

President's Perch

by Jane Vanderhook, PVAS President

Hello everyone.

Our Annual Appeal is well underway, so the time has come for me to urge you to make a donation if you haven't already.

First, thank you to all who have already helped us get off to a very good start. Thus far, we have received \$28,896 which is 74% of our budgeted goal of \$39,000. (To be honest, we would like to reach last year's record-breaking total of \$41,465 but with the vagaries of the current economy, we decided to set our goal within reach and based on your response so far we are hopeful that we can meet our goal.) We sincerely appreciate your support and your support really does matter. We are very careful with the contributions you make and we do accomplish a great deal with those dollars as you can see in the Annual Report posted on our website <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/report>. As you read this newsletter, you can't help but notice the wide variety of services PVAS provides the community. Your dollars help to make that possible.

So if you are planning to give but just haven't gotten to it yet, we hope you'll do so soon. Or if you haven't really thought about giving, we hope you'll consider it. Let's set a new record with this year's Annual Appeal. Every contribution moves us closer to our goal and is **100% tax deductible**. We are grateful for all gifts, no matter how great or how small.

Please do help if you possibly can.

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Change is afoot. At the end of February, we will be losing our wonderful VISTA volunteer, Melanie Snyder. Her term of service ends at the end of the month and she is seeking other employment opportunities.

Melanie has been incredibly helpful in so many ways over the last two years... She has been helping with grant writing, event coordination, volunteer recruitment and coordination, database management, and community outreach.

She will be sorely missed. She has truly been a pleasure to work with, always willing to do even boring and tedious work without complaint. We wish her all the best in her next endeavors.

We will also be releasing the PVAS office at HFI Wealth Management at the end of February. After two years of generously providing free office space to PVAS, the space will be rented at the end of Melanie's contract. We can't thank Rob Hoxton enough for his gracious and generous provision of beautiful office space and conference room over the last two years.

We have been so spoiled with the contributions of both Melanie's volunteer service through VISTA and the Shepherdstown office space at HFI. A heart-felt thank you to both Melanie and Rob from PVAS!

PVAS to participate in Southern States' Wild Bird Appreciation Day

PVAS's expert birders, Jean Neely and Joette Borzik, will be at Southern States on Saturday, January 30th from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Stop by Southern States in Ranson and support Jean and Joette as they share information on wild birds and their habitat, bird houses, bird feeders and PVAS's numerous birding events!

Come hear about the Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count, the Grassland Bird Initiative, Birding 101 and much more! Have questions about good places to bird? What binoculars birders recommend? Have a bird call you need identified? Come on over and talk with Jean and Joette.

Southern States is located at 222 N. Mildred Street, Ranson, WV. We look forward to seeing you there!

Your Ideas Wanted! Please complete our PVAS Survey

What would your ideal Audubon chapter look like? How does PVAS do in balancing youth education programs with programs for adults? Should we put more resources into field trips? Education? Environmental action?

Chapter leaders want to know! By sending the PVAS board your ideas and opinions, you'll help us plan for the future, set priorities, and stay in touch with the needs of our members and the community. To participate, please complete our online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PVAS>. The survey is anonymous and can be completed in five minutes. If you prefer completing a paper copy of the survey, please call 304-676-3397.

Kiss Winter Goodbye!

What better way to say goodbye to winter and welcome the first day of spring than with a party? This year our spring fundraiser will take place on **Sunday, March 20th from 4-6pm at the Shepherdstown Train Station** and together we can celebrate the return of the sun and warmth.

You will be able to choose from a selection of very good bourbons. Bourbon not to your liking? No problem: Champagne cocktails and wine will be offered, and of course non-alcoholic libations will be available as well. An array of delicious savory and sweet bites guaranteed to please even the most discerning palate will be provided by the extraordinary cooks on the Special Events Committee.

Are you a tiny bit addicted to chocolate? This is your chance to give in to those cravings and indulge in our chocolate tasting. Discover for yourself which chocolate you find the most tempting.

We will offer a few items for sale in our silent auction so come prepared to bid and take something special home with you. We don't think you will be disappointed.

Bourbon. Chocolate. Champagne. Sweets. Savories. If any of this appeals to you, please join us. Ticket prices begin at \$45 per person and all proceeds go to support PVAS programs. If you have not received an invitation, please give us a call at 304-676-3397 or email us at admin@potomacaudubon.org. We hope to see you there!

Rotary Charity Ball

A handful of PVAS volunteers attended the Rotary Club of Shepherdstown's Charity Ball on December 4th.

Participants enjoyed wonderful food, nice music, an array of interesting items to view and bid on in the silent auction, and great companionship. And according to some, the PVAS table had the most beautiful centerpiece in the room.

The Ball was very successful for our organization, as we netted \$1,250 to support PVAS programs and operations. Big thanks to all of the PVAS donors who contributed to the success of this event.

Next year will likely be bigger and better, so please keep the first Friday of December, 2016 open on your calendar.



Pictured, left to right, Mike Sullivan, Tanner Haid, Alexandra Beaulieu, Diana Gaviria, and Jon Pike.

Great Backyard Bird Count!

February 12-15, 2016

Take some time this month to stare at your feeders for 15 minutes (or more) or take a hike, binoculars and bird list in hand. El Nino may make this an interesting year with unusual finds! And you'll be contributing to science at the same time. The GBBC organizers make it easy with great resources online. There's even a short slideshow on how to participate. Register, record your results, and learn more at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

Birding Apps for Your Holiday Tech

By Wil Hershberger

No doubt some of you reading this received a new smart phone or tablet device for the holidays. There is no better way to trick-out your new tech than with some birding related applications (apps). Today's mobile devices contain enough memory to carry several field guides, audio guides, and enhanced guides, while leaving plenty of room for music, videos, and life-related apps. Before we go any further, please read the excellent [guidelines on the ethical use of bird song recordings](#) penned by David Sibley. It is vitally important that we not disturb nesting or territorial birds by over-playing their songs to them in the field. (<http://www.sibleyguides.com/2011/04/the-proper-use-of-playback-in-birding/>)

There are several field guides available for both iPhone and Android-based devices. These include: [The Sibley eGuide to Birds](#), [National Geographic Birds](#), [Audubon Birds](#), [Peterson Birds](#), and [iBird PRO](#). All of these apps feature: paintings or photographs of all bird species that can be found in North America; range maps showing summer, winter, and migration locations; descriptions of songs, and in most cases, actual sound clips of the songs and calls of most of the species featured. My personal favorite is the Sibley Guide – in addition to the wonderful artwork of David Sibley the app includes the comprehensive collection of recordings by Lang Elliott and friends. These recordings were first featured in the Stokes Guide to Bird Songs in the 1990s. This expanded, comprehensive collection of sound recordings is available as a separate app (Apple devices only) titled “[BirdTunes](#).” All of these field guide apps can be explored on their individual websites (linked above and URLs at the end of this article) so that you can make an informed choice that suits your preferences.

In addition to field guide apps, there are apps for entering your birding data into a national database ([BirdLog](#)) and for identifying a bird from your observations ([Merlin](#)). BirdLog, by Birdseye apps, uses your eBird account so that you can enter your birding data into eBird while you are in the field. If you are an eBirder, I highly recommend this app – if you're not an eBirder I highly recommend that you check it out and try it. The data collected is being used by many organizations to map and conserve critical habitat for birds throughout their life cycle. The more data there is in the system, the better able researchers are to accurately and effectively manage habitat for the birds we love. Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology developed Merlin as an application to help people identify birds. Using a brief key of menus you choose your location, the date of the observation, the size of the bird you saw, the major color(s) that were seen on the bird, and its behavior. The app presents a list of the possible birds that you could have seen with the most likely suspect at the top of the list. It is amazingly accurate thanks to countless volunteers that helped “teach” the app what to look for when people were describing a bird.

Lastly, there is an app companion to the book, “[The Warbler Guide](#),” that is simply fabulous. Not only are there lovely paintings and photographs of each species (males only), under-tail views, song descriptions, etc., there is a very unique 3-D view available. Here you can rotate a detailed painting of the male of the species in any direction to see it from above, below, right side, left side, top – any angle. This is simply an amazing way to study a bird's appearance. This app is even more spectacular on a tablet!

These are but a few of the apps available for smartphones and tablets that are focused on birds and birding. I certainly hope that you will check out some of these wonderful, new age learning tools for yourself. Not only are they stunning to look at, they can greatly enhance your personal joy and involvement in bird watching and bird conservation.

URLs of embedded links:

<http://www.sibleyguides.com/about/the-sibley-eguide-to-birds-app/>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mobile/apps/handheld-birds/>

<http://www.audubonguides.com/field-guides/bird-identification-app.html>

<http://petersonguides.com/Birds.php>

<http://ibird.com/app/android/ibird-pro/>

<http://www.Birdtunesapp.com>

<http://www.birdseyebirding.com/apps/birdlog/>

<http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>

<http://www.thewarblerguide.com>



Male Wood Duck © WilHershberger

Birding News and Events

Registration is Open for April 9 “Race for the Birds”

We’re now accepting online registrations for PVAS’s 15th annual “This Race is for the Birds!”

The event will be held on Saturday, April 9, 2016 at a new location: Wild Goose Farm at 293 Shepherd Grade Road in Shepherdstown. The farm is just across the road from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services’ National Conservation Training Center, where the event has been previously held. The Center is no longer able to host the event.

The 2016 event will include two professionally timed races: one 5 kilometers long and another 10 kilometers long. There will also be a 1-mile “Fun Run” for children under 10 years of age. In addition, adults and families who wish to walk or jog the 5K course at their own pace may do so.

The 5K and 10K races will follow non-technical cross-country bridle and fox hunting trails through the farm’s scenic fields, rolling hills and woods. The course is suitable for all runners.

The 5 and 10K races will begin at 9:00 a.m. The children’s Fun Run will be held at about 10:00 a.m.

To register, and for more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. You can email your questions to race4birds@potomacaudubon.org, or contact Nan Johnson at 304-870-4414.

Registration for the 5 and 10K races will be capped at 300 for *both*, so same-day registration may not be available. The children’s Fun Run will be free. Fees for the other portions of the event will range from \$25 to \$35. Save money by registering online prior to April 8!

All proceeds will be used to support our programs for children.



“Birding 101” Will Be in June This Year

Registration is now open for this year’s “Birding 101” course for beginning birders. This will be the 31st year we’ve offered this course, and it continues to be very popular.

This year’s course will be held during June, which is later than usual, to accommodate our instructors’ schedules. It will be taught by two leading local bird experts: Bob Dean and Wil Hershberger.

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.

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.

The evening classroom sessions will start on Thursday, June 9 and be held each of the following three Thursdays (June 16, 23 and 30). Each session 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 (June 11, 18 and 25, and July 2).

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



Birding News and Events**Harpers Ferry Bird Walk Set for February 24**

PVAS will sponsor a winter bird walk in the North Schoolhouse Ridge section of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on Wednesday, February 24. The walk will be led by local birding expert Deb Hale. It will begin at 8:00 a.m. and will last about two hours. After that, those who wish to continue will proceed to the Potomac Street dam for an additional hour of waterfowl watching.

The walk is free, and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills; children are also welcome.

The trip will involve about 2.5 miles of walking through fields and unpaved roads, along mostly level terrain. In addition, the group will stop at the Potomac Street dam. Birds expected to be seen include wintering birds, waterfowl and raptors.

Participants should plan to meet before 8:00 a.m. at the North Schoolhouse Ridge parking area. From Route 340 just west of Harper's Ferry, turn north on Bakerton Road (Route 27) and go about three-quarters of a mile to the parking area on the left. Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress for the prevailing weather conditions and bring along drinking water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

The trip will be canceled in the event of bad weather. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. For more information, contact Deb at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-1528.

2015-16 Christmas Bird Count Report

With all reports in, the most succinct description of the 116th Christmas Bird Count locally would be "dull." And that would apply to all aspects of the counts: total species, total number of birds, rarities, invasives, new high counts, etc. The combination of unseasonably warm weather and lack of snow cover and ice contributed to highly dispersed birds and very few northern visitors.

On the Charles Town count, held on Dec. 19, the 21 participants did manage new high counts for Bufflehead: 53, Double-crested Cormorant: 2, Bald Eagle: 15, and Peregrine Falcon: 2. Our collective 44.75 party hours and 272.5 party miles were rewarded with 70 species. Most of the uncommon winter residents were found in small numbers.

Matt Orsie's team in the field found the only Green-winged Teal, American Kestrels, and Horned Larks, as well as one of the 2 Peregrine Falcons. Lynne Wiseman's relentless group of searchers found 3 Ring-necked Ducks while Jenny Eaton's team got the only Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and the other Peregrine. Joette Borzik and Chuck Parker came up with the only American Tree Sparrow and Rusty Blackbirds. Vickie Crites' crew managed a Pied-billed Grebe, vocal Fish Crow, 2 Winter Wrens, 3 Hermit Thrushes, and the Double-crested Cormorants. We failed to count any Virginia Rails, Wilson's Snipe, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Meadowlarks, or Purple Finches, and the uncommon sparrows all avoided detection.

We had a very nice time at the tally rally where the repetitive "dull" captured the recurring theme for the day.

The Inwood count promised to be a turnaround, with several seasonably cold days behind us, but still no snow or ice. My group's day started at 5:30 with a pair of Great Horned Owls that were calling as soon as we exited the car at the first stop. Two Eastern Screech Owls responded shortly thereafter, and I thought "here we go," but at all of my favorite stops there were no vocal Barred Owls. That's how it went much of the day, though Vickie Crites and I were lucky to get the only Belted Kingfisher and Black Capped Chickadee for the count.

Lynne Wiseman and her team got the only Pied-billed Grebe. Matt Orsie and Bill Telfair collected a remarkable 88.5% of all species found on the count including all 12 American Black Ducks, the only Winter Wren, 4 Swamp Sparrows, 6 Red-winged Blackbirds, and 8 Brown-headed Cowbirds. Very well done gentlemen!

There were new high counts for Turkey Vulture: 223 and Common Raven: 24, which would indicate the winter scavengers are doing pretty well. We worked 53.75 party hours and 332.5 party miles to garner a respectable 61 species.

Sarah and Stan Corwin-Roach hosted the tally rally where Stan's soup and Gary Sylvester's maple candy were big hits with all.

I'm hopeful that next year we can get many more folks who live within the two count circles to do feeder counts that can be added to the total. Many good birds show up at feeders, and we've not taken full advantage of that potential. More to follow.

The calendar is not friendly for CBC participants next year, so mark them now for Saturday, December 17, 2016 for the Charles Town count, and Wednesday (what?), January 4, 2017 for the Inwood count... and let's hope for a thrilling time!

Respectfully submitted by your compiler, Bob Dean

Notes from the Preserves

Yankauer Preserve Update

A well has officially been drilled at Yankauer! We contracted with Mr. L.L. Brannon to drill the well, and it was drilled in December. We now have a 220 ft. deep well with clear water flowing at 20 gallons per minute. The trench, pipes, and other items will be purchased and installed as weather permits.

The composting toilet facility is up and running as well. The bathroom on the right side is completed and functional, complete with toilet paper. The second side (on the left) is nearing completion.

After so many years, it is hard to believe that these projects are nearly done. We can't thank volunteer Lou Scavnicky enough for coordinating these projects, and for the many other volunteers who have put so much time into making these dreams realities. THANK YOU!



Stauffer's Marsh Happenings



Taking advantage of the longer-than-usual fall, volunteer land manager Steve Hartmann rented equipment to remove invasive trees and shrubs in the north field at Stauffer's Marsh.

The ultimate goal is to create a grassland habitat in the north field as a Grassland Birds and Pollinator Habitat Demonstration Project. Steve generously donated the equipment rental and his own labor to take this next step toward our goal. We can't thank Steve enough for his initiative and generosity!

Cacapon State Park Tree ID Trip Set for February 6

PVAS will offer a winter tree-identification field trip at Cacapon State Park in Morgan County on Saturday, February 6.

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. The trip should last about two hours.

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

If there has been a major snow the day before, or if 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. Those who participate should be sure to dress warmly and wear sturdy footwear.

Space is limited and pre-registration is essential. To register, go to the Society's website at www.potomacaudubon.org. For more information, contact Debbie Maiorano at 540-535-5145 or debbiem58@aol.com.

Youth Programs

PVAS In Schools This Spring

Once again, PVAS is in and out of schools this spring. Our fourth grade watershed program has already begun in three new schools in Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan Counties. Classes are being conducted every two weeks in nineteen classrooms through April. (Twenty-one other classrooms are continuing the longer program that began last fall.) Later in the spring, several of these classes will participate in a field experience at a local stream where students will practice the water quality testing techniques and macroinvertebrate studies that they have been learning. We can always use volunteers to help with these field studies!

Several other schools have contacted us for programs either in the classroom or to visit Yankauer Nature Preserve. Ellen Murphy is being assisted by volunteers in presenting these programs, which means that we are able to serve more schools! Many of these programs are being funded by grants from the Eastern WV Community Foundation and Ecolab.



Our newest school program will be developed this spring and then pilot tested in about fifteen fifth grade classes. Designed specifically for fifth graders, the program will focus on alternative energy (wind, solar, kinetic) and will allow students to have hands-on experiences, including using a hand crank to power a light bulb, jumping rope to power a cellphone, and using solar ovens to bake chocolate chip cookies!

This new program is being funded by a generous grant from the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation. We have already lined up some fifth grade classes to participate, but funding is still available to include a few more. So, if you know of a fifth grade teacher who might be interested, send them our way!

Wee Naturalist Returns!

Our monthly Wee Naturalists program, which helps introduce preschoolers (ages 3-5) and a caring adult to outdoor adventures, is back this spring! The Wee Naturalist program is designed so that child/parent teams explore outdoors together, focusing on a different theme each month. The programs are held at Yankauer Nature Preserve.

Anne Young, an experienced environmental educator and mother of a preschooler will be leading each session. On March 21st, we'll be exploring "Furry Tails" (like Fairy Tales!), and will identify mammals, tracks, and habitats. We even have special animal tails for the preschoolers to try on and decide whether they would look best as a squirrel, or an owl, or even a skunk!

Programs begin at 9:30 a.m. The first thirty minutes is for free play and exploration, with the structured activities following. (Don't forget that the new Pixie Hollow area near the pavilion is perfect for free play!) Each session will include songs, sensory activities, movement, hikes, and a take-home craft. Cost is \$10 per child, and pre-registration is required. (There's no charge for siblings under age 2.) Find out more and register at www.PotomacAudubon.org.



February 10 Program Will Focus on Handling Wildlife Encounters

PVAS's monthly program for February will feature a presentation about managing encounters with area wildlife. The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 10. This month's program will take place at WVU Health Sciences Center, Eastern Division, in Martinsburg, WV. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome.

The speaker will be West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Manager Joshua Vance. He will review recommended practices for handling encounters with the kinds of wildlife commonly found in our area, emphasizing ways to keep both people and animals safe.

Vance's work with WVDNR includes community outreach and education on wildlife issues in populated areas. He also specializes in chronic wasting disease surveillance in white-tailed deer, habitat management on state owned wildlife management areas, and population and harvest management of game species.

Please note that the venue for February is a departure from our usual location at Hospice of the Panhandle. The program will take place in the Mountaineer Room at WVU Health Sciences Center, Eastern Division, in the Robert C Byrd Building at 2500 Foundation Way, Martinsburg, WV 25401. This venue is near the hospital in Martinsburg. There is plenty of parking at the facility.

For more information go to www.potomacaudubon.org or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Family Programs

Birds, Eggs, Passports, and Flowers: Spring Programs For Families!

Children and their families have some great programs to choose from in the next few months! Although you can bird watch year round, the **Great Backyard Bird Count** is celebrated February 12-15 this year. The easiest way is to count the birds that visit your bird feeder, but just make sure it's up now so the birds will have time to find it. All you have to do is count birds for 15 minutes and submit the results online, but we suspect you'll spend more time than that watching! Much more information is at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>.

Our **Spring Egg Hunt** is planned for the afternoon of March 20th. It's the ninth year for this event aimed at younger children, and features eggs painted to resemble wild bird's eggs. Prior to the actual hunt, the children will enjoy activities to help them learn about camouflage, and about other animals that lay eggs. The eggs are hidden on the shorter, Cedar Loop Trail. After the eggs are collected, the camouflaged eggs are traded in for a sweet treat to take home. Two lucky egg hunters, who find the hidden "special eggs" receive a special reward. Registration for this event is now open on the PVAS website.

During Spring Break Week (March 28-April 1), PVAS is teaming up with local libraries, in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, to offer "**Passport to Nature**" programs. Each library will host a different themed program one day that week and children will receive a "passport" that can be stamped at each program. All the programs will be different, but all will be focused on nature and will feature a book and activity. Themes include: "Float Your Boat," "Follow A Trail," "Race a Buffalo," and more. The exact schedule will be posted online and at the participating libraries. All programs are free and open to everyone.

On April 16, families are especially invited to celebrate wildflowers at Yankauer Preserve during our annual **Wildflower Festival**. This family-friendly event is a great time to explore the trails with a knowledgeable guide. A new StoryWalk® book has been selected for this year's festival, and children's games and activities will be held at the pavilion. Guided tours will be offered between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., but everyone is welcome to wander the trails at their leisure. For the ninth year, we will feature poetry by local poets, and children's art – all celebrating the beauty of spring!

Please remember that winter is for families too! While you are waiting for these spring programs, get outside and enjoy this season. And, don't forget to feed the birds!



February 13 Animal Discovery Hike Offers Family Fun at Stauffer's Marsh

PVAS is sponsoring an "Animal Discovery Hike" at its Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Saturday, February 13. The hike is part of a new series of PVAS-sponsored "Family Outdoor Adventures" that are aimed at involving children and their families in interesting and educational outdoor activities.

This event will focus on learning about the wildlife that inhabit wetlands in our region. It will last from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Families with children of all ages are welcome. There is a fee of \$5 per family, space is limited, and pre-registration is required. To register, go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

The hike will be led by an experienced guide. It will be focused on looking for tracks, nests, dens, and other signs of animals that live in the marsh, such as birds, raccoons, foxes and muskrats.

The Preserve is only 46 acres in size, so the distances to be walked are not great. However, the terrain includes wet meadows and marshlands, as well as dry areas, so waterproof footwear is essential. Participants should also plan to dress for prevailing weather conditions. Ticks can be an issue at the preserve year-round, so tick repellent is recommended if air temperatures are significantly above freezing. 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). Participants should meet in the gravel parking area at the north end the marsh.

For more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org, or 703-303-1026.

Camp Programs

Camp Registration Begins February 1st!

Registration for our 14th year of Audubon Discovery Camp begins February 1st! The camp brochure with full information about sessions and dates will be posted on the PVAS website later this month, but we'll give you the program preview now.

Sessions will include "Camp Survivor," "Nature's Architects," and "Science in the Woods" at Yankauer Preserve, as well as "The Simple Life" and "Pioneer Survivor" at the Peter Burr Farm. "Wildlife CSI" and "Pioneer Survivor" will be offered for older campers. Junior Staff opportunities are also available for teens entering grades 7 and up.

The first week of camp will be "DIY Nature" which will allow campers to pick and choose one day of camp or multiple days. Each day will have a specific theme, posted on the PVAS website.

Another new program this year is a 3-day "Project Webfoot" session at Stauffer's Marsh in Back Creek Valley. The setting will be primitive (portable toilets and tents for shelter), but this fabulous program will focus on wetland birds and animals, and on exploring the water. It is designed for ages 10-13.

Most sessions will remain \$150 per camper, per week, although a few are slightly higher. Those who are not yet PVAS members pay a higher fee, which includes a one-year organization membership, but you can avoid that by joining or renewing your membership now (www.PotomacAudubon.org/member)! Just remember that the non-member fee applies only to the first camper session you register for.

Scholarships are available for all Audubon Discovery Camps, and the short application form is available to download online. Questions about camp should be directed to Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).



Digital Nature Photo Camp For Teens

One of the best youth programs that PVAS offers is our Digital Nature Photo Camp. The camp is held on the Shepherd University campus under the instruction of Ben Schonberger, a professional photographer and Visiting Lecturer at the University of Akron (OH). Ben is returning for his third year!

This camp is perfect for teens who are interested in photography, intrigued by photography, or not at all sure what photography is all about! No experience is necessary, but teens who are already photographers are welcome, too. Everyone receives personalized attention and a digital SLR camera to use during the week.

Campers spend the week learning how to compose a picture, how to use the manual settings on a digital SLR camera, and how to manipulate the images they take using computer software. Much of each day is spent outside taking pictures in the Shepherdstown area, but a day-long field trip during the week is also featured.

At the end of the week, campers will choose their best photos for public exhibition on the last day of the camp. The

exhibition is open to everyone, so prepare to be stunned by the quality of the images. Camper-photographers will be available to discuss their photos and the techniques they used.

Complete information, financial assistance forms, and registration information can be found at www.potomacaudubon.org/photocamp. Questions about the camp should be directed to Ellen

Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).

Summer Camp Scholarships are Available

The Camp Scholarship Committee of PVAS is eagerly looking ahead to the summer 2016 camp season. Now is the time to encourage eligible youngsters and families to apply for camp scholarships!

We have already reserved spaces for a great family adventure at the Hog Island Family Camp on the coast of Maine, August 7–12, 2016. We're excited by this opportunity because our 2014 and 2015 camper families reported a super experience there! To learn more about this camp go to <http://hogisland.audubon.org/family-camp-name-change>.

Other excellent camp choices will include the *Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies*, *Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp*, and our own *Audubon Discovery* day camp. Please check our web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, and future issues of *Valley Views*, where we will provide further details as they become available. We'll continue to provide 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 annual fall birdseed sale and from individual and community sources support our scholarship program. Many thanks to all our loyal birdseed customers and other donors!

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Ten Years of Volunteer Service!

PVAS offers a hearty congratulations and thanks to the three founding members of the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program which is celebrating its 10th Anniversary in 2016: Clark A. Dixon, Jr., Ora Dixon, and Cheryl Jennings.

To acknowledge their dedication and service over the past decade, at the beginning of the PVAS monthly meeting on January 13th, PVAS Executive Director Kristin Alexander presented Clark, Ora, and Cheryl with certificates as founding members of PVMN, and thanked them for all of their hard work in building and helping to maintain the chapter. They also each received WV State Parks gift certificates from the Master Naturalist Committee.

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists would not be the thriving, active chapter that is today without these wonderful individuals. We look forward to seeing what another ten years will bring!



Kristin Alexander presents certificates to PVMN founding members Clark Dixon, Cheryl Jennings, and Ora Dixon.

PVAS's Master Naturalist Program

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program has begun its 10th year! This is a huge accomplishment for all Master Naturalists and 2016 looks to be an exciting and celebratory year. The Master Naturalists kicked off the year with their 2nd annual Open House on January 13. The event is aimed at giving people who are interested in the program an opportunity to ask questions and hear details from certified Master Naturalists in a relaxed and friendly environment. Melanie Snyder, the committee co-chair of logistics and operations, provided a brief overview of the program and Clark Dixon shared information about the 10th anniversary celebrations.

The 2016 Master Naturalist students will begin their classes the weekend of April 2nd and 3rd at the Hospice of the Panhandle Education Center, with full day sessions on Saturday and Sunday. Classes will continue one Saturday per month through September at a variety of venues including the National Conservation Training Center, the Leetown Conference Room at the Fish Health Building and Cacapon State Park in Morgan County.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Naturalist or would like more information about our program, please visit our website at potomacaudubon.org/masternat or email Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.

Did you know...

Did you know that not only is there the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program in conjunction with PVAS, but there are also seven other chapters of the Master Naturalist program in West Virginia?

Those chapters include: Canaan Valley (Tucker County – Davis), Kanawha Valley (Charleston), Monongahela (Morgantown), New River (Summersville), Ohio Valley (Wheeling), Mid Ohio Valley (Parkersburg), and Tygart Valley (Elkins); each chapter has its own coordinator such as our Clark Dixon. Information on all Master Naturalist chapters can be found on the website mnofwv.org.

We cooperate with each other when it comes to obtaining your initial core and elective classes. If you need to make up a class or recertify, these chapters' classes are available to all WV Master Naturalists & students. PVMN 2016 classes begin on April 2nd & 3rd at Hospice of the Panhandle. We will be holding classes in April this year on two weekends, then monthly one-day classes until our final classes on September 17th & 18th. Our Annual Meeting will be October 29th.

It's a great program and we hope you join us. To enroll use the following link: http://www.potomacaudubon.org/MN_application.pdf.

Christmas Parade THANKS!

Many thanks to the PVAS members and volunteers who made the Shepherdstown Christmas Parade so much fun! We were represented well with kids, adults, stuffed animals, and even a PVAS puppy! Thanks for coming out to show your PVAS pride and giving a wave to all your fans! And it was great to see so many familiar faces in the crowd as well. Thanks for your support!



Bill Telfair shared this photo of a Barred Owl he took recently on Rissler Road

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

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

Details available at potomacaudubon.org/member

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

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: _____

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

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS

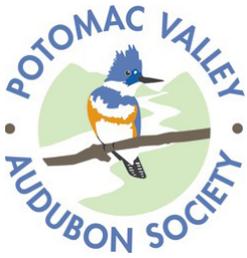
PO Box 578

Shepherdstown, WV 25443



If you'd rather join the National Audubon Society:

Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society's Audubon magazine. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org and click on "join." If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become a member of PVAS and have access to our events, an e-mail copy of newsletter and e-mail alerts. However almost all of your dues payments will go to the National Audubon Society; only a small percentage will go to PVAS.



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MAIL TO:

February 2016

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 34, Issue 5

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

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

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

President: Jane Vanderhook (2016)..... janehook@frontiernet.net
 Vice President: Michael Sullivan (2016) msullivan@limno.com
 Secretary: Diana Gaviria (2016) jpikester@comcast.net
 Treasurer: Dan Cogswell (2017) daniel.cogswell@gmail.com
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 Joe Hankins (2016) joseph.hankins@gmail.com
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 Matthew Patterson (2016) tridecanone@yahoo.com
 Don Campbell (2017) treehouseview@comcast.net
 Mina Goodrich (2017) larrymina@peoplepc.com
 Elizabeth Morningstar (2017) dlglntthedlrt@comcast.net

Ex Officio Board Member: Diana Mullis (past president) DianaMullis@aol.com
Emerita Board Member: Jean Neely jeaneely@comcast.net

Special Contacts

Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397)..... Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
 Program Director: Ellen Murphy (304-676-8739)..... Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org
 Adult Prog. Coord: Krista Hawley (703-303-1026)..... AdultPrograms@PotomacAudubon.org
 Web Master: Kathy Bilton..... kathy@fred.net
 PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-754-3753)..... dianamullis@aol.com
 Valley Views editor/publisher:
 Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639)..... newsletter@potomacaudubon.org
 VISTA volunteer: Melanie Snyder Admin@PotomacAudubon.org