

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society

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President's Note

by Michael Sullivan, PVAS President

As I write this note in late February I cannot help but notice that my daffodils are ready to bloom. What are we to make of this extraordinarily mild winter? During a brief cold snap in December the temperature plummeted to a low of 8 degrees F at the airport in Martinsburg, and during another cold morning in early January it dropped to 10 degrees F. And I did notice that the Shenandoah River appeared to be frozen and quite beautiful when I drove across it on Route 9 in early January. But mild has been the way to describe this winter. Very mild!



Most of us are able to discern changes in the weather over the short run, which prompt us to use terms like hotter, colder, wetter, and drier to describe current and recent conditions. Our memory of weather conditions when we were children or from earlier periods in our lives can provide a reference for assessing our perception of change over our lifetimes. Climate scientists are better able to interpret patterns recorded over the long run that may stretch across centuries. They are telling us now that the trend in global warming that they see is unequivocal, and that global warming is having an impact on our environment.

The National Audubon Society takes the threat of global climate change very seriously. *Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report* provides a very detailed assessment of the potential impact of climate change on birds. Over half of the 588 species of North American birds are at risk from global warming, and 126 are classified as climate endangered. This assessment addresses climate suitability, habitat, sea level rise, migration, predation, and competition.

The National Audubon Society encourages its members to take steps to address the climate change threat in their backyards, in their communities, in the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) near their homes, and in the State Houses. Those of us concerned about global warming can become better educated on the subject and lend our support to conservation and advocacy initiatives.

As Rachel Carson said, "*Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we will say our work is finished.*"

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Welcome Erin Shaw! PVAS is very fortunate to have Erin Shaw joining the PVAS team as our new VISTA volunteer. Erin started on February 20th with VISTA training in North Carolina, and began her service with PVAS on February 24th. She will be helping PVAS build its capacity to serve youth in West Virginia by helping with fundraising events, grants, volunteer recruitment and retention, membership services, and other areas.

Erin graduated from Shepherd University in 2014, with a Bachelors in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Historic Preservation. She has been a seasonal park ranger at both Fort Frederick and Gambrill State Parks, and interned for the National Park Service at Glen Echo, MD, and at the Archives at the National Conservation Training Center.

She is interested in learning about how non-profit organizations work – and we're happy to give her the hands-on experience! She'll be working out of our new office at the Cool Spring Preserve to help keep the facility open on a more regular basis as well.

We're looking forward to introducing you to her at upcoming events and programs! We know you'll make her feel very welcome, and we know she'll be impressed by our dedicated members and volunteers.



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

Purple Finch, *Haemorhous purpureus*

By Wil Hershberger

One of our most handsome feeder visitors is the Purple Finch. Males are bedecked in shades of raspberry, browns, and cream – females, and young birds of both sexes, in browns and cream. Though a year-round resident in our area, there are periods when migrants come through, descending on feeding stations in far greater numbers than at other times of the year. One of these periods is just around the corner – late March through late May. Migrating Purple Finch numbers peak around the second and third week of April and your backyard could be festooned with these gorgeous birds feasting on black-oil sunflower seeds.



Amazingly, Purple Finches have not been well studied. Once a nest site is selected by the pair, usually in a conifer, the female appears to be the predominate builder of the nest. She completes the nest in about a week and begins laying 2-7 pale greenish-blue eggs that are spotted and blotched with browns and blacks near the large end of the egg. The eggs hatch in about 13 days after the last egg is laid. The young are altricial: dependent on the parents for warmth, protection, and food for several days. The young fledge at about two weeks after hatching, and look very much like females – feathered in shades of browns and cream.



As noted above, young birds cannot be reliably separated as males or females. Most males develop the raspberry coloration in their third year. If you are really close to brown-plumaged birds in June through September, look at the color of the flesh at the corner of their bills (this is called the gape). If the flesh is reddish or orange, it is probably a male. Female gapes are more yellowish or yellowish-orange.

Male Purple finches sing exuberant, warbling songs with rich tonal quality and a pleasing pitch. (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/110235>) This male is singing rapidly and with wonderful buzzy glides on a spring evening close to sunset in the Adirondacks of New York state. You can hear some imitations of other birds within some of the song phrases.

Here is a female Purple Finch recorded singing near Ithaca, New York by my friend Bob McGuire (<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/199027>). You can also hear that she is imitating other birds, particularly an American Robin at 11 seconds. Next, this amazing recording, by my friend Martha Fischer, of a male Purple Finch, singing in Hammond Hill State Forest near Ithaca, NY, is full of mimicry (<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/54827>). This male is giving notes similar to those given by Northern Cardinal, American Robin, American Goldfinch, Northern Flicker, Eastern Towhee, Tufted Titmouse, Cedar Waxwing, and Barn Swallow. No one is quite certain why these birds would go to such lengths to mimic so many other species, some of which they would not normally be interacting with for food or nesting sites.

You can attract Purple Finches to your backyard by feeding black-oil sunflower seeds in a tube feeder, or better yet, a tray feeder. There are interesting behaviors to watch for at the feeder. Brown-plumaged birds are more often successful at displacing purple males. Perhaps females have more social status and so anything that appears to be a female gets priority. There appears to be a few levels of aggression between similarly plumaged birds. First is a horizontal posture with the neck extended and the bill pointed at the victim. This is a low aggression display. Second there is the head held high display where the aggressor holds its head high with neck extended toward the victim. This is more aggressive. Last is the bill display where the aggressor extends its body as high as possible with its bill pointed at the victim – this often leads to pecking of the victim. This is the most aggressive.

With a little planning and few appropriate feeders, you too could enjoy the visual beauty and the interesting displays of Purple Finches in your backyard. If you're lucky, you'll get to hear some of their lovely songs as well.

Male Purple Finches (above), and female Purple Finch (left). Photos © Wil Hershberger

PVAS Events

March 8 Program Will Focus on Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Our monthly program for February will feature a presentation entitled “Naughty, Naughty Monkeys: Human-Wildlife Conflict in Indonesia and Beyond.” The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 8 at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome to attend. The speaker will be Alison Zak, PVAS AmeriCorps volunteer, who recently studied the conflict between crop-raiding monkeys and farmers in Sulawesi, Indonesia, as part of her studies for a Master’s degree in Anthropology. Her presentation will include an overview of the problem of human-wildlife conflicts, photographs from her research, and insights from interviews conducted during her fieldwork.

The issue of human-wildlife conflict is complicated. Many human and wildlife populations live in increasingly overlapping habitats and may even compete for resources such as food. Certain species of primates and other wildlife share urban and agricultural spaces with people, creating conflict that is a concern for both human well-being and wildlife conservation. What if these “pests” are also endangered species? How is such conflict studied from both cultural and ecological perspectives?

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.

Tree-ID Field Trip Set for March 4

PVAS will offer a winter tree-identification field trip at the Antietam National Battlefield’s Snavely Ford Trail on Saturday, March 4. Larry Stritch, a retired U.S. Forest Service botanist, 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 Battlefield’s Burnside Bridge parking area. The trip will last about two hours, and involve about two miles of walking over moderately even ground.

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

Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website. For more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

If there has been a major snow the day before or the weather is especially inclement on the day of the trip, it will be rescheduled. Those who participate should be sure to dress warmly and wear sturdy footwear.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met...Susan Fluharty?

You really should because you will come away from the meeting knowing all about the importance of butterflies (and possibly something tasty, too!). Susan is a Master Naturalist who became interested in nature after a lifetime of being focused on the home arts. She discovered birds on a bird walk to Altona Marsh, then became a Master Naturalist, then became a regular volunteer at Audubon Discovery Camp, and then discovered Monarch butterflies!

Susan raises them from egg-to-caterpillar-to-chrysalis-to-adult, then tags them, and sends them on their way to Mexico each fall. Susan often used butterfly activities (and other nature activities) while she was a substitute teacher in Berkeley County schools. Since retiring she still volunteers with some special, school, nature field-days so that she can spread the word about the need to provide habitat for the Monarch.

But that’s not all! Susan is also a wonderful cook and has provided specially designed and decorated cookies for our Spring Egg Hunt and several fund raising events. Her sour cherry pies are always in demand at the PVAS Annual Meeting and sometimes, even show up in the Master Naturalist scholarship fund silent auction (where the bidding is very competitive)! She, and her husband, Scott, live in Berkeley County and spend a great deal of time working on the certified butterfly habitat and raising heirloom vegetables in their backyard. We know all our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone we should highlight, contact Bridget Tinsley (Bridget@PotomacAudubon.org).



PVAS Events

Vernal Pool Workshop Set for March 11

PVAS will offer a one-day workshop on vernal pools on Saturday, March 11.

The workshop will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon. It will begin with a classroom session in the Fish Health Laboratory building of the US Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center and include a visit to a vernal pool in the area. Workshop instructors will be local Master Naturalist Clark Dixon and Kevin Oxenrider, a wildlife biologist with the WV Division of Natural Resources.

The workshop is intended primarily for Master Naturalists but it is open to anyone with an interest on a space-available basis. Space is limited to 20 people, and pre-registration and a fee is required. The fee is \$20 for PVAS members and \$25 for the general public. Register on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Vernal Pools, which are quite common in this area, are small, seasonal bodies of water that provide valuable reproductive habitat for many creatures, including frogs and salamanders. Typically, they are at their peak size and depth in the spring, and then dwindle greatly or disappear entirely during hot weather.

The workshop will focus on a need for citizen involvement in monitoring of vernal pools in West Virginia. Oxenrider is engaged in a WVDNR pilot project intended to assess the extent of amphibian diseases throughout the state. He will outline the project's goals, needs, and methods, which include developing a statewide database of ponds and other wetland areas that have breeding populations of spotted salamanders and wood frogs. This monitoring effort will rely heavily on Master Naturalists and other citizens to cover local areas, so this is a good opportunity to become involved in a meaningful citizen science project.

The Fish Health Laboratory building is located at 407 Reservoir Road, just off Leetown Road in Leetown. To search for it on Internet mapping sites, enter "407 Reservoir Road, Kearneysville, WV."

This workshop is part of PVAS's "Natural History Workshop" series. These sessions are 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 our Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program. That program can take a year or more to complete.

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

Tree Pruning Workshop Set for March 25

PVAS is sponsoring a Natural History Workshop on structural tree pruning on Saturday, March 25. The workshop will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Society's new Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County. Shawn Walker, a local certified arborist, will lead the program. It is intended primarily for Master Naturalists, but open to anyone with an interest.

Space will be limited to 15 people, and pre-registration is required. To register and get directions, go to the PVAS website. There is a fee of \$20 for PVAS members and \$25 for nonmembers.

The workshop will cover the essentials of tree pruning, with an emphasis on pruning of small and young trees for structural integrity and health. Participants will review different trees on the Cool Spring property and discuss possible pruning approaches one might take. Then they will apply the concepts they have learned by pruning those trees.

Ladders will be available, but most of the work should be possible with both feet on the ground. Most of the necessary tools will be provided. Participants should wear sturdy closed-toes shoes and bring work gloves, eye protection and any pruning tools they may have. They should also bring drinking water and a bag lunch.

The workshop is part of a series of Natural History Workshops on different natural history topics the Society is sponsoring in 2017. Its workshops are intended for people who are interested in learning about specific 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.

The Cool Spring Preserve is located at 1469 Lloyd Road, about six miles southwest of Charles Town.

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



Family and Youth Programs

Spring Overview of Library Programs

PVAS plans to host a youth program at the Shepherdstown Public Library for homeschool students (ages 8-12) on Monday March 20, 2017 from 11:00 am-12:30 pm. AmeriCorps volunteer, Alison Zak, will teach the highlights of the 4th grade watershed curriculum.

The program will involve hands-on exploration of the following topics: what is a watershed, run-off & erosion, and water quality. A portion of the program will occur at the Town Run where we will test the water and see if students' boats, made out of natural materials, are able to float! Registration will be required for this event.

Other upcoming library events for the spring include the weeklong (April 17-21) spring break series called 'Passport to Nature' in which we will travel around the world through stories! Each library program, at rotating locations throughout Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, will include a nature-themed read-aloud and a craft from a different part of the world.

Kids will receive a 'nature passport' and earn a new stamp at each program they attend. These events will be free and open to the public for ages 4 and up. Check the PVAS website and Facebook page for more details about this event and future

Spring Overview of Non-Watershed School Programs

This month, a total of 14 classes (Pre-K through 2nd grade) at Wee Disciples, Back Creek Valley Elementary, Ranson Elementary, and St. Joseph School have enjoyed PVAS school programs focused on our feathered friends.

Students have learned about what birds are (and what they are not!), flight, avian anatomy and adaptations, and diet through the creation of "Momma Nature's Pizzas" complete with edible bird food toppings (seeds, goldfish, and even gummy worms).

Classes also discussed how domestic cats prey on birds, after which students attempted to sneak around while wearing bells!

Wee Naturalists Are Branching Out!

Our monthly Wee Naturalist program for preschoolers and a caring adult will be held at both Cool Spring and Yankauer Nature Preserves in the coming months.

In March, the program will be at Cool Spring and we'll be listening to sounds in nature as we hike in the woods. By April, when the weather is more predictable, the program will return to Yankauer and feature an egg hunt with eggs painted to resemble wild bird eggs. May's program will focus on wildflowers, and Yankauer is the perfect setting for this. This popular program will continue through the summer months, but we hope to be able to bring the program to Martinsburg so that those who cannot travel easily can still enjoy the program. Details on that will be coming soon. In the meantime, if you'd like more information on the Wee Naturalist program, contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org)

Spring Overview of Watershed Programs

The PVAS Watershed program is being taught in 9 schools (52 classes) this spring. Four instructors continue to teach in Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan County.

Schools participating in the full-year program are learning about benthic macroinvertebrates over the course of two lessons. Students learn about how animals are classified based on certain characteristics, how to identify macroinvertebrates using a dichotomous key, and how the critters help us determine water quality.

Schools participating in the half-year program are learning about the definition of a watershed (not an easy concept!), and exploring maps to determine the 'watershed' addresses for their school locations. Students and teachers sing and dance to the following song (sung to the tune of 'She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain') to memorize the stages of the water cycle:

*Water travels in a cycle, yes it does.
Water travels in a cycle, yes it does.
It goes up as evaporation,
Forms in clouds as condensation,
It falls down as precipitation, yes it does.*

*Water travels in a cycle, yes it does.
Water travels in a cycle, yes it does.
Into the ground as percolation,
It runs off in a splash sensation,
Water travels in a cycle, yes it does- yeehaw!*

MLK Day Library Program

PVAS hosted a library program on MLK day (January 16) that was quite a hit! AmeriCorps volunteer, Alison Zak led seventeen children on a story-yoga adventure about a compassionate monkey queen! Some kids even brought their own yoga mats to the event and were already familiar with the nature-inspired yoga poses. After stretching out bodies and minds, participants decorated monkey masks to take home. In case you were wondering why the streets of Shepherdstown were filled with colorful monkeys on MLK day...

Camp Programs

Camp Scholarships Available!

There's still time to apply for camp scholarships, but don't delay! Applications must be post-marked by Wednesday, **April 5, 2017**. Camps, locations, ages, and dates are listed below. The PVAS web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, has more information, including links to camp web pages with great photos and other exciting details.

Audubon Discovery Day Camp: PVAS' own local day camp; pre-school to grade 12 plus junior staff opportunities for grade 7 and older; a variety of week-long sessions in *June and July 2017*. Check PVAS web site.

Junior Nature Camp, Oglebay Institute: at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; *July 16-22, or July 23-29, 2017*.

Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies: at Capon Bridge, WV; ages 11-15; *June 25-July 8; July 11-25; or August 2-15, 2017*.

West Virginia Junior Conservation Camp: at Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV; ages 11-14; *June 19-23, 2017*.

Mountain Stewards Summer Camp, MIDDLE SCHOOL Program, Spruce Knob, WV; entering grades 6-8; *June 11-15, June 18-23, July 2-7, and July 9-15, 2017. (Camp weeks vary in length.)*

Mountain Stewards Summer Camp, HIGH SCHOOL Program, Spruce Knob, WV; grades 9-12 (up to age 17); *June 11-17, June 18-23, June 25 - July 1, July 2-7, and July 9-15, 2017. (Camp weeks vary in length.)*

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 12 - 17, 2017*.

Nature Photography Camp: offered by PVAS at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); *June 19-23, 2017*.

Get scholarship forms at the **PVAS web site**, www.potomacaudubon.org. You may also contact scholarship coordinator Kathryn Henry at 304-876-6681, or dhenry@myexcel.com.

PVAS offers camp scholarships for eligible persons throughout our membership area – the WV Eastern Panhandle and Washington County, Maryland. Scholarships are supported by the PVAS fall birdseed sale, as well as other donors and community sources. We thank these generous supporters!

Sponsor a Kid at Camp!

If you (or your child) grew up playing outside or even going to camp, you know how much fun it can be as well as being important to healthy development. Going to camp can help improve critical thinking and problem solving, it can expand a child's awareness of how their actions affect the world around them, and help them develop a new sense of responsibility to all communities. Most importantly, it helps children use all five senses and explore the natural world with mind and body!

Not everyone can afford a week at our day camp or more expensive sleep-away camps. That's where you can come in! Each year, PVAS provides financial assistance to families that value the camp experience, but circumstances make it hard for them to participate. Our fall birdseed sale, and some donations from local community groups and garden clubs, helps, but we want every child to have a week at camp. Can you help?

A donation of \$50 will help, a donation of \$100 will help more, and a donation of \$150 will sponsor a child for an entire week of Audubon Discovery Camp! If you are feeling even more generous, you can help a camper attend a resident (sleep-away) nature camp at the Schrader Environmental Center (Wheeling), Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies (Capon Bridge), or a WV Conservation Camp (Webster County).

Donations can be sent to Scholarship Donations, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown WV 25443. Our camp scholarship committee will make sure your funds are well used to send a kid to camp!

Birding News and Events

March 4 Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve

PVAS will sponsor a winter bird walk at the new Cool Spring Nature Preserve in Jefferson County on Saturday, March 4. The walk will begin at 7:30 a.m. and last two to three hours. It will be free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills.

Pre-registration is recommended but not required. Easy pre-registration is available on the PVAS website.

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

The Cool Spring Preserve is located at 1469 Lloyd Road, about six miles southwest of Charles Town. Detailed directions can be found at www.potomacaudubon.org.

For more information, contact the walk leader, Lynn Wiseman, at 304-676-2725.

March 29 Bird Walk at Harpers Ferry

PVAS will sponsor an early spring bird walk in the Virginius Island section of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on Wednesday, March 29. There is no fee, and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are also welcome. Pre-registration is recommended, but not required. To register, go to the PVAS website.

The walk will last about 3 hours and involve about 2 miles of level walking along level ground, including some railroad tracks. Species likely to be sighted include raptors, waterfowl, and early migrants.

Participants should plan to meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the intersection of Shenandoah Street and Route 340. Everyone should bring water and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions. The Society will provide binoculars for those who do not have their own. For more information, contact walk leader Deb Hale at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-1528.

Join Jim Farley for March 20 Shannondale Springs Bird Walk

PVAS will sponsor an early spring bird walk at the Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area, on the east bank of the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County, on Monday, March 20.

The trip is free, and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are also welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged, but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website. Participants should plan to meet at 8:00 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, and 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. For more info, contact Jim Farley at jamesfarley@frontiernet.net or 540-686-2056.

Don't Forget April 8 "Race for the Birds"

Here's a reminder that our 16th annual "This Race is for the Birds!" event will be held on Saturday, April 8. It will be held at the same location as last year: 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 used to be held. The Center is no longer able to host the event.

This year's 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 5 and 10K races will follow non-technical cross-country trails through the farm's scenic fields, rolling hills and woods. The course will be suitable for all runners. The 5 and 10K races will begin at 9:00 a.m. The children's Fun Run, which will be free, will be held at about 10:45 a.m. The fees for the 5K and 10K races will be \$25 and \$30, respectively, for those who pre-register before March 25. Same-day registration will be \$5 more for both distances.

Registration for the 5K and 10K races will be capped at 400 for both, so same-day registration may not be available. To register, and for more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. Or contact Nan Johnson at 304-870-4414 or race4birds@potomacaudubon.org. All proceeds will be used to support our programs for children, and all fees will be tax deductible.

Birding News and Events

Family Owl Prowl

A magical evening was experienced by the eleven families that joined PVAS for its Family Owl Prowl on February 19th, at our new Cool Spring Preserve. The evening began with activities for the children in the downstairs classroom, including books about owls, and stuffed animal owls. Families covered their flashlights with red cellophane to preserve their night vision before the hike.

Ellen Murphy read *Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen, to the families on the back porch in the unseasonably warm evening. Ironically, we scheduled this program in February in hopes to recreate the story of *Owl Moon* that tells of a young girl who goes out owling with her father on a cold winter evening, tromping through the snow. Little did we know what a balmy February we had in store! Next, Bob Dean told the group about the various owls we have in the area, and some of the unique adaptations owls utilize to make themselves the amazing nocturnal hunters they are. Their incredible hearing and silent wings make them quite adept hunters even in the darkest conditions. After a quick tutorial on owl calls, the group went off along the Studio Loop calling screech owls along the riparian zone. When there was no response, the group ascended the hill into the forest.

The group stopped to allow Bob to call a barred owl, and a great horned AND barred owl responded. After a few minutes of calling, a dark shadow – a barred owl – was seen approaching the group in the treetops, curious as to who or what was in its forest. With more coaxing calls from Bob, the barred owl gave a wonderful concert of various calls and chortles to the great enjoyment of the silent group huddled below. There were lots of small children in the group, but every one was silent and entranced by the sighting. Twice the owl perched a little closer, and finally, curiosity satisfied perhaps, flew off in search of something more edible. The magic of the book, *Owl Moon*, was realized after all.

The group exited the woods to find Clark Dixon stewarding a campfire and cooking peach cobbler in the hot coals, and marshmallows ready to roast over the fire. All who came enjoyed this special, unexpected treat as the grand finale to the magical evening. A special thanks to Bob Dean, Clark Dixon, and Ellen Murphy for making the evening such an enjoyable experience for all who came.

Prepare for Birdathon in May

Sign up now for this year's Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon! A few changes are afoot to make the 24-hour birding marathon more accessible to participants. This year you can choose any 24-hour period within the month of May! In addition, you may bird ANYWHERE! Not just in the PVAS service area. We hope this will encourage folks to get out and about to favorite birding hotspots – no matter where they are. We're hoping this will help participants log more birds than ever.

The Birdathon event is an easy and inclusive citizen science effort that also helps fundraise for PVAS. Similar to a walkathon, bird watchers raise money by collection donations for the number of species they count (or you can give a flat rate). Proceeds from this year's birdathon will help support the "Raise the Roost" Chimney Swift Tower Project. Annual birdathon observations are also critical for collecting data about migratory birds, and contribute to ebird.org, an online database used by researchers to track ornithological migration and population trends.

The Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon will follow the April Birding 101 courses. Birdathon participants can form their own teams, join an existing team, or fly solo. We're happy to help you find a team if you want to partner up with experienced birders.

Birders from all experience levels will have ample opportunities to scout locations, as PVAS will be hosting over nine different guided birding excursions throughout May. The grand finale will be a combined field trip with Mountaineer Audubon from Morgantown to visit Cranesville Swamp Preserve and Cooper's Rock State Forest on May 27, 2017. Visit potomacaudubon.org to learn more and register your team.

"Birding 101" Course Is Full For Now

This year's "Birding 101" course, which begins April 6, is currently full and a waitlist is being taken. The course, now in its 32nd year, is always very popular. This year's classes will be taught by two leading local bird experts: Wil Hershberger and Lynne Wiseman.

It will include Thursday evening classroom sessions held at the National Conservation Training Center on April 6, 13, 20 and 27, and Saturday morning field trips to various locations in the area on April 8, 15, 22 and 29. Tuition for the full course package of classroom sessions and field trips is \$90 for PVAS members and \$110 for nonmembers.

Full details and waitlist instructions are available on the PVAS website. You may also contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Conservation

Chimney Swift Roost Plans Underway

The “Raise the Roost” Project got a boost of support last month when Harpers Ferry Job Corps agreed to help with the construction of the Chimney Swift Roost tower on Shepherd University campus. Job Corps is a free education and training program that provides all-around skills for young people to begin their careers. The construction of the Chimney Swift Tower will include excavation, laying a concrete foundation, and performing masonry work to build the large brick roost. Currently, engineers are working to complete a site assessment and finalize the tower design details. Once the engineering plans are approved, material purchasing and construction date confirmation will begin.

PVAS is proud to partner with Harpers Ferry Job Corps, in addition to Shepherd University, WV Dept. of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To stay updated, or to make a donation please visit: www.potomacaudubon.org/chimneyswifts.

For the Love of Pollinators

Visitors to Yankauer Nature Preserve may notice some changes this Spring. As we continue to finalize the restroom and water installation project, we are also adding a pollinator waystation to the front entrance.

This project was initiated by local horticulturist and landscaper James Dillon, owner of Native Havens LLC. James gave an informative presentation about functional garden design February 8 during the PVAS monthly program. His presentation was the opening component of our Yankauer pollinator waystation project. James will be collaborating with a group of volunteers to develop, install, and care for the pollinator waystation. This effort will be a hands-on learning experience for those involved, and will be a welcome addition to Yankauer.

Ecological Resiliency in Urban Landscapes

More than ever before, native plants are a topic of interest among conservations and naturalists alike. Native plants support a balanced ecosystem by providing food, shelter, and biodiversity. In an era of unprecedented challenges including habitat fragmentation, contaminated resources, and climate change, native flora and fauna maintain an important role in ecological resiliency. Using native plants to create pollinator waystations can go a long way to mitigating many threats to pollinators.

Often a flower’s nectar and pollen are of primary interests to gardeners, but beyond the blossom, plants host other important pollinator food sources including aphids, caterpillars, mites, and beetles. These creatures, though often disregarded as an unwanted nuisance, are crucial high-calorie food sources for nesting birds and bats. By creating space in your yard for native plants you will be helping to promote native pollinators in the panhandle.

PVAS is holding the second annual native plant sale in Shepherdstown on May 20, 2017 from 9am to 4pm. The event includes native plant vendors, educational groups, horticulturalists, beekeepers, natural resource restoration experts, and more. PVAS will be selling butterfly weed and swamp milkweed at the event through a partnership with The Monarch Alliance of Washington County.

Many native plant vendors have already confirmed, and we are still accepting vendor applications. Anyone with an invested interest in pollinators and native flora is invited to join the native plant sale.

For more information, or to be a vendor please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

Annual Appeal closes March 31!

Donate now at www.potomacaudubon.org/support

or send a check to PO Box 578, Shepherdstown WV 25443

Any contribution amount is gratefully accepted and is tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!

Notes from the Preserves

March Madness at the Nature Preserves

Spring is around the corner and for PVAS the season is a particularly eventful one!

Many enjoy “March Madness” college basketball tournaments, but PVAS members head to the great outdoors instead. Our nature preserves will be hosting many events this Spring including three volunteer events in March. If you are looking for an excuse to visit our Nature Preserves and spend time outside, please join us! Master Naturalists will receive volunteer hours credit for their participation.

March 3rd, at Yankauer from 9am-12pm, we will be working to remove climbing invasive plants and clear the hiking trails of debris. The preserve is located across from 455 Whiting’s Neck Rd., Martinsburg, WV.

March 5th, at Eidolon Nature Preserve from 10am-2pm we will be removing dead trees and clearing trails. Lunch will be provided for volunteers, as we will be grilling near the Zapolean Cabin. Please confirm your attendance by writing bridget@potomacaudubon.org. The preserve is located at 2146 Orleans Rd., Great Cacapon, WV.

March 11, at Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve from 9am-12pm, we will be doing site preparation in the meadow. This work is a preliminary step toward pollinator habitat restoration work we are completing on the 3.5-acre field. Volunteers will be building brush piles, removing invasive plants, and clearing vines from the fence line. This work is expected to be very strenuous. The preserve is located across from 4069 Back Creek Valley Rd., Hedgesville, WV.

Cool Spring Cottage Restoration Report

Amy Moore, Cool Spring Preserve’s Site Manager and our Director of Audubon Discovery Camp, will move into Mrs. Thornton’s Cottage this month.

After several months of volunteers working tirelessly on the cottage, it is nearly ready to inhabit. Following an initial inspection of the cottage, we replaced the cabinets and sink in the kitchen, replaced light fixtures, a window and toilet (!), removed wallpaper, had the septic tank pumped and the electric brought up to code, painted walls and floors, and the wood floors will be refinished early March. There is still a lot to do on the exterior, but the interior is looking very cozy! And the furniture that some of you have donated has helped the cause significantly. Thank you!

These improvements would not have been possible without the incredibly talented and dedicated volunteers who made it all happen: Gretchen Meadows, Mike Wiltshire, Don Campbell, Mike Sullivan, Bill Gentry, Kevin Moore, and Christian Thomas. I believe Gretchen Meadows and Mike Wiltshire win the award for “most hours,” and they both were excellent at communicating the progress as things came together. From special trips to Leesburg’s Re-store for Kitchen Cabinets, to multiple trips to home improvement stores, it was a “dream team” to whom PVAS will be grateful for years!

Thank you for helping Amy have a lovely home where she can live on-site, and be able to keep an eye on our new preserve.



Volunteers Needed for March 11 Stauffer’s Marsh Work Day

PVAS is looking for volunteers to help with improvements at the Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Saturday, March 11. The day will be the preliminary work to convert a large open field to a pollinator meadow. Specific tasks for the March 11 maintenance day will include cutting and limbing locust trees, building brush piles, and creating a firebreak around the perimeter of the field. The work is expected to be strenuous, and some refreshments will be provided.

The work will start at 9:00 a.m. and last until 12 noon. All necessary tools will be provided, along with water refills and first aid.

The Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve is located across from 4069 Back Creek Valley Rd., Hedgesville, WV in Berkeley County. It is one-half mile south of Shanghai, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7). Detailed directions can be found on the PVAS website.

For more information, contact Bridget Tinsley at 304-261-6016 or bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

PVMN

Leave No Trace Trainer Course

A Leave No Trace Theme for 2017: “The Outdoors is Yours. Leave No Trace to Protect it.” Potomac Valley Audubon Society will offer a two day overnight Leave No Trace Course (LNT) on October 20-21, 2017.

This course is designed to enhance your understanding of LNT practices and ethics, and to increase our level of expertise and confidence in teaching Leave No Trace skills to others. Through focused activities, hands-on field experience, and both formal and informal discussions, you will be introduced to concepts and methods that will increase your knowledge of LNT issues.

The Trainer Course provides fun activities where all participants have a part in demonstrating the choices that can be made to minimize our impact on the landscape. All outdoor activities for this overnight camping experience will be held at a location to be determined. This overnight course will not involve backpacking nor strenuous activity. Minimal short distance hiking will be involved.

Upon completion of this course participants will be registered and certified with the national Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics as Leave No Trace Trainers. Pre-registration is required. Registrants must be 18 or older; cost is \$45 PVAS members; \$65 non-members. Additional information will be provided to course participants at a later date. Class size is limited to 10 participants. Register early as this course is expected to fill up fast.

Spring Gathering

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists will celebrate spring with our Annual Spring Gathering at Cacapon Resort State Park on Sunday, April 29, 2017. This event has proven to be a time for fun and for learning. In addition to various Naturalist History electives to be offered, there will be Aldo Leopold activities to include making Leopold Benches, reading from A Sand County Almanac, and Dutch oven cooking. As in the past, participants are asked to bring a covered dish for the mid-day meal. More details to follow.

Did You Know...?

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists celebrated ten years in 2016 as a West Virginia Master Naturalist Program chapter. Tenth Anniversary pins are still available for purchase. Contact any PVMN Coordinating Committee member.

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: ____.

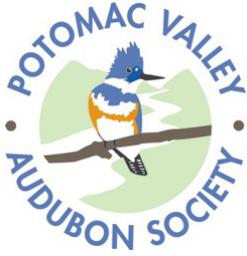
Clip and mail this form to:

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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March 2017

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

PVAS BOARD

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

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

- President: Michael Sullivan (2018) msullivanwv@gmail.com
- Vice President (*acting*): Jane Vanderhook (2017)..... janehook@frontiernet.net
- Secretary: Diana Gaviria (2018) jpikester@comcast.net
- Treasurer: Dan Cogswell (2017) daniel.cogswell@gmail.com
- Board Members-at-Large:
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 - Amy Evrard(2017) amyyoung4@gmail.com
- Emerita Board Member:** Jean Neely jeaneely@comcast.net

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