

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

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Comets!



Comet Hyakutake March 26, 1996
©Wil Hershberger

Seeing bright comets is usually a once in a lifetime event. Many of us have been blessed with seeing several very bright and impressive comets. In 1996 comet Hyakutake was visible from March through June. Hyakutake was proclaimed “one of the grandest comets of the millennium.” At its peak, the comet’s tail stretched nearly halfway across the sky. In 1997, comet Hale-Bopp surprised everyone with its amazing display and spilt-tail appearance. Hale-Bopp was visible from July 1996 through October 1997 becoming an evening spectacle in April of 1997.

Well, keep your eye on the sky this year! There is the potential for two bright comets in 2013. The first should be visible as you read this. Comet C/2011 L4 (PanSTARRS) will be visible in the evening sky at sunset. Look west just above the setting sun starting March 6. On March 12 the comet will be just to the right and above the very thin crescent of the moon. The comet will be fading as it rises higher in the evening sky becoming visible in the darker night sky rather than the glare of the sunset. In early April the comet will be close to the Andromeda galaxy. By late April it will be difficult to see, even with binoculars.

The real spectacle may be comet C/2012 S1 (ISON) that will be visible starting in November of 2013. Early in the morning, just before sunrise look for this comet in the east in the constellation of Virgo. It will brighten rapidly to become brighter than the moon in late November. It will be getting closer to the sun at this

time as well, making it harder to see in the glare of the rising sun. On November 22, it will be to the right of the planet Mercury just above the eastern horizon around 6:10AM. At the end of November and the start of December it will be very close to the sun and at its brightest. Remember: *DO NOT LOOK AT THE SUN WITH YOUR NAKED EYES!* To see the comet at this time you will have to use welding goggles or special filters to protect your eyes from the sun. This comet will then move away from the sun and back into the morning sky during December still very bright and easily seen. By Christmas it will be high in the morning sky, best visible with binoculars, as it fades away into deep space.

An exciting year of comets is ahead. Be sure to watch the PVAS events calendar for gatherings to view these comets.

For solar filters for your telescope or binoculars see this link:

http://www.telescope.com/catalog/search.cmd?form_sate=searchForm&keyword=solar+filters

March Program: Spring Wildflowers

Our March program at the National Conservation Training Center will feature a presentation about spring wildflowers. The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 13 in Room 151 of the Instructional West Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.



Toothwort

The presenter will be local naturalist Kathy Bilton, a former teacher and longtime PVAS member and volunteer well known for her botanical knowledge. Kathy is especially known for her decades of experience with local plants. She is currently serves as the Secretary of the Botanical Society of Washington. Since 1990, she has been a member of the Maryland-based Worthley Botany Class, an informal botany group founded by the noted biologist Elmer Worthley.

Her presentation will focus on the local spring wildflowers. She will also offer some general observations about the flora of North America, discussing the derivation of plant names and medicinal uses of plants.

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

Reflections on PVAS

By Bob Reynolds, PVAS President

HELP WANTED: Board of Directors of PVAS seeks new Board members – apply within.

During our annual meeting in June the PVAS membership will be asked to elect four members and a Secretary to our Board of Directors, and now is the time to volunteer to serve on our Board.



PVAS has four primary product lines – conservation advocacy, land preservation, adult services, and youth services. Direction and oversight of our business is the responsibility of our thirteen member Board of Directors. In addition we maintain administrative and fiscal systems and employ staff to support our program services. While we ask each Board member to identify a specific area of focus, we are still spread thin.

We also ask Board members to feel the pulse of our membership, and to advocate for the expansion or development of services our members value. This year, for instance, membership interests persuaded the Board to begin planning for a new Backyard Naturalist Program as well as a Grassland Birds initiative.

Our Board meets five times a year – every other month during the academic year. Our meetings are focused and efficient – background papers are written for agenda items and distributed in advance of every meeting. We will not waste your time.

If you have a passion for one of our service areas, or expertise in administrative systems, I hope you will let us know of your willingness to serve on our Board of Directors. Our nominations process seeks to provide overall balance to our Board. For instance, at this moment we are especially in need of a Board member interested in the area of youth services.

If you will alert us to your interest in serving, I can at least guarantee a conversation and a free cup of coffee!

Altona Marsh – A Case Study

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

Altona Marsh is a rare and special place for plants and wildlife in Jefferson County. PVAS has been using the marsh, under conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy, for many years for field trips and courses.



Altona Marsh is special because it's one of the few marl marshes left in the state. Marl marshes are formed from groundwater springs that pass through limestone, resulting in a soil of wetland soils with high concentrations of calcium carbonate. According to The Nature Conservancy, only ten such wetlands remain in West Virginia and most are located in Jefferson County. Altona-Piedmont Marsh is the largest and most

significant of these marshes.

Also according to The Nature Conservancy, Altona Marsh “contains the state’s only “calcareous fen” (a limestone plant community on a layer of peat). Special soils influence the occurrence of unique and rare species, and these wetlands together are home to the largest collection of rare plants (30) in the state. In addition, they are significant as wildlife habitat, supporting breeding and migrating birds such as sandhill cranes, Virginia rails, King rails, least bitterns and wood ducks.

PVAS recently became aware of a proposal to rezone a property near the marsh, owned by Jefferson Asphalt Products, Inc., from rural to residential, light industrial and commercial. Alarmed at the implications of this change and the potential impact it could have on the marsh, the PVAS Board of Directors submitted a letter to the Jefferson County Commission to alert them to the unusual habitat that is home to rare species and the importance of the marsh to migratory birds and other wildlife. Also raised was the significance of the marsh’s unusual natural history to the state and region, and encouraging the Commission to be good stewards and take care of the rare marsh’s watershed.

PVAS was one of several groups to voice concern over the rezoning proposal. The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, and the WV Division of Natural Resources also wrote letters or testified on the marsh’s behalf.

The request to rezone the property was approved. We hope that the next owners will be good stewards of the land and that they take into consideration the impact of their development may have on the marsh and its residents.

We were, admittedly, caught off guard with this proposal to rezone the property near the marsh. PVAS has not been very engaged in issues like this one in recent years. PVAS has been working on a plan to better address such issues of environmental concern locally, regionally, and nationally. PVAS Board member Heather McSharry has been working on a draft proposal to the Board to adopt a strategy to help guide PVAS in considering actions in response to environmental issues and concerns. This issue of the marsh hit close to home, and we submitted the letter in spite of the policy being incomplete. The draft policy has now been presented to the Conservation and Action Committee and stakeholders and will be presented to the Board for consideration in the near future. It is our hope that this new policy will help guide PVAS decisions for action (or inaction) and to help us keep a better eye on conservation issues in the community in the future.

“Race for the Birds” Is April 20

This year’s race will be held April 20th on the campus of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) near Shepherdstown. Registration is available at www.RaceForTheBirds.org.

As in the past, the Race for the Birds will include two professionally timed races—one 4.9 miles long and another 7.7 miles long. There will also be a self-timed 2-mile community jog/walk for families and individuals who prefer a slower pace, and a 1-mile “Fun Run” for children under 10 years of age.

The 4.9- and 7.7-mile races will follow trails that wind through the forests and fields of the 538-acre NCTC campus. The 2-mile jog/walk will follow a course that will be very user-friendly for families with small children, and trail-friendly baby joggers will be appropriate and encouraged. The 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.



2012 Race - courtesy of Potomac Highlands Distance Club

Fees for the other portions of the event will range from \$15 to \$25 and will include a race t-shirt while supplies last. All proceeds support PVAS programs.



2012 Fun Run

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.

For more information, go to the race website at www.Race-ForTheBirds.org.

Or contact the race directors, James and Suzy Munnis, at jmunis@earthlink.net or 304-876-6784.

Race Volunteers Needed!

If you are interested in helping with the Race for the Birds event by being a race marshal, registering runners, handing out t-shirts, organizing food and drinks for runners, cleaning up after the race, or a variety of other tasks, we'd love your help on race day and leading up to the race. The race is April 20, and most volunteer responsibilities begin around 7am and are done at noon. We'd love to have your help! Volunteers receive a t-shirt and food.

Contact Kristin Alexander at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org or 304-676-3397 if you are interested in helping. (You may also sign up at our website at <http://raceforthebirds.org/volunteer.html>. Please ignore last year's dates on that page. We're working on fixing that glitch. Your information will be captured accurately.) Thank you!

Bird-Friendly Coffee

Do you love both birds and coffee? In an earlier newsletter, we provided information about how management practices on coffee plantations can greatly affect the habitat value they provide for both migratory and resident bird species, affecting population health in all parts of their ranges. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Bird-Friendly Coffee certification and labeling program provides a convenient way to find beans from plantations that provide good



bird habitat, and the PVAS Conservation Services Committee is pleased to announce that some of those beans will soon be available in the PVAS area! Shepherdstown's Hypnocoffee has ordered 2000 pounds of Smithsonian Bird-Friendly Certified coffee from Las Esmeraldas farm in El Salvador and the roasted beans should be ready for sale in early March. Please consider purchasing some of this great coffee and encouraging this local business to keep looking for certified sources.

You can read more about Bird-Friendly certified coffee at <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/default.cfm>.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists will begin their seventh class in March at Cacapon State Park. This year's class has 14 students who will spend one Saturday a month from March through October learning about West Virginia's natural history and sharing their new knowledge through volunteer projects. Members of the 2013 class include persons from Berkeley, Morgan, and Jefferson counties as well as Frederick County Maryland.

Natural History Workshops, sponsored by PVMN, help current Master Naturalists maintain their currency, but all workshops are open to the public. In February, *Project Wild Aquatic* training was offered at NCTC with 22 attending. Many of these were public school teachers from the local area who learned techniques for incorporating aquatic based environmental education into their lesson plans. The training was led by Debbie Crouse and Ellen Murphy of PVAS and Katie Willard of WVDEP.

Two more Natural History Workshops are scheduled in April: *Exploring Vernal Pools* on April 20 and History and *Ecology of the Chesapeake Bay* on the Schooner Sultana on April 27. Registration is open now for both of these workshops at www.PotomacAudubon.org.

Nature Writing Group



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

The Backyard Naturalist

By Sandy Sagalkin

Do you or your family like watching birds in your backyard? If so, you are among the 70 million other Americans who watch birds, mostly in their backyards. Bird watching is one of the fastest growing recreational activities in the country and a major contributor to the economy. Would you like to improve your skills in identifying birds and their songs in your backyard and in learning how to attract them by buying the right kinds of food and feeders? Would you like help in choosing the right pair of binoculars and learning how to use them? How would you like to use your backyard as a science laboratory where you or your family can learn about common butterflies, moths, caterpillars, other insects, frogs, toads, salamanders, and conservation in general? Or learn what native plants to put into your backyard to attract birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

PVAS is launching a major new endeavor called the **Backyard Naturalist Program**. The program will be aimed at adults and families, seniors and children, educators, and anyone else interested in learning more about nature. The PVAS website will be your own personal portal to slide and video programs dealing with different aspects of your backyard ecosystem. Our PVAS volunteers will also present these programs at libraries, PVAS monthly meetings, senior centers, nursing homes, garden clubs, and other venues, using the slide or video programs as starting points, but supplementing them with additional information and hands-on-materials, activities and demonstrations. We are also considering the possibility of certifying program participants as "Potomac Valley Audubon Society Backyard Naturalists."

The Backyard Naturalist Program will also have slide programs on how to become citizen scientists. There are several citizen science programs that provide important information to scientists that would otherwise be unavailable, such as the Great Backyard Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and the Christmas Bird Counts. By your participation, you will be able to help scientists understand what is happening to bird populations because of habitat loss or degradation, climate change and other reasons. If you love Monarch Butterflies and are concerned about their incredible migration, we will teach you how to participate in Monarch Watch and help scientists understand the environmental factors important to their survival.

There are more parts to the program. The Backyard Naturalist Program will be phased in as time and resources allow. We will keep you posted as the program develops so you can participate and help us spread the word!

Grassland Birds Initiative

Do you remember hearing the songs of Eastern Meadowlarks drifting over the fields and farmlands of your youth? When was the last time that you saw or heard a Northern Bobwhite? How often have you seen American Crows picking over a recently mowed field in late June?



Grassland birds are in trouble. Many species are declining so rapidly that only 20% of their 1966 populations remain today. Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Horned Lark, Vesper Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite Quail, and others are among these beleaguered species.

Why have these species declined so rapidly in the last 50 years? Habitat loss and changes in land management are the main factors. The loss of breeding habitat has had a tremendous impact. Once open pastures and hay fields are now converting to woodlands, housing developments, shopping centers, and roads. Land management has also changed. As recently as 30 years ago, farmers would harvest the first cutting of hay in mid-July. This allowed grassland-nesting birds the opportunity to have one successful nest per season. Now, hay is harvested in mid-June, late-July, and again in August or September. There is no chance for these birds to produce young within these short periods of time. Fencerows are now kept completely free of vegetation and fields are planted right up to the fence. When narrow strips of grass are left at the edge of a field or along a fence, predators have an easy time looking for prey. They can easily hunt these areas by zigzagging back and forth across the narrow lane. They have a harder time finding prey in larger, squarer plots of land.

For all of these reasons and more, PVAS' Conservation Committee is launching a **Grassland Birds Initiative** (GBI). The program hopes to protect grassland-nesting birds by encouraging landowners to change their land use practices. Small areas at the ends of fields to larger tracts or entire fields, which are not being used for production, are all important to the program. Changes in land use practices include:

- Mowing high and waiting to mow later in the season, after October 20th but before March 20th.
- Not mowing at all for 4-5 years and then mowing within the dates as above.
- Refrain from mowing until July 15 to allow first nests to be successful and then mowing as high as the mower will allow.

Mowing high allows the grass clumping structure to remain intact. This clumping provides bare soil between the plants where these birds build their nests and it creates lanes within which they run around looking for food and to flee from predators.

Landowners that are truly dedicated to this cause can collaborate with the GBI and the Partners for Wildlife program of the National Resource Conservation Service by converting some acreage to warm-season grasses which are not only native but are better for these birds and other wildlife that require grassland habitats for survival. These species of grass grow later in the season and provide a bounty of nutrients for wildlife and domestic animals.

We are also working with the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle (LTEP) to encourage some landowners to protect their land through a conservation easement. Landowners that already have a LTEP conservation easement can also take advantage of this program. The GBI will work with these landowners to help them manage their land for grassland birds while the LTEP helps them setup the easement.

With all of the different levels that landowners can participate in the GBI, we hope that people will be excited to sign-up and set

aside acreage for these imperiled birds. Landowners have the option to earn certificates and have signs posted on their property to show that they are managing their land for grassland birds.

If you would like to get involved as a landowner or a volunteer with the GBI subcommittee, please see our website at <http://Potomacaudubon.org/GBI> or email us at Grasslandbirdsinitiative@gmail.com.



Rodent Poisons Kill Birds

By Nancy Kirschbaum

I have enjoyed observing Barred Owls hooting and floating from tree to tree in our wooded neighborhood near the Potomac River. Last fall, when I learned that two of them were found dead in the community—within days of each other—I suspected that they had eaten poisoned rodents.

This winter, family members in Gloucester, Massachusetts sent beautiful photos of a Snowy Owl seen there. The next day the bird was found dead.

These birds are probably victims of “second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides” found in such brand names as d-Con, Hot Shot, Generation, Talon, and Havoc. These poisons were developed because in some places, rats appeared to be developing tolerance to warfarin, a first-generation rodenticide.

For a rodent to get a lethal dose from a first-generation rodenticide it has to eat it more than once, but that’s not a problem. Leave first-generation baits out for a week and they’re just as efficient as the second generation. What makes second-generation rodenticides so non-selective is that they kill slowly, so rodents keep eating them long after they’ve ingested a lethal dose. By the time they expire, or are about to, they contain many times the lethal dose and are therefore deadly to predators, scavengers, and pets.

After a rodent eats this poison, it stumbles around for several days, making it attractive prey for owls, hawks, foxes, and other predators. In New York, rodenticides were found in 49 percent of necropsied raptors, and in San Diego, California, 92 percent. Similar contamination is seen around the world. The poisons are also being found in bird species that do not eat rodents. It may be that insects pick it up and pass it along to songbirds.

In 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency declared that second generation rodenticides posed an unreasonable risk to children, pets, and wildlife, and gave manufacturers three years to stop selling them directly to residential consumers. Three of the 29 manufacturing companies have refused to comply with the new regulation, and appealed the decision. These poisons are still being sold in stores such as Home Depot and Lowes.

The safest, and most humane, option for rodent control is still the snap trap. Please don’t buy baits containing second-generation rodenticides. If we kill off the predators in our environment, disturbing the balance of nature, the rodent population will increase dramatically with no natural controls.

To learn more, and for other options for safe and humane rodent

control, please read the full article in Audubon magazine’s Jan-Feb 2013 issue, available online here:

<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/conservation/poisons-used-kill-rodents-have-safer-alternatives?page=show>

Annual Appeal Update

We are pleased to announce that the annual appeal contributions continue to come in. As of this writing, we’re up to 138 generous donors having contributed \$31,534.24 with an impressive average donation of \$228.51.

This is very gratifying. Last year the appeal closed at \$34,182, so we’re well on our way but we have a little ways to go.

By closing the gap (and perhaps surpassing it?) we will know how to plan next year’s programs and activities. This year, as you’ve heard, we’re planning to launch the new Backyard Naturalist Program and a Grassland Birds Initiative. We don’t have grant monies in hand, yet, to launch these programs. Your contributions will help us continue our existing programs while building the foundation for these new initiatives while we seek additional funding to fuel their development and growth.

The annual appeal is our most important source of income that can be used for day- to-day operations. These daily operations allow us to reach the thousands of children and adults each year. We can’t thank you enough for your contributions (past and future) to enable staff and volunteers to do what they do so well.

So please help if you can! The formal deadline for the Annual Appeal is March 30th. No amount is too large or too small. We value each and every dollar, and promise to use it wisely in furthering our programs and mission. Thank you!

Identifying Trees in Winter

PVAS will offer two of its always-popular winter tree-identification field trips this March. Both trips will be led by West Virginia state foresters and last about two hours. They will show how to identify trees through such clues as their branching habits and overall shape, twigs and buds, and bark.



Beech tree in winter

The first trip will be held along the C&O Canal across from Shepherdstown the morning of Saturday, March 16 and will be led by state forester Herb Peddicord. Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Ferry Hill Place, the old brick mansion on the Maryland side of the Potomac River that used to be the C&O Canal Park headquarters. The entrance is on MD Route 34 just east of the Rumsey Bridge across the Potomac. In the event of bad weather, this trip will be rescheduled to March 23.

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The second trip will be held at Cacapon State Park west of Berkeley Springs on Saturday, March 23. Participants will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park's Nature Center. State forester Ben Kunze will lead this trip. If bad weather forces cancellation of this trip, it will be rescheduled to March 30.

There is no fee for either trip, and anyone with an interest is invited to attend. However, space will be limited for both trips and pre-registration is essential. To pre-register or get more information go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org or contact Kelly Wolf at kheldreth@hotmail.com or 304-229-6229.

Those who participate should be sure to dress appropriately for the prevailing weather and wear sturdy footwear.

Space Available for Birding 101

As this is being written, there's still space available in this year's "Birding 101" course for beginning birders, which will be held during April.

This will be the 28th year we've offered this course. It's taught by leading local bird experts, including Bob Dean, Matt Orsie, and Wil Hershberger. It utilizes both evening classroom sessions and daytime field trips. Participants learn everything from bird identification to birding techniques and resources to field etiquette. It focuses on bird species that are found in the Eastern Panhandle area.



The evening classroom sessions will start on Thursday, April 4 and be held each of the following three Thursdays (April 11, 18, and 25). 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 6, 13, and 20 and 27).

Tuition for the full course package of four classroom sessions and four field trips is \$75. Registration is required. Online registration and more information are available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. Or contact Ellen Murphy at 304-676-8739 or pvasprograms@gmail.com.

Wildflower Festival Set for April 6

PVAS will hold its annual spring Wildflower Festival on Saturday, April 6 at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. The festival, which is held to coincide with the peak of the spring wildflower season, will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine. It will include guided wildflower walks through the preserve for advanced and beginner/families, children's activities and refreshments. Guided walks will leave the pavilion on the hour, though visitors are welcome to explore the trails on their own as well. Admission to all

these events will be free and everyone is welcome.

For the sixth year in a row, the festival will also include a special Poetry Walk component—poems that focus on spring themes will be posted all along the preserve's Kingfisher trail where the majority of wildflowers are found. Early to mid April is traditionally the best time to view early spring wildflowers at the preserve. Some of the wildflowers on display should include bloodroot, spring beauties, Dutchman's breeches, and rue anemone.



The trails at Yankauer are primitive, so wear sturdy walking shoes. Please leave pets at home and leave the wildflowers for all to enjoy.

For more information contact PVAS at 304-676-3397 or kristin@potomacaudubon.org.

Poems Sought for Wildflower Festival

PVAS is once again asking local poets to submit poems that will be displayed as part of our annual Wildflower Festival (see separate story on Festival). Those who wish to submit poems are encouraged to do so by sending them via email to Shepherdstown's Four Seasons Bookstore at 4seasons@citlink.net. Poems may also be dropped off at the store on German Street in person. Poems can also be sent by regular mail to Poetry Walk, c/o PVAS, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

The deadline for submissions is 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 29. For more information contact PVAS at 304-676-3397 or kristin@potomacaudubon.org.

Three Birding Trips Set for March

PVAS has scheduled three Jefferson County birding trips for March. All the trips are free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Full details can be found on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. The specific dates and basic details are as follows:

March 6: Bird walk in the South Schoolhouse Ridge Battle-field section of the Harpers Ferry National Park. Will last two to three hours and involve about 3 miles of walking through woods and fields, with some hilly terrain. Likely species include winter visitors and year-round birds like woodpeckers and raptors. Meet at 8:00 a.m. the South Schoolhouse Ridge parking area. From Route 340 west of Harpers Ferry, turn south onto Millville Road (County Route 27) at the outdoor flea market; proceed 2 miles to parking area. If the gate is closed, pull off and park along the road. No pre-registration required. For more info, contact Deb Hale at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

March 9: Bird walk in the Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area, on the east bank of the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the WMA parking area by the boat launch site. Likely species will include waterfowl, winter visitors and year-round birds. No pre-registration required. For more info contact Jim Farley at jamesfarley@frontiernet.net or 540-686-2056.

March 20: Birding trip to Altona Marsh west of Charles Town in Jefferson County. Trip will begin at 8:00 a.m. Likely species will include waterfowl, winter visitors and year-round birds. Because this is a protected site and there are access issues, participants must pre-register and sign a waiver. To do this, contact Jim Farley at the email address or phone number shown above.

Children of any age will be welcome on the first two trips. For the Altona Marsh trip, children 12 and older may participate as long as they are accompanied by an adult. For each trip, participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trips may be cancelled because of bad weather.



Summer Camp Registration Begins!

Registration for our Audubon Discovery Camp has opened! *Camp Survivor*, *Bugs-A-Billion*, and *Do You Like Spiders and Snakes?* are being offered at Yankauer Preserve in June. Sessions at the Peter Burr Farm, including *Ol' Time Arts*, are offered in July.

Most sessions are geared for children ages 6-13, but older campers have the opportunity to **Rock On!** (including an afternoon of caving) or explore **Camp, Canoe, Canal** at Yankauer, on the Shenandoah River, and hiking around Harpers Ferry. Sessions are also offered for preschoolers.

Teens, entering grades 7-12, can be a part of camp as well. Those who attend a required training can then volunteer to work as junior staff during a week at camp. The **Nature Digital Photo Camp** for teens returns this year at Shepherd University in June. Both of these sessions have limited spaces, so don't delay reserving your spot!

Most sessions will offer before/after camp care for a reasonable fee. Before and after care will be available on a pre-arranged, weekly basis and you can arrange for that at the same time you register for a camp session. It's also possible to add camp care later as family summer plans become firm.

The fee for most traditional camp sessions is \$150, but preschool camp options are less. A \$50 deposit will secure your child's spot in a session with the balance due in May. T-shirts will be available for pre-order online and will cost \$10 again this year. Sizes range from Youth XS to Adult XL. Our shirt "mascot" this year is a frog on a kiwi green shirt. Audubon Discovery Camp has been offered since 2003.

Camp Scholarship Opportunities!

If you know a young person, or if you ARE that young person who would enjoy learning about the natural world at summer camp, we encourage you to apply for a camp scholarship from PVAS. Applications must be post-marked by Friday, April 5, 2013, so act now! Camps, locations, ages, and dates are listed below, but the PVAS web site provides even more information -- exciting camp descriptions and links to camp web pages with great photos and application details.

- **Audubon Discovery Day Camp:** our own local camp at Yankauer Nature Preserve and Peter Burr Farm Site; pre-school to grade 12; a variety of week-long sessions May 28 to July 19, 2013.
- **Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp:** at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; July 21 - 27 and/or July 28 - August 3, 2013.
- **Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies:** at Capon Bridge, WV; ages 11-15; June 23 - July 6; July 9 - 23; or July 30 - August 12, 2013.
- **Mountain Adventures Camp:** at Mountain Institute, Spruce Knob, WV; ages 12-17; June 16 - 22, June 23 - 29, June 30 - July 6, 2013.
- **West Virginia State Conservation Camp:** at Camp Caesar, Webster County, WV; Campers must be age 14 by January 2013 and not past age 18 on June 1; June 10 - 15, 2013.
- **Student Climate & Conservation Congress (SC3):** at the National Conservation and Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV; Rising grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 23 - 29, 2013.
- **Digital Photo Camp:** at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); June 17 - 21, 2013 (tentative).
- **Coastal Bird Studies for Teens:** at National Audubon's camp on Hog Island, Maine; ages 14-17; June 16-21, 2013

Please check our web site at www.potomacaudubon.org for updates or additional details as they become available. The web site provides PVAS scholarship application forms and links to the camps' web sites. You may also contact scholarship coordinator Kathryn Henry at 304-876-6681, or dhenry@myexcel.com.

Scholarships are available for eligible young people throughout the PVAS membership area -- the WV Eastern Panhandle and Washington County, Maryland. Every year during its 31-year history, PVAS has sent youngsters to camp on scholarships. The program has been supported by our fall bird seed sale, but individual donors and additional community sources also generously help to fund our camp scholarships. PVAS thanks our bird seed customers and other loyal supporters!



Sign Up Now for March 24 Egg Hunt **School Programs Feature Service Projects**



2012 Egg Hunt

PVAS will hold its fifth annual Spring Children's Egg Hunt the afternoon of Sunday, March 24 at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. Unlike traditional egg hunts, this one combines fun with an educational experience. The eggs we use are colored to resemble real eggs of wild birds. Children are challenged to find the naturally camouflaged eggs on the trail and, in the process, they discover how birds keep their eggs safe from predators. Other activities this year will include a "penguin egg walk" and an "ostrich egg balance challenge," as well as an egg-toss game.

This year's event will be for children ages 3-6. Eggs for them to collect will be hidden along trails at the preserve. At the end of the event, collected eggs will be "traded in" for a sweet treat.

This will be a family-oriented event and parents should plan to accompany their children as they walk on the trails. The hunt will be held from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Space will be limited and pre-registration is required. The fee is \$5 per child. Registration is available at the PVAS website.

For more information, contact Ellen Murphy, PVAS's Director of Youth Programs, at **304-676-8739** or ellen@potomacaudubon.org.

Preschool Programs at Yankauer

Wee Naturalists, PVAS's outdoor program for preschoolers and a loving adult, returns on April 15 and 18 with "Spring Fling." The May 6th and 9th program will introduce children to "Animal Families." The morning program encourages participants to explore nature together through activities at the Yankauer pavilion, nature walks, circle games, and other activities.

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

Several school programs in January and February featured a service-learning component designed especially for the students by Ellen Murphy. Third graders at St. Joseph's Parish School learned that teaching is sometimes harder than it looks as they helped 4-year old preschoolers at the school make a simple bird feeder. Second graders at the school made suet feeders as part of their year-long program focused on plants and animals and as preparation for the classes taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Watershed programs for fourth grade continue in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties and have begun in Morgan County, thanks to a generous grant from the Friends of Cacapon River. Reports from the teachers and parents continue to let us know how much they value this PVAS program because it combines hands-on learning that is tied tightly to the WV learning standards and includes a real-world component with the field trip to a tributary of the Potomac River. In an email, a parent reported "*Owen told me how much he LOVED watershed today. He was telling me all about density. He can't wait for the next one!*"

PVAS staff visited Back Creek Valley Elementary School for the first time ever in January and were able to present programs to all the Kindergarten, First, and Second grade classrooms. The dreary, cold weather that day didn't prevent the students from getting outside to explore their schoolyard for signs of nature. Even the principal joined in the "insect games!"

If your class (or you'd like your child's class) to take part in one of our grade-specific programs at Yankauer Preserve or in the classroom, contact Ellen at 304-676-8739 or Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org.

Outdoor Explore! Events Continue This Spring

Several more *Outdoor Explore!* events are scheduled as the weather turns warmer. On Saturday, March 9, children can explore Eidolon Nature Preserve in Morgan County and discover the nooks and crannies where animals can hide in "Run For Cover." The event will help youngsters learn about forest habitats and the ways in which forest animals shelter and hide themselves. It will last from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

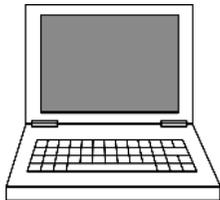


The April event will focus on hiking the Maryland Heights Trail near Harpers Ferry. Events will also take place in May and June.

The Outdoor Explore program is intended to give youngsters a better understanding and appreciation of the natural world in a safe, supervised way. Its activities include hiking, exploration of different

local habitats, plant and animal identification, and other natural science activities around the Eastern Panhandle. Each month's theme is appropriate to the time of year and habitat of the specific location. Jan Hummer, an experienced natural science educator, is leading each program session. The program is being made possible by a grant from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

Each even has a small fee and registration for each event can be completed on the PVAS website. For more information, contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org or 304-676-8739.



Staying Connected With PVAS

Once upon a time, PVAS was a local Audubon affiliate club, in the West Virginia Eastern Panhandle. We're still that, but our ability to reach out to folks who live in other areas has exploded in 2012! With the introduction of our new website and presence on other social media sites, we have entered the digital age with pizzaz!

It's only been a year since we introduced the new PVAS website, which has separate pages for many of the programs and events we offer. One of its best features is an easy-to-use, online registration system that allows us to post upcoming events and programs to a larger audience and without the use of excessive paper.

Our presence is also being established in other social media. PVAS and Potomac Valley Master Naturalists have each established a Facebook page, the Birding Group has established a birder's blog, the Potomac Valley Nature Photographers have formed a Facebook group, and the Potomac Valley Nature Writers Group continues with its blogsite. Each of these social media groups can connect interested persons all over the United States and the world with us!

If you would like to see any of the electronic sites listed above, just go to www.PotomacAudubon.org and you'll find links to all of them. When you've found them, visit them often and become a contributor. Social media is just one of the many ways that PVAS is reaching out to our members and friends and it works best when you take part too.

Grassland Bird Preserve

This private land is being managed by its owner to protect valuable breeding grounds for threatened grassland birds, as well as other wildlife that require this kind of habitat for survival.

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

For Information:
potomacaudubon.org/GBI
 Phone: 304-676-3307 or
GrasslandBirdInitiative@gmail.com

Landowner: _____

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

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

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

Membership Form

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

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

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Thank you for your support!

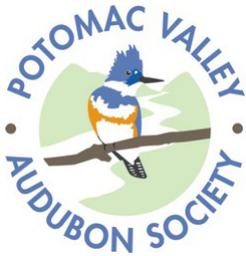


If you'd rather join the National Audubon Society:

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

T RED TEXT - DOT ALERT

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



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A proud partner of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign.



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

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

PVAS Officers and Board Members

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

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

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