

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society

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President's Perch

by Jane Vanderhook, PVAS President

More than 30 years ago, my husband and I made the decision to settle in Shepherdstown and we have never regretted it. Neither one of us had a hometown; in fact, neither of us had ever lived anywhere longer than five years, so deciding where to put down roots was a challenge. One of the biggest attractions was the natural beauty of West Virginia. There were so many opportunities for a wide variety of outdoor activities that appeal to us. That love of the natural world soon manifested as curiosity about the birds I was seeing and fourteen years ago I joined Potomac Valley Audubon Society so I could learn more. Taking some of the excellent birding courses that PVAS offers has greatly enhanced my enjoyment of birding. While I remain an intermediate birder at best, I am having fun.

In February we spent some time in South Carolina and Florida, (yes, I checked the weather every day while I was gone and no, I am not sorry I missed that cold spell) I got to go birding six times. On our most productive day, we identified over 80 species of birds, thirteen of which were new birds for me. It was a great vacation, but I'm happy I live where I do, in the Potomac Valley surrounded by hundreds of species of birds and plenty of elbow room. I am looking forward to the Spring migration and I have resolved to spend more time actively watching. Hope to see you soon through the binoculars.

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

The generosity of PVAS members and friends never ceases to impress and humble me. The response to the 2014 annual appeal has been fantastic, and I'm truly grateful to all of you who have contributed already. Contributions continue to come in as we approach the March 31 deadline. We thank you!

As I'm writing this article, we're up to 144 generous donors having contributed \$36,365. Last year the appeal closed at \$37,850, so we're well on our way to matching last year's total but we have a little ways to go. We'd love your help!

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

The 2014 appeal will close on March 31, so please contribute what you can! Donations can be made by check and sent to PO Box 578 in Shepherdstown (zip 25443), or you can go to the donation page on the PVAS website: www.potomacaudubon.org/support. However you choose to give and no matter how much you choose to give, every dollar is appreciated and used wisely in furthering our programs and mission. We truly thank each and every one of you for your support.

VISTA Volunteer: YEAR 2!

by Kristin Alexander

I am happy to announce that our AmeriCorps Promise VISTA volunteer, Melanie Snyder, has agreed to stay on for a second year! We are very fortunate to have her back so that she can continue the momentum she's gained in her first year. Her second term begins March 1st, and she'll continue to be a full-time member of the PVAS team. She will continue to focus her attention on membership development, fundraising, communications strategies, volunteer recruitment, and the development of partnerships.

We will continue to work with "West Virginia's Promise - The Alliance for Youth." It is a statewide program that mobilizes partners to strengthen the capacity of local communities to develop and support young people. The purpose of the VISTA is to continue to help us build PVAS' capacity in order to strengthen and expand PVAS' youth programs in our region. Rob Hoxton, of HFI Wealth Management, has generously agreed to continue offering PVAS pro bono office space in his Shepherdstown location. We can't thank Rob enough for his commitment to PVAS by continuing this significant contribution for a second year.

Please thank Melanie for continuing on when you see her at future PVAS events!

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

Bird Walk Set For March 15 at Stauffer's Marsh

PVAS will sponsor a birding trip to its Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Sunday, March 15.

Local birder, Steve Hartmann will lead the walk, which will begin at 8:00 a.m. The event is free and open to anyone with an interest, and children are welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required; easy registration is available on the PVAS website.

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). The marsh is an excellent birding site any time of year. Species likely to be sighted during March 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. Participants should meet in the gravel parking area at the north end of the marsh.

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.



Deb Hale Will Lead March 25 Harpers Ferry Bird Walk

Veteran birder Deb Hale will lead a PVAS bird walk at the North Schoolhouse Ridge section of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on Wednesday, March 25. The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. and last about three hours.

It will be free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website.

Species likely to be sighted include lingering winter birds, early migrants, and year-round birds like woodpeckers and raptors.

Participants will meet at the North Schoolhouse Ridge parking area. From Route 340 just west of Harpers Ferry, turn north on Bakerton Road (Route 27) and go about three-quarters of a mile to the parking area on the left. The trip will involve about 2.5 miles of walking through fields and unpaved roads, along mostly level terrain.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water, sunscreen and bug spray. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trip will be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

For more information contact Deb at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

Shannondale Springs Birding Trip Set for March 31

PVAS is sponsoring a birding trip to the Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area, on the east bank of the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County, on Tuesday, March 31.

The trip is free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required; to register, go to the PVAS website.

Participants should plan to meet trip leader Jim Farley at 7:30 a.m. at the WMA parking area by the boat launch site, off Mission Road.

The 1,361 acre Shannondale Springs property is managed by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources; it includes a mixture of forest, brush land and open fields covering rolling hills. The trip will involve walking about three miles over moderately even ground. Possible species to be sighted include early spring migrants, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, vultures, Great Blue Herons, waterfowl, and woodpeckers.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water and bug spray. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trip may be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

Red-winged Blackbirds

by Wil Hershberger

As winter slips into spring, our wetlands begin to ring with the songs and calls of Red-winged Blackbirds. It is hard to miss the jet-black males, sporting bright-red epaulets, as they strut and display. These males are desperately trying to impress females and warn other males that this is their patch of marsh that they are ready to defend — perhaps violently. Females are harder to spot, decked-out in brown feathers with streaked breasts, they look like large sparrows at first glance. Red-winged Blackbirds are very common across most of North America and the species is amazingly well studied with Arthur Allen, of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology fame, conducting the first in-depth scientific fieldwork on the species in 1914.



All photos © Wil Hershberger

Red-winged Blackbird males sing a simple song sounding something like, “*conk-la-ree*,” which can be heard year-round, but is most often heard in spring during the breeding season. As they sing, males may preform the “Song Spread Display.” Here the male leans forward and purposefully puffs out and exposes the red epaulets on each wing so that rival males can clearly see that he means business. Male song also entices receptive females to court. Females also sing a variety of simple songs that appear to be designed to modify the behavior of males; encouraging them to guard the nest, refrain from harassing the female, and notifying the male when she is entering or leaving the territory so that he is more on-guard. Additionally, she sings an aggressive song directed at other females. Red-winged Blackbirds also exhibits a wide variety of calls that communicate actions such as; alarm, threat, distress, courtship, and feeding. One of the more rare calls to listen for is the male’s flight song/call that he gives when he is leaving the territory. I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time to record this display in March 1998.

<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/94252>

Territories are vigorously defended with song and displays. Male Red-winged Blackbirds are so territorial that they will repeatedly attack a dark sock outfitted with red epaulets until they knock the epaulets off the intruder. However, males that were experimentally muted often lose their territory to aggressive neighbors. Experimentally vacated territories are more slowly occupied by neighboring males if song is played from within that territory. These studies seem to indicate that song is the most effective territorial defense mechanism that a male can use.

Nesting is done communally with large numbers of pairs establishing and defending closely packed territories. Nest sites are selected by the female, with the male participating by performing the “Symbolic Nest-site Selection Display.” Nests are built entirely by the female in as little as one day with most nests take about 3-4 days to build; nest building may take longer earlier in the season. The open cup nests are typically placed a few inches above water and are attached to vegetation such as cattails. Nest building starts with the placement of fine, string-like material wrapped around vertical vegetation. To this is added a layer of vegetation to form a base on which to build the rest of the nest. Next, strips of vegetation are woven around the vertical supports and into the base platform. A lining of mud may or may not be added as a finishing touch. A female may delay egg laying for several days after she finishes her nest. Two to 4 pale blue-green eggs are laid for each clutch, which will hatch in 11-13 days. The altricial young, fed by both parents, fledge at about 14 days after hatching. The dependent young are fed for an additional 2-4 weeks while still in or near the parent’s territory.

Red-winged Blackbird populations in West Virginia have been declining at a rate of -1.6% per year since counts were started in 1966. It would be a real shame to lose such a vibrant and cheerful species. One sure sign that spring has arrived is that morning when the local marsh is suddenly full of ringing, “*conk-la-rees!*”

<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/94251>



Next “Family Nature Tales” Program Set for March 28

Our “Family Nature Tales” program for March will be held at the Yankauer Nature Preserve on Saturday, the 28th, from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Our Family Nature Tales are a new series of programs intended to encourage families to explore nature together. Each program starts with a nature-themed story reading at the preserve’s pavilion, followed by a supervised outdoor nature activity in the preserve.

The stories and activities are aimed at children 8 years of age and younger, but everyone is welcome. All the programs are free but pre-registration is required. Register on the PVAS website.

The Yankauer preserve’s trails are natural surface (dirt) with hills and rocks, so rugged strollers or packs are recommended for younger children. Participants should dress for prevailing weather conditions and wear closed-toed shoes.

Programs will generally be held rain (or snow) or shine, but severe weather may force occasional cancellations.

The programs are being funded by a grant from the Nora Roberts Foundation. For more information, contact [Ellen Murphy](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org) at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists 2015



The Master Naturalist Program enthusiastically begins its 9th year of classes. 22 students have enrolled in this year’s program, which will begin on the weekend of March 21 & 22 at the Ole Inn at Cacapon State Park.

Students will participate in full day classes one weekend a month throughout the year. The courses, which consist of three or more hours of expert instruction on a specific nature studies topic, are offered on Saturdays (and a few Sundays) at a variety of venues, including: Cacapon State Park, the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) and CraftWorks.

Each student enrolled will receive a total of 48 Core and 16 Elective hours of instruction. The Elective courses may be taken and counted as re-certification hours by Certified Master Naturalists.

If you are interested in more information about our Master Naturalist Program, please visit our website at potomacaudubon.org or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Register Now For March 29 Spring Egg Hunt

We will hold our sixth annual Spring Children’s Egg Hunt the afternoon of Sunday, March 29 at our Yankauer Nature Preserve. The hunt, which will be held from 2:00-3:30 p.m., is for children ages 2-6. It will be a family-oriented event, and parents should plan to accompany their children as they hunt for eggs.

Unlike traditional egg hunts, this one combines fun with an educational experience. The eggs used in the hunt are colored to resemble real eggs of wild birds. Children are challenged to find these eggs on the preserve’s trails and, in the process, discover how birds use camouflage 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. At the end of the event, collected eggs will be “traded in” for a sweet treat: decorating an egg shaped cookie to enjoy on the spot with lemonade or take home and enjoy later.

Space will be limited and pre-registration is required. There will be a fee of \$5 per child.



Register online at the PVAS website or contact Ellen Murphy, PVAS’s Director of Youth Programs, at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org or 304-676-8739.



Don't Miss March 7 Wildlife Signs Walk at Cacapon State Park

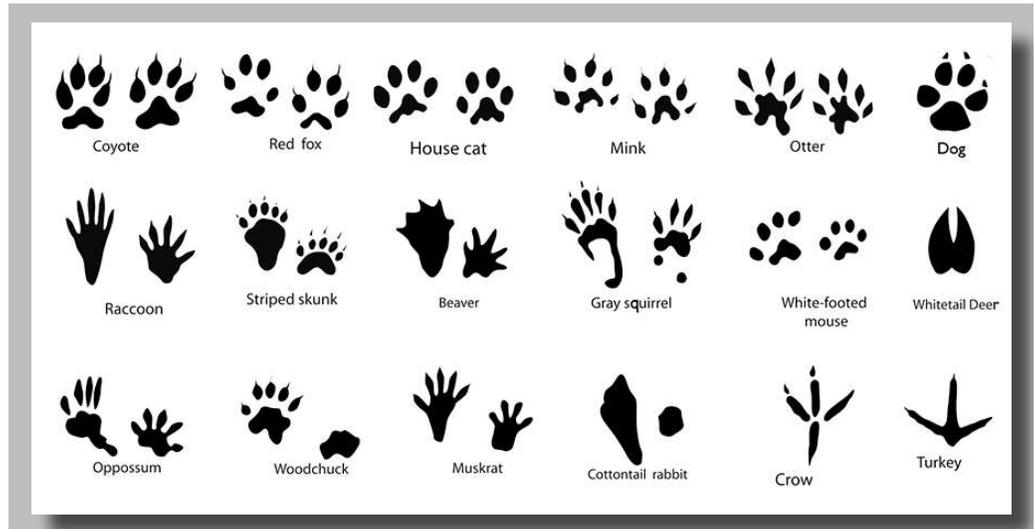
PVAS is sponsoring a "Wildlife Signs Walk" at the Cacapon State Park in Morgan County on Saturday, March 7. The event is free and anyone is welcome to join in.

Participants should meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park's Nature Center. The walk will begin from there and be led by the Park's naturalist, Renee Fincham. It will last about one-and-a-half hours. This will be a family-friendly event that will show how to look for tracks and other signs of wildlife in West Virginia forests.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website. 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 or rained out, it will be rescheduled to March 28. Participants should wear sturdy footwear and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions.

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



PVAS Is Getting Out This Spring!

In addition to going to schools, like our fourth grade watershed program, PVAS has a number of "spring things" planned for youth. Family Nature Tales continues on the last Saturday of each month at Yankauer Preserve and Ellen Murphy has several visits to school classes planned for later in the spring.

A new adventure, "Reading to the Trees" is being planned with the Martinsburg Children's Library and the Martinsburg Children's Museum, located at the train station. (The museum is called "For the Kids, By George!") Funded by the Nora Roberts Foundation, this program will allow PVAS to provide a nature activity focused on a different read-aloud book each day during Spring Break (April 6-10). Our hope is that with the library and the museum's help, we can provide a positive nature experience to kids who live in the downtown area. (Of course, everyone is invited to any of the programs! They're free.)

At the same time, we are working with several other local libraries in the PVAS service area to do a similar program called "Audubon on the Road." This program will take place at a convenient time for the libraries during the spring, summer, or fall months. For both programs, we'd love to find some folks who like to read to kids; we have lots of nature artifacts, games, activities, and ideas ready to go! If you'd be interested in helping with some of these programs please contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).



Children investigate a black bear pelt

March 7 Workshop on Environmental Curriculum for Young Children

PVAS will offer a Saturday, March 7 workshop on an environmental education curriculum developed by Project Learning Tree for children ages three to six. This will be the first workshop on this curriculum in the Eastern Panhandle. It is intended primarily for professional educators working with young children, but any interested adult may attend.

The workshop will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville. It will be led by Linda Carnell, of the US Forest Service. All participants must pre-register on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org and pay a \$10 fee. Each participant will receive a free copy of the curriculum book and an accompanying CD. Light snacks will also be provided.

Project Learning Tree is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators, parents, and community leaders working with youth from preschool through grade 12. Its *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* curriculum is specifically designed for educators who work with children ages three to six. Developed with preschool educators and early childhood specialists, it includes over 130 experiences to engage such children in outdoor play and exploration. Topics include exploring nature with five senses, meeting neighborhood trees, and experiencing trees through the seasons. For more information about it go to the Project Learning Tree website at www.plt.org.



The Hospice facility's address is 330 Hospice Lane, Kearneysville. The entrance is located on old Route 9, near Short Road, across from the Food Lion store. The workshop will be held in the Education Room of the facility's Main Office building. There is plenty of parking at the facility.

This workshop is part of PVAS's Natural History Workshop series. For more information, contact Ellen Murphy at ellen@potomacaudubon.org or 304-676-8739.

Watershed Program Field Trip Volunteers and OJ Cartons Needed!

You might not think those two things would go together, but they actually do. With 64 watershed classes and 14 days of field trips planned this spring, we need your help!

Watershed field trip volunteers help students put what they have learned in class into action: testing water quality, learning about stream bank stability, searching for macroinvertebrates, and playing games like Watershed in Jeopardy. Volunteers help lead one of the sessions (we will train you). Field trips are held in Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties during late March, April and May.

Some classes are potting tree whips as part of their field trip. That's where the orange juice cartons come in! Students at some schools will be planning tree whips that will be returned to grow-out stations at local schools. The whips should grow well in the half-gallon waxed cartons, which are biodegradable.

We need about 100 cartons by April, so we'd like PVAS members' to help save them. If you could save us the empty and clean half-gallon waxed cardboard cartons from orange juice, milk, soy milk, iced coffee, fruit juice, almond milk—whatever you drink—we would appreciate it! You can contact Melanie Snyder (admin@PotomacAudubon.org) or Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org) to make arrangements to drop them off.



Master Naturalist Keith Jones in the field with a group

Camp Scholarships are Available!

Here's your opportunity! If you are a young person – or a family -- who would enjoy learning about nature at a summer camp, do consider applying for a camp scholarship from PVAS. If you know someone else who would be interested, pass this information along!

Applications must be post-marked by Wednesday, **April 8, 2015**, so act now! Camps, locations, ages, and dates are listed below, but the PVAS web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, provides much more information, including exciting camp descriptions and links to camp web pages with great photos and other details.

- ☐ **Audubon Discovery Day Camp:** our own local day camp at Yankauer Nature Preserve, Peter Burr Farm, and Shepherd University; pre-school to grade 12; a variety of week-long sessions in *June and July 2015*.
- ☐ **Family Camp:** at historic Audubon camp, Hog Island, Maine; families with children ages 8-12; *August 11-16, 2015*.
- ☐ **Oglebay Institute Junior Nature Camp:** at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; *July 19-25 and/or July 26 - August 1, 2015*.
- ☐ **Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies:** at Capon Bridge, WV; ages 11-15; *June 21-July 4; July 7-21; or July 28 – August 10, 2015*.
- ☐ **West Virginia Junior Conservation Camp:** at Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV; ages 11-14; *June 15-19, 2015*.
- ☐ **Mountain Stewards Summer Camp,** at Spruce Knob, WV; grades 9-12 (up to age 17); *June 7-12, June 14-19, June 28-July 3, July 5-10, 2015*.
- ☐ **West Virginia Senior Conservation Camp:** at Camp Caesar, Webster County, WV; Campers must be age 14 by January 1 and not past age 18 on June 1; *June 15 - 20, 2015*.
- ☐ **Student Climate & Conservation Congress (SC3):** at the National Conservation and Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV; Rising grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); *June 21-27, 2015*.
- ☐ **Nature Photography Camp:** at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); *June 22-26, 2015*.

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

PVAS offers scholarships for eligible persons throughout our membership area – the WV Eastern Panhandle and Washington County, Maryland. Camp scholarships are generously supported by our fall bird seed sale, as well as other donors and community sources. We thank our bird seed customers and all loyal scholarship supporters!

Summer Camp Registrations Are Underway!

Registrations for Audubon Discovery Camp began on February 1; registration for sessions has been brisk. This doesn't mean there isn't a spot for your child, though. There are still plenty of openings!

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." Our "Teen Digital Photo Camp" returns to Shepherd University again this year. It's an amazing opportunity for teens to explore photography.

One session for middle schoolers called "Outdoor Adventurer: Build A Techno Trail" filled up in two days, so we are planning to have a second session, but based in Martinsburg, rather than Shepherdstown. The date and details will be posted on the PVAS website.

We maintain waiting lists for all camp sessions (no fee is required) and we encourage you to register there if your chosen session is already filled. We try our best to place every camper in a session of their choice, in the order of registration on waiting lists. All T-shirts must be ordered by May 15 to guarantee delivery at camp. Shirts are \$10 and must be paid in advance.

Full information about all sessions and direct links to register are on the PVAS website: www.PotomacAudubon.org/discovercamp.

Race for the Birds Registration Continues

PVAS is continuing to accept online registrations for its 14th annual “Race for the Birds!”

The race will be held on Saturday, April 25, starting at 9:00 a.m., 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; 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 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 our programs for children, and all fees will be tax deductible.

To register and to get more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. Or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

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.



Photo courtesy of Potomac Highlands Distance Club

March Program Will Look at “eMammal” Project

Our monthly program for March will feature a presentation about the “eMammal” citizen science project.

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

Admission will be free and everyone is welcome to attend.

The speaker will be Megan Baker-Wharton, who is the citizen science coordinator of the eMammal project at the Smithsonian Institution’s Conservation Biology Institute.

She will provide an overview of the e-Mammal project, which links citizen volunteers with researchers at the Smithsonian Institution and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences to document mammals throughout the mid-Atlantic



region, and soon, the entire country.

Project volunteers place infrared-activated cameras in parks and other natural areas. The resulting photos help researchers answer questions about mammal distribution and abundance and assist conservation efforts.

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 www.potomacaudubon.org or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Winston Gardens Spring Plant Sale (Liquidation!)

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

On the weekend of May 2-3, from 10am-3pm each day, Winston Gardens will be having their final native plant sale. Winston Gardens, located off Swan Pond, has been donating 15% of the proceeds from her plant sales since spring of 2011, totaling over \$1,200 over that time. 15% of the proceeds from this year's plant sale are again dedicated to Stauffer's Marsh Preserve.

Species this year will include Sugar Maples, Bottlebrush Buckeye, Summersweet, Cockspur Hawthorn, Winterberry Holly, Northern Bayberry, Viburnums (including Arrowwood, Possum Haw, and Mapleleaf) and White, Red and other oaks. All native species, these trees are specifically appropriate for local climate and soil conditions.

Virginia Winston has been raising native trees and shrubs for over fifteen years, here in the Eastern Panhandle. After years of caring for these young potted plants (i.e. watering all summer long) she's decided to liquidate her stock this spring before the summer heat sets in. All plants will be very reasonably priced at \$20-\$25/tree to help clear her inventory. Virginia will also have her artwork for sale over the weekend. For a sneak peek of her artwork and a list of the tree species available, you can go to her website: www.winstongardens.com.

If you are not available the weekend of the sale, Virginia is willing to set up an appointment by phone or e-mail. She can be reached at (304) 267-6924 or virginia@winstongardens.com.

DIRECTIONS:

From 45 East out of Martinsburg, go about 5 mi., turn left on Files Crossroads and go 1 mi. to 'T' at Swan Pond Rd. Turn left, go 1/2 mi. and turn right onto Hollida Rd. Follow Hollida as it turns sharply right at the mailboxes, becomes gravel, passes up hill and between a large white farmhouse and barn, turns sharply left a little way beyond the barn, and goes down a long straightaway. Just as the road turns sharply right again, follow our driveway up to the left (1121, light green ranch house) and park along the drive.

We can't thank Virginia enough for providing our region with native trees and shrubs, as well as her generous contributions to PVAS over the years. We wish her all the best in her new endeavors.



Field with Redbud © Virginia Winston

Where is Wee Naturalists?

Our monthly Wee Naturalists program, that helps introduce preschoolers and a caring adult to outdoor adventures, has been absent lately, but we'd like to bring it back on a regular basis. PVAS needs someone to lead the program—could that possibly be you?

The Wee Naturalist program is designed so that child/parent teams explore Yankauer Preserve together, focusing on a different theme each month. Past themes have included birds, spring and spring showers, shapes and colors in nature, and animals in the forest.

Generally the first thirty minutes of the program is for free play and exploration with a more structured program in the next hour.

The Wee Naturalists program leader is responsible for developing the theme and activities and conducting the program. There is a small stipend each month and we provide program supplies and materials.

Programs are generally offered in March, April, May, August, September, October, and November at a regular time (often a Monday). If you'd like to learn more about leading this program, contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).



Still Time to Sign Up for Birding 101 Course

There's still time to sign up for our 2015 "Birding 101" course for beginning birders, which will be held during April. 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.

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.



Wil Hershberger, top, and Bob Dean, bottom. Photos © Wil Hershberger

Reminder: Wash and Disinfect your Feeders Regularly!

by Kristin Alexander (with quote from Susan Olcott, Biologist, WVDNR Wildlife Diversity Program)

I recently read this post from Susan Olcott, of the WV DNR, on the WV Birders Listserve. A week later, a house finch with conjunctivitis showed up at my feeder. Nothing like that "in your face" reminder that it's time to clean the feeders again! Here's Sue's post, printed her with her permission:

"Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis can affect several species of birds, but it mostly affects house finches. Since it is passed from bird-to-bird by direct contact, or with contact with infected seed, feeders, or surfaces, any feeder or seed can be a conduit for infection. Be a responsible bird feeder! Regularly wash and disinfect (with 10% bleach solution) your feeders, and clean up seed hulls and bird droppings. If you see sick birds stop feeding - discard old seed, wash and disinfect you feeders, and either hang them in a new location or stop feeding for a week or two to allow any disease to run its course and have the birds disperse. Remember, birds don't need us to survive the winter - we invite them to our feeders with an easy meal. It's our responsibility to ensure that our actions don't negatively affect birds that brighten out winter days."

To learn more, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has good information on this disease: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/hofi/abtdisease.html>.

Smithsonian Research Center Tour is Full

PVAS is sponsoring a special tour of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) near Front Royal, VA, on Tuesday, March 24. We announced the tour on January 29. Our occasional trips to this world-renowned zoological research facility always fill up fast, and this one is no exception. By mid-February, we'd already hit our limit of 26 participants and stopped taking registrations on our website. It's always possible that one or more people may drop out and free up some spaces, so if you're interested keep an eye on our website.

Birding & Habitat Conservation

Monday, April 13, 2015
Blandy Arboretum Library

7 PM Public Program
 6 PM Evening Bird Walk
 (Weather permitting, meet at central kiosk)

Join NSV Audubon and Potomac Conservancy for a presentation on Shenandoah Valley riverside habitat preservation at 7 pm.

Weather permitting, a bird walk will precede the public program.

Email at shenandoahaudubon@yahoo.com,
 or www.audubon-nsvas.org

NSVAS, P.O. Box 2693, Winchester, VA 22604



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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 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.

6th Annual West Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference

June 12 – 14, 2015
Elkins, WV
MNofWV.org

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists!

Mark your calendars!
Saturday, May 2
Spring Get Together
 (More information to follow)



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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.

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