at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, WV, Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies in Capon Bridge, WV, the West Virginia Teen Conservation Camp in Ripley, WV, the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) at NCTC, and Family Camp at National Audubon’s Hog Island in Maine! If your child has a real interest in nature and is ready to be away from home for one to two weeks, think about applying for one of these scholarships.

PVAS is pleased to be able to offer scholarships for all these camps. The brief scholarship applications can be found on our website, [www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org). There is a separate application for Audubon Discovery Camp. Both applications are due in early April and require a short letter from the camper (parents can take dictation if your child hasn’t learned to write yet!) and a letter of reference from a teacher or family friend.

### Summer Camp Scholarships are Coming Soon

The Camp Scholarship Committee of PVAS is looking ahead to the summer 2015 camp season! We’re excited by our *Family Camp* opportunity at *Hog Island, Maine*, after our 2014 camper family reported a super experience there!

Other excellent camp choices will include the *Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies*, *Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp*, *West Virginia State Conservation Camp*, and our own *Audubon Discovery Day Camp*. Now is the time to encourage eligible youngsters and families to apply!

Please check our web site, [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org), and future issues of *Valley Views*, where we’ll provide further details and possibly other camp opportunities as they become available. We’ll continue to give specifics on camps, dates, ages, and application forms. You may also contact Kathryn Henry, our Scholarship Coordinator at 304-876-6681, or at [dhenny@myexcel.com](mailto:dhenny@myexcel.com).

Proceeds from our annual fall birdseed sale and from individual and community donors support our scholarship program. Every summer we have sponsored several young people to attend nature camps. Thank you to all our loyal birdseed customers and other donors!

### Spring Programs for Families

Spring will come—we promise—and PVAS has several programs planned especially for families. Our popular Spring Egg Hunt for Preschoolers is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, March 29.

A new program, Family Nature Tales at Yankauer Nature Preserve has begun one Saturday a month and you’ll find more details are in the accompanying article.

Our StoryWalks® are being posted frequently at several libraries and in Shepherdstown at The Little House.

A new workshop designed to help adults learn new ways to share nature with their children or grandchildren will be offered on Sunday afternoon, April 19 at Yankauer Preserve.

You can register for all of these events now at the PVAS website.

We’re still hoping that Wee Naturalists will return this spring and we’re searching for someone who would like to lead the program on a regular basis.

If you are that person, contact Ellen Murphy at [Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).

## Winter Waterfowl

by Wil Hershberger

During the summer months, waterfowl are spread all across the North American continent. They are nesting around lakes, ponds, prairie potholes, streams, rivers, and permanent and ephemeral wetlands. Millions of young ducks, grebes, rails, bitterns, and loons are born and raised by committed mothers, risking their lives to protect the next generation. They teach their young how to find food and avoid predators, but they may leave them on the breeding grounds as the weather turns colder and they begin their southward migration.

For most species, fall migration is started by the males. Males molt their flight feathers earlier than females while they are still on



Male Wood Duck, © WilHershberger

the breeding grounds and begin heading south soon after they are able to fly. Females will leave their young and seek cover to molt, which leaves them flightless for around three weeks. Once the females are able to fly, they too begin heading south to avoid being trapped in ice as ponds and lakes freeze.

In our area, we begin to see an increase in the number of ducks starting in October. From December through April, the numbers of individuals peak. Rivers, lakes, and ponds are the best places to look for these winter visitors. If the Great Lakes freeze in January or early February, the numbers of ducks and grebes can really skyrocket.

Our area is blessed with many accessible areas to look for wintering waterfowl. The Shenandoah River, the Potomac River, the ponds at Shannondale and Country Club Road, the lake at Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management area, and Stauffer's Marsh are all good places to search.

Perhaps the most productive location is the Shenandoah River from Millville to John Rissler Road. Along this stretch of river you can find Loons, Double-crested Cormorants, Red-necked Grebes, Horned Grebes, Pied-billed Grebes, American Wigeon, Wood Ducks, Mallards, American Black Ducks, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Redheads, Canvasbacks, Common Golden-eyes, Buffleheads, Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted Mergansers, Canada Geese, Tundra Swans, and others.



Snow Geese in Flight, © WilHershberger

Stauffer's Marsh offers roadside views of Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, American Black Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, and the occasional Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. Tundra Swans are a very rare visitor to the marsh, and would be a great find.

Spectacular waterfowl viewing can be had at some nearby locations such as: Bombay Hook WMA in Delaware; Indian River Inlet, Delaware Seashore State Park, Delaware; Ocean City Inlet, Ocean City, Maryland; Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia; Long Wharf Park on the Choptank River, Cambridge, Maryland; and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge also at Cambridge, Maryland. Many of these locations feature tens-of-thousands of Snow geese that are particularly abundant in late November. As the sun rises, tremendous flocks of geese will take off from the protected bays and ponds as they head out for the day looking for food. Some areas host hundreds of Tundra Swans with an occasional Trumpeter Swan mixed in. It is not unusual for these coastal locations to have species that we rarely, if ever, see this far inland, such as: Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Surf, Black, and White-winged Scoters, or the rare European Wigeon.

While many may see winter bird-watching as slow and not very exciting, with the treasure trove of waterfowl species that we can see in our own area, and at locations within a day's drive -- winter birding can be spectacular.

## Join February 15 Bird Walk at Stauffer's Marsh

PVAS is sponsoring a birding walk at its Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Sunday, February 15.

The trip will begin at 8:00 a.m. It will be led by local birder Steve Hartmann. The event is free and open to anyone with an interest. Children will be welcome.

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

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

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

The preserve is only 46 acres in size, so the distances to be walked are not great. However, the terrain will include wet meadows and marshlands, as well as dry areas, so waterproof footwear is strongly recommended. Ticks can be an issue at the preserve year 'round, so tick repellent is also recommended if air temperatures are significantly above freezing. Participants should dress for the prevailing weather and bring water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trip may be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

For more information go to the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at 703-303-1026 or [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org).




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## At the Preserves...

No surprise, 2015 will be a busy one at the various preserves PVAS manages!

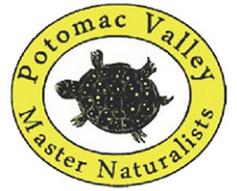
Yankauer will see some major improvements this year thanks to three Eagle Scouts who have requested projects there. Alex Hinkle is planning to improve the landscaping around the entrance sign at Yankauer with native plants. Jackson Tennant will be removing the original kiosk and replacing it with a bench for folks to rest while waiting for friends who are out on the trails, or who are waiting in line for the future bathroom. And Ethan Geyer will be helping PVAS better establish some of the more "remote" paths that get grown over with honeysuckle and multiflora rose in the summer. We are so grateful that so many scouts are choosing the Preserves to be the recipients of their labor and leadership! And we are also grateful to PVAS volunteers Nan Johnson and Lou Scavnicky for working directly with these youth as they coordinate the workdays and projects.

At Eidolon, we are seeking some additional volunteers. We need to re-establish some of these trails as well, and trail upkeep is critical through the summer's growing season. If you'd like to help out at Eidolon by participating in organized work days or signing up for regular maintenance tasks, contact Lou Scavnicky at (304) 262-7496.

Stauffer's Marsh has been the recipient of a grant from the WV Division of Environmental Protection's Stream Partners Grant. The paperwork has now been signed, the monies received, and we are beginning to plan the work in earnest! This spring you'll see additional improvements in the parking lot (weed barrier and gravel), and by fall you'll see new interpretive and directional signs. Steve Hartmann, volunteer Land Manager at Stauffer's Marsh, is spearheading these efforts. We can't thank him enough for his leadership on these and many other projects at the Preserve.

## PVAS Master Naturalist Program

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is beginning its ninth year and is off to a great start! The Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee hosted a very successful first annual Open House at Hospice of the Panhandle on Wednesday January 14<sup>th</sup>.



After an introductory presentation by the committee, there was an opportunity for attendees to network and enjoy light refreshments. Certified Master Naturalists shared their experiences with new faces and answered many questions about the program. This event proved to be a fantastic way to kick off the 2015 year and promote one of our most popular adult programs.

Master Naturalist classes will begin the weekend of March 21<sup>st</sup> at Cacapon State Park, with sessions on Saturday and Sunday. Classes will continue one Saturday per month through September at a variety of venues including CraftWorks and the National Conservation Training Center. The final September weekend also consists of Saturday and Sunday sessions.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Naturalist or would like more information about our program, please visit our website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org) and look for the blue Master Naturalist tab, or email Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org).

### Save the Date: 2015 Master Naturalist Program Conference

Plan to attend the 2015 Master Naturalist Program Conference on June 12-14. The conference will be held on the campus of Davis & Elkins College; Elkins, WV. This conference provides an opportunity to meet West Virginia Master Naturalists from other chapters, take field trips to unique and outstanding natural sites in the state, and receive elective hours for re-certification. The conference is open to certified Master Naturalists and those working towards certification.

More information about conference registration, schedule, description of classes, list of instructors, and registration form will be made available by email, Valley Views, and PVAS website as soon as the conference is officially announced. In the meantime mark your calendars for June 12-14, 2015.

### February 25 Bird Walk Along C&O Canal at Harpers Ferry

Join Deb Hale for a winter bird walk on the C&O Canal at Harpers Ferry on Wednesday, February 25. There is no fee and anyone with an interest is welcome.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website.

The walk will involve about 4 miles of level walking along the Canal towpath. Participants should plan to meet at 8:00 a.m. at John Brown's Fort in Harpers Ferry National Park. Parking may be 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 raptors, waterfowl, and other birds that overwinter in this area.

Participants should bring water and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions. The Society will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own. The walk may be cancelled in the event of heavy weather.

For more information, or to check on possible weather cancellation, contact Deb at [debhale72@gmail.com](mailto:debhale72@gmail.com) or 304-535-2346.

### February 11 Program Will Focus on Backyard Habitats

Our monthly program for February will feature a presentation on "Creating a Healthy Backyard Habitat."

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 11 at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville.

Admission will be free and everyone is welcome to attend.

The speakers will be three local Master Naturalists: Susan Brookreson, Carol Del-Colle, and Bruni Haydl. They will provide homeowners with helpful information about creating backyard habitats that attract birds and other beneficial wildlife.

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

For more information go to the PVAS website or contact Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org) or 703-303-1026.

## PVAS Goes to School

PVAS has been going into the local schools for over 10 years, but maybe you've been wondering what we actually do! Our spring programs began the very day that students returned to classes in January and will continue throughout the spring semester. Ellen Murphy has been busy with students at Rosemont Elementary and Berkeley Heights Elementary Schools in Martinsburg and North Jefferson Elementary in Jefferson County. Students at these schools have learned about insects, how animals survive cold weather, and animal adaptations. Later this spring, we'll introduce a new second grade program about birds based on the book "Rainbow Crow."

We serve over 1500 fourth graders each year through our Watershed Program which has just begun in 48 classrooms. An additional 21 classes are continuing with a year-long program that began last fall. Our six watershed instructors are certainly busy! This year, PVAS is collaborating with Cacapon Institute to emphasize the importance of planting native tree species to protect rivers and streams. Students at several of the schools will plant and nurture tree whips as part of the watershed program.

Later this spring, we plan to pilot several new school programs focused on wetland habitats. These will take place in the classroom and at Stauffer's Marsh. The programs are being funded by a grant from the WV Division of Natural Resources.

Plans are also underway with several homeschool groups to offer programs at Yankauer Preserve. It's always exciting to be able to work with students and encourage them to use the natural world to achieve learning standards. PVAS always welcomes volunteers to help with these programs!

## Here's a Great Pair for Your Car

by Jean Neely

The West Virginia license plates that feature wildlife and whose extra fee benefits the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program are available. There are three now: the bird, the deer, and now-- the bear.

Each year, this series of license plates provides more than \$300,000 to DNR, and supports a variety of wildlife education outreach programs. The West Virginia Wildlife Diversity Program (WDP) and Natural Heritage Program are responsible for those species listed by the federal government as threatened or endangered, as well as nongame wildlife and their habitats. Nongame wildlife includes those species which are not fished, hunted or trapped. More than 80% of West Virginia's wildlife is classified as nongame, including: 299 species of birds, 67 mammals, 46 amphibians, 42 reptiles, 180 fishes, 130 butterflies and thousands of other invertebrates, as well as over 2800 plant species.

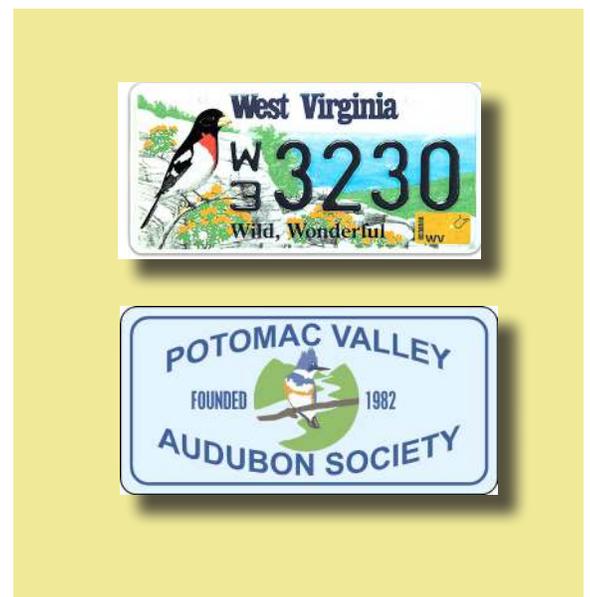
Over the past 20 years, funds have been used to develop educational wildlife trunks for schools, publish numerous books and brochures, identify rare plants and plant communities, develop wildlife viewing areas, fund grants to schools for projects benefiting wildlife, and inventory and monitor nongame wildlife species.

You may exchange your current license plate at any DMV regional office or by mail at the time of renewal. You can also exchange your plate at any other time for a pro-rated registration fee. For more information on West Virginia license plates, call 1-800-642-9066.

The extra \$15 is well-spent, so think about a good conservation move: the handsome wildlife plate on the back of your car; and, above the front bumper—the PVAS plate, with our Belted Kingfisher logo. PVAS plates may be ordered from Melanie Snyder at [Admin@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Admin@PotomacAudubon.org), or call (703) 973-5419. Your cost is \$15.

We can be especially proud of Audubon's active role in getting the wildlife license plate authorized in 1994 -- the state's constitution had to be changed in order for that to happen. It took four years, but the income produced has been very beneficial—even to PVAS. We have applied to DNR and received grants for various projects over the years.

Get your pair today!



## Sign Up Now for Birding 101 Course

We are now accepting applications for our 2015 “Birding 101” course for beginning birders, which will be held during April. This will be the 30th year we’ve offered this course, and it continues to be very popular.

Enrollment will be strictly limited to 24 so those who are interested are encouraged to sign up soon. The course is open to people of all ages but children younger than 15 must be accompanied throughout by an adult.

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

Registration is required. To register, go to the PVAS website and look for “Birding 101” under “Birding” or “Events Calendar.” Or contact Krista Hawley at 703-303-1026 or [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org).

The evening classroom sessions will start on Thursday, April 2 and be held each of the following three Thursdays (April 9, 16, and 23). All of these sessions will be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Conservation Training Center just north of Shepherdstown.

The field trips will be held at various locations around the Panhandle from roughly 7:00 a.m. to 12 noon, on the Saturdays following the Thursday evening sessions (April 4, 11, and 18 and 25).

Tuition for the full course package of four classroom sessions and four field trips (a total of 28 hours of instruction) is \$90 for PVAS members and \$100 for nonmembers.

This course is part of our “Natural History Workshop” series. The series is intended for people who are interested in learning about particular natural history topics in considerable depth but cannot commit to pursue the much more comprehensive natural history education available through PVAS’s Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program. That program can take a year or more to complete.




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## Sign Up Now for This Year’s Race for the Birds

Here’s a reminder that online registration for our 14th annual “Race for the Birds!” is available at [www.raceforthebirds.org](http://www.raceforthebirds.org).

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

This year’s race will include a new distance event: a professionally timed 15K (9.32-mile) trail race that will replace the 7.7-mile trail race held in recent years. There will also be an 8K (4.97-mile) professionally timed trail race. And as always, the event will include a self-timed, 2-mile community jog/walk for families and individuals who prefer a slower pace and a 1-mile “Fun Run” for children under 10 years of age.

The 15K and 8K races will follow trails that wind through the forests and fields of the 538-acre NCTC campus. The 2-mile jog/walk will follow a course that will be very user-friendly for families with small children, and trail-friendly baby joggers will be appropriate and encouraged. The trails on the NCTC campus are not normally open to the general public so this will be a good opportunity to visit and enjoy the facility’s beautiful trail network.

The two races will begin at 9:00 a.m. The jog/walk will begin shortly afterwards and the children’s Fun Run will be held at about 10:45 a.m. The children’s Fun Run will be free. Fees for the other portions of the event will range from \$15 to \$30.

All proceeds will be used to support PVAS’s programs for children, and all fees will be tax deductible. For more information, contact Nan Johnson at [race4birds@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:race4birds@potomacaudubon.org) or 304-274-5057.

## Learn How to Identify Trees in Winter



PVAS will offer a winter tree-identification field trip at Cacapon State Park in Morgan County on Saturday, February 14.

West Virginia state forester Ben Kunze will lead the trip. He will show how to identify trees through such clues as their branching habits and overall shape, twigs and buds, and bark. Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park's Nature Center. There is no fee, and anyone with an interest is invited to attend. This is intended as a family-friendly event, and children will be welcome. The total time of the trip will be about two hours.

Space is limited and pre-registration is essential. To register, go to the Society's website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org). For more information, contact Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org) or 703-303-1026.

If there has been a major snow the day before or the weather is especially inclement on the day of the trip, check the PVAS website to make sure the trip is still on. If the trip is snowed out, it will be rescheduled to the following Saturday, February 21. Those who participate should be sure to dress warmly and wear sturdy footwear.

## PVAS Benefits From Shepherdstown Rotary Event

PVAS received nearly \$1,000 through its participation in the Shepherdstown Rotary Club's annual Christmas Charity Ball, held on December 5th 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, so all proceeds from ticket sales go to the designated nonprofit. Area restaurants provide food, and there is a dance band and a silent auction. Keep this event in mind for next December: attend a dressy and fun evening and lend support to PVAS and other worthy organizations.

An enormous thank you goes to Mike Sullivan for organizing and sponsoring PVAS' table, and Mina Goodrich, Larry Dean, Diana Gaviria, Jane and Ray Vanderhook, Gary and Iris Heichel, Lex and Pam Miller, Nan Johnson, Marie Van Valkenburgh, Clayton Johnson, and Tanner and Alex Haid for supporting and/or attending this event. Thanks are also due to the Shepherdstown Rotary Club for making this event possible.



## Great Backyard Bird Count! February 13-16, 2015

It's a great excuse to take some time to stare at your feeders for 15 minutes (or more) or take a hike, binoculars and bird list in hand. And you'll be contributing to science at the same time. The organizers make it easy! There's even a short slideshow on how to participate. Register, record your results, and learn more at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

## 2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count Report (Charles Town and Inwood, WV)

Both the Charles Town and Inwood Christmas Bird Counts were held in unseasonably mild conditions. At no time during either count day did temperatures dip as low as freezing; the low for Charles Town on Dec. 14 being 38 degrees F while the low for the Inwood count on Jan. 4 was 35 degrees F, balmy compared to last year's -4 degrees F. There was no significant precipitation and light wind for both counts, and all water was open. Twenty-six participants helped with the Charles Town count and 24 joined the Inwood effort.

Perhaps a portent of things to come was the high number of vultures seen on both counts. Records for turkey vulture numbers were set for both counts (747 in Charles Town and 118 in Inwood) as well as a new standard for black vultures in Charles Town with 321. I suspect the large numbers of road killed deer and other critters are quite to the liking of both vultures.

Other species seen in record numbers on the Charles Town count, with totals in parentheses, were great blue heron (33), red-bellied woodpecker (95), and white-breasted nuthatch (75). The Inwood count saw new highs for red-shouldered hawk (21), northern flicker (109), and pileated woodpecker (39) as well as the aforementioned turkey vulture.

Among the 79 species recorded for the Charles Town count were several good finds. Jenny Eaton and her team of birding friends found a merlin, Jane Vanderhook and Diana Mullis had a memorable encounter with a golden eagle, and Matt Orsie got his usual Virginia rail. The best bird award for the Inwood count goes to Matt and Carol Del-Colle for a group of 7 American pipits. Gabby Martin, Vickie Crites, and Bob Dean found 3 red-headed woodpeckers near Shanghai. There were 65 species found on the Inwood count.

It was noted by many of the participants that bird activity during both counts were low and spotty, and required more effort to get fewer birds than on days of high activity which are frequently characterized by colder weather and the promise of change on the air.

Whatever the weather it was a real pleasure to spend 2 good days birding for the cause of citizen science. Thanks to PVAS for its sponsorship.



### 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Membership Chair, PVAS**

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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](http://www.audubon.org) and click on "join." If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become a member of PVAS and have access to our events, an e-mail copy of newsletter and e-mail alerts. However almost all of your dues payments will go to the National Audubon Society; only a small percentage will go to PVAS.



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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please contact any of the board members listed here or see <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>. PVAS serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

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

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

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 Vice President: Michael Sullivan (2016) ..... msullivan@limno.com  
 Secretary: Diana Gaviria (2016) ..... jpikester@comcast.net  
 Treasurer: Lex Miller (2014)..... pamandlex@frontiernet.net  
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