

VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society

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May 2009



Don't Forget "Race for the Birds!"

Here's a reminder that we'll hold our eighth annual "This Race is for the Birds!" on Saturday, May 2, on the campus of the National Conservation

Training Center.

The event is a major fundraiser for PVAS: all proceeds are used to support our educational programs for children.

It will be held rain or shine, and will feature a 5-kilometer run sanctioned by the Shenandoah Valley Runners Club.

Families and those who prefer a slower pace can also participate by walking the same

See *Race*, Page 2

Summer Camp Waiting Lists Available

Camp registrations for our 2009 Audubon Discovery Camp at Yankauer Preserve filled up in less than 4 weeks! The only spots left, at this writing, are in the preschool sessions in early June. Nevertheless, waiting lists are being taken for all sessions and it is worth being on a list since plans sometimes change and spots open. To register for a waiting list, you should go through the registration process online at www.potomacaudubon.org, completing the family name and camper information. Be sure to include the session and dates for your preferred sessions under the "comments" section at the end of the registration form. Credit Card information is not required for campers on the waiting list. If a spot opens, we will contact campers in the order that they registered on the waiting list.

June Reception at Belle Vue to Benefit PVAS!

Mike and Gay Shepherd Henderson have very graciously agreed to host a fundraising reception for PVAS at their beautiful home, the historic Belle Vue mansion just outside Shepherdstown, the evening of Saturday, June 6.

All proceeds from the event will be used to support our education programs for local children.

See *June Reception*, Page 4

Annual Appeal Raised A Record High \$28,521!

Our latest annual fundraising appeal, which began December 1 and concluded March 31, raised a total of \$28,521.

This is \$1,166, or 6.2 percent, more than we raised over the 2007-2008 winter and represents a new record high.

The number of donors hit a new high, too: 149 families and individuals contributed, up from 130 the year before.

This was a great outcome given the concerns about the economy throughout the appeal period, and it will help us weather this difficult period. It's gratifying to know we have such a loyal base of support in the community.

Overall the average contribution to this year's appeal was \$191.41.

Eighty-eight of this year's contributions, or about 59 percent, were for \$100 or more; of these, 25 were for \$250 or more and nine were for \$1,000 or more.

A full list of all those who contributed is included in this newsletter.

Thanks again to all of you who have been so generous to PVAS. We appreciate your help, and you can count on us to put your contributions to good use!

May 13 Annual Meeting and Program

Our May program at the National Conservation Training Center will include a presentation by Grant Smith, the President of the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, and our annual business meeting.

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. in Room 151 of the Instructional West Building.

The annual business meeting will come first; the main item of business will be the election of board members.

Election of Board Members

There are thirteen board positions called for in the PVAS bylaws. Four of the positions are officers with the remainder serving as at-large members. Election of board members is staggered so that approximately one-third of the seats are up for election each year. The term of office for all board members is three years with no more than two consecutive terms; however, a person that serves two consecutive terms and is elected as an officer may extend their board

See *May Meeting*, Page 3

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



Hello everyone:

Once again, spring has arrived (well, sort of—as this is being written in mid-April, today's predicted high temperature is only in the mid-forties).

In any case, PVAS has a lot going on, as it usually does this time of year. Here are some highlights:

- Our March 28 Green Homes Tour was a major success by any standard; the event was well attended and well covered by local media.
- Ditto for our second annual spring egg hunt at the Yankauer Nature Preserve.
- Our "Watershed Education Initiative" program for fourth grade school children will soon wrap up its sixth successful year.
- The Yankauer Preserve is once again busy with visits from school children enrolled in our programs for the other K-6 grades.
- We're gearing up for another Race for the Birds at the National Conservation Training Center on May 2, and for a fundraising reception at the beautiful Belle Vue mansion outside Shepherdstown on June 6.
- Our summer day camp at the Yankauer Nature Preserve continues to be one of the most popular things we do. This year, all the sessions except those for pre-schoolers were fully booked well before April 1.
- We're teaming up again with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to offer a digital nature photography camp for high schoolers at NCTC this July.
- Among our programs for adults, we've got some especially interesting field trips coming up, including a special, private tour of the National Zoo's Conservation and Research Center near Front Royal, VA.
- Among our land and facilities activities, a new parking lot is now under construction at the Eidolon Nature Preserve in Morgan County.

Thanks to the staff, interns, and many volunteers who have been pitching in to help make these and many other things happen.

Thanks, too, to the many families and individuals who also make our things happen by contributing to our annual appeal. The \$28,521 that you contributed this time was an exceptional result—particularly since the condition of the economy and the financial markets seemed downright scary for most of the appeal period. These funds will go a long way in helping us to sustain our programming. We really appreciate your support!

—Peter Smith

Birding 101 Full!

This year's Birding 101 course filled very quickly, and several folks were put on the waiting list! A perennial favorite for more than 20 years, the course combines class time, field trips, and stunning photos and sounds captured by Wil Hershberger. Along with Will, expert instruction comes from Bob Dean and Matt Orsie. We can't thank this group enough for volunteering their time, incredible knowledge, and skills to teach others the joy of birding.

Race (Continued from page 1)

course at their own speed.

This year's course will be the same as last year's, and will follow paved roads and walkways within the NCTC campus.

For experienced runners, this means the course offers a great opportunity for a personal best time. For beginners, it's an opportunity for a great first race experience.

The course is also very user-friendly for walking families—strollers will be appropriate and encouraged.

The race will begin at 9:00 a.m. The walk will begin immediately after the runners have cleared the starting area.

Following the completion of the run, at about 9:30 a.m., there will be a "Fun Run" for children less than 10 years of age, on a special short course set up just for them. All children will receive a ribbon and prize for participating.

All runners and walkers must register. Those who wish to pre-register can do so online at www.active.com or send a check payable to PVAS to Race for the Birds, c/o Diana Gaviria, 526 Appian Way, Martinsburg, WV 25403. Registration forms can be downloaded from the PVAS website, www.potomacaudubon.org. Runners and walkers may register the morning of the race as well.

The fee will be \$20 per person, which will include a free t-shirt while supplies last. The fee for children participating in the walk and/or Fun Run will be \$10.

PVAS members and members of Shenandoah Valley Runners receive a \$2 discount.

Full details can be found on the PVAS website, along with tips for getting in shape for this and other races.

Also, please remember that Shepherdstown Day Care is sponsoring a 5 K event of its own two weeks later, on May 16. It will start at 10:00 a.m. at the Shepherdstown Train Station. For details about that event go to www.shepherdstowndaycare.org.

Look for PVAS Booth at May 9 Boonsboro Green Fest

The town of Boonsboro, Maryland, will hold its First Annual Boonsboro Green Fest on Saturday, May 9. The festival will be held in Shafer Park, which is right next to the downtown, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Admission will be free.

Hosted by the Boonsboro Recycling Task Force, the festival is aimed at promoting conservation efforts and recycling and will feature a wide variety of vendors and exhibitors. Items offered for sale will include local organic farm products, heirloom plants, hand crafted soaps and personal care products and even rainwater collection systems.

Exhibitors will include firms that specialize in such areas as renewable energy systems and sustainable, low-impact landscape design, as well as PVAS and other conservation-minded organizations.

There will also be special children's activities and food concessions.

See the festival website at www.boonsborogreenfest.com for full details.

May Meeting (Continued from page 1)

membership/officer position by one additional term by unanimous decision of the board.

Peter Smith has served two consecutive terms on the board, the last of which he guided PVAS' activities as our President. There is virtually unanimous recognition of the outstanding service that Peter has provided and the exceptional guidance, leadership, and personal commitment of time and energy he has given to PVAS. He is our first president following the 2006 update of our constitution and bylaws, and PVAS has achieved an unprecedented level of growth and accomplishment as a result of his efforts. In recognition of the uncertain state of the national economy and with our momentum on the rise, the Board Development Committee has asked Peter to stand for re-election as president. If re-elected, Peter has indicated his willingness to continue as president for long enough to transition a new president into office and to do what he can to help assure PVAS' continued success. As noted above, his re-election will permit the board to allow Peter's continuance as PVAS president.

In addition, this year four board seats are up for election by the membership. All four seats are at-large positions that run for a three-year term. All of the candidates are currently members of the board. With the exception of Don Briggs, who was appointed by the board to fill the unexpired term of a departing board member, all candidates are running for re-election.

Slate of Candidates

Peter Smith, President (extension of term)

Peter retired as director of public affairs for the Association of American Universities in 2002, a post he held for 15 years. Previously he had worked as a journalist and served as press secretary to three different U.S. Senators. He joined the PVAS Board in 2004, and chaired the Board Development Committee that worked to restructure the organization. He is currently president of PVAS and chairs the Executive Committee. He has a longstanding interest in conservation issues and is a member of The Nature Conservancy. Locally, he has also served on the boards of the Friends of the Shepherdstown Library and the Shepherdstown Men's Club. He is a graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

Don Briggs, At-large

Don is the administrator of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail program. Based in Harpers Ferry, the program is a partnership between the National Park Service, the states of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia to develop a system of trails between the mouth of the Potomac and the Allegheny Highlands. Previously, Don managed technical assistance, special studies and planning projects for the National Park Service in the Mid-Atlantic States. He holds a B.S. in Natural Resources from Ohio State University and two masters from the University of Wyoming, one in American Studies and another in Community and Regional Planning. He has also held various volunteer positions, including chair of the Public Lands Committee of the Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning and President of the Shepherdstown Elementary Association. Don lives in Shepherdstown with his wife, Bonnie Sitman, and their children.

Wayne Braunstein, At-large (re-election)

Wayne has been a member of PVAS for 20 years. He is a past

editor of the chapter newsletter and previously served two terms on the Board of Directors in that capacity. He is currently chairperson of the Board Development Committee. He and his wife are supporters of many conservation projects and organizations, both national and regional in scope. He has a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Maryland, University College; a B.A. in Secondary Education from Shepherd University; and a M.S. in Computers in Education from Shenandoah University.

A. R. (Rob) Hoxton, At-Large (re-election)

Rob is president of Hoxton Financial, Inc., a financial planning firm with offices in Shepherdstown, Winchester, and Chambersburg. Prior to joining the firm, he worked with American International Group (AIG), a financial services provider in New York City. He is a graduate of North Carolina State University and of the Certified Financial Planning Professional Program of the College for Financial Planning in Denver Colorado.

Georgia Jeppesen, At-Large (re-election)

Georgia is employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center as an Education Specialist in the Division of Education Outreach. She has been a member of PVAS since moving to West Virginia in 1997/98. She served on the Yankauer Advisory committee in the past. She received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Utah in the biological sciences and a Master's from Florida State University in Science Education/Curriculum and Instruction.

Regular Program

Mr. Smith's presentation will focus on the Land Trust's efforts to safeguard Eastern Panhandle farmland, open space, scenic views, parkland and historic landscapes for future generations.

A private, non-profit, tax-exempt organization, the Trust was founded in 1994 and is governed by a volunteer board of local residents from Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan counties.

It uses a formula that has been successful all over the country, providing landowners flexible and creative legal methods to protect land. The primary method, a perpetual conservation easement, has potential income and estate tax benefits.

Mr. Smith has been a member of the organization's board since 2001, and has served as its President since 2005.

For more information about the Trust's activities go to its website at www.landtrustepwv.org.

For more information about the business meeting portion of the program contact Wayne Braunstein at 304-728-7181 or wbraun@frontiernet.net.

Master Naturalist Workshops

PVAS's Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is offering three Master Naturalist Workshops at Cacapon State Park during the months of May and June.

The workshops, which consist of three or more hours of expert instruction on a specific natural history topic, count as elective courses for individuals enrolled in the Master Naturalist Program.

However, the workshops are also open on a space-available basis to members of the general public who are interested in learning more about certain topics but do not want to commit to a full course of

Master Naturalist instruction.

Enrollment for each workshop will be limited to 20 persons.

Applications to enroll in any of the workshops should be submitted no later than two weeks before that workshop's date.

The cost for each workshop will be \$10 for Master Naturalist Program members and trainees and \$15 for members of the public.

Application forms and further information are available on the PVAS website. Or contact PVAS at 304-676-3397 or pvasmail@aol.com.

The specific dates and topics of the three workshops are as follows:

May 9: *Using the Global Positioning System* (1:00-5:00 p.m.). A comprehensive introduction to the history and use of GPS. Each participant will receive a copy of the book *GPS Made Easy: Using Global Positioning Systems in the Outdoors*.

May 23: *Save Our Streams* (9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.). A detailed review of the bioassessment approach to monitoring the health of local streams and rivers.

June 6: *Dragonflies* (9:00 a.m.-12 noon). Learn about the natural history of dragonflies in West Virginia, the characteristics of each dragonfly family, and dragonfly behavior.

Watershed Program Goes "Down to the River"

Fourth grade students from St. Joseph's Parish School, Shepherdstown Elementary School, and North Jefferson Elementary School spent a day in late March at the Izaak Walton League of Berkeley County, using the water quality testing skills they had practiced in their classroom. (Students from Ranson Elementary School had their visit rained out.) One hundred forty-five students tested the Potomac



River for pH, temperature, and dissolved oxygen, looked for macro-invertebrates in the water, performed a streambank assessment, and experimented with natural water filters. The Izaak Walton League, which has allowed the use of their property since the beginning of the program in 2003, is the perfect setting for the students because it allows students safe and accessible river access. This field trip is an important element in helping the fourth graders connect what they are learning in class with their larger environmental impact on the health of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

In Morgan County, the field trip for students at Warm Springs Intermediate School will focus on the Cacapon River and is scheduled on April 30. Volunteers from Berkeley and Jefferson Counties will be joined by members of the Cacapon Institute, but additional volunteers are welcome. Contact Ellen Murphy at pvasprograms@comcast.net or 304-676-8739 if you'd like to help.

June Reception (Continued from page 1)

Belle Vue is one of Jefferson County's most historic homes. Its first story was built in 1773 by Joseph Van Swearingen, a prominent figure in pre-revolutionary Virginia who had the distinction of having defeated George Washington for a seat in the House of Burgesses in 1757 (he later went on to serve as a high-ranking officer under Washington during the Revolutionary War).



The house remained in the Van Swearingen family through most of the 19th century and was enlarged by them during that period.

It has been owned by Shepherdstown's founding family, the Shepherds, since 1900.

It was designated a Jefferson County Historic Landmark in 1975 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The reception will be held from 4:00-7:00 p.m. If weather permits it will be held mostly outside, on the porch and lawn that offer sweeping views of the Potomac River and the Maryland mountains.

Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served, and musical entertainment will provide background.

Dress will be casual.

Tickets to the event will be required, and space will be limited. Ticket costs will be tax deductible.

Basic tickets are \$45 per person. Those who pay \$150 for two people will be recognized as Donors, those who pay \$200 for two will be recognized as Patrons, and those who pay \$250 or more for two will be recognized as Supporters.

To reserve tickets, call 304-676-3397 or e-mail PVASmail@aol.com and provide your name, address, and phone number.

Photo Camp for High Schoolers to be Offered Again This Year

Applications are now being accepted for an innovative nature photography day camp for area high school students.

Now in its fourth year, the camp is sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and PVAS.

It is based at the Service's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) outside Shepherdstown.

The week-long camp will be held July 6-10. It will include four days of field and lab training at NCTC and a one-day field trip to a nearby natural area.

Participating students not only learn about the fundamentals of

digital nature photography and image editing from expert instructors; they also gain a greater understanding of nature and a greater appreciation for the conservation ethic.

Enrollment is very limited, so those who participate receive very intensive, hands-on instruction. They also have full access to NCTC's state-of-the-art computer laboratory.

Digital SLR cameras are provided, courtesy of the Nikon Corporation. All other equipment will be provided as well.

The cost for the entire week is only \$115.

Participating students must be entering grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 in the fall of 2009 (or be of equivalent age) and they must reside in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia or Washington County, Maryland.

Application forms and instructions are available on the Potomac Valley Audubon Society website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

NCTC Training Specialist, Matt Poole, who is an expert nature photographer, leads the camp.

The camp has been so successful over its first three years the Fish and Wildlife Service is encouraging other Fish and Wildlife Service facilities and conservation education organizations around the nation to replicate it.

For more information contact Matt Poole at 304-876-7962 or matt_poole@fws.gov.

Sign Up Now for Nature Photography Workshop

PVAS is now accepting registrations for a nature photography workshop that will be held the weekend of June 5-7 at the National Conservation Training Center near Shepherdstown.

The workshop will be led by Wil Hershberger, one of the area's leading naturalists and nature photographers, and his wife, Donna.

It will be aimed at beginners and photographers with some experience.

The workshop will run from 6:30 p.m., Friday, June 5, to noon on Sunday, June 7.

It will cover all aspects of nature photography focusing on 35mm format equipment (film and digital), with classroom and field sessions. Topics of discussion will include light, composition, equipment, workflow, and finding suitable images.

Early registration is essential because the size of the workshop will be limited to 12 individuals; a waiting list will be maintained in case of a cancellation.

The cost to participate will be \$150 for the entire weekend. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

Full information and registration forms are available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. Or, contact Kristin Alexander by e-mail at PVASmail@aol.com or telephone at 304-676-3397.

Registration forms should be submitted with a \$25 deposit to PVAS, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

Wil and Donna Hershberger are founding members of Potomac Valley Nature Photographers and operate Nature Images and Sounds in Hedgesville, WV.

Wil is a former PVAS president, the former first vice-president of the Shenandoah Photographic Society, and a former moderator of the flora and macro forum at NatureScapes.net. He is also a member of the American Ornithologists Union, the Society of Field Ornithologists, the North American Nature Photographers Association, the Professional Photographers Association, and the North American PhotoShop Professionals.

His nature photographs have been published widely. Most recently, he is coauthor of "The Songs of Insects," a book and audio CD published in 2007 by Houghton-Mifflin Company.

Spring Egg Hunt Perfect Weather

Our second Spring Egg Hunt at the Yankauer Nature Preserve was held Sunday afternoon, April 5, with families and friends cheering on their favorite egg hunter. Over 30 children participated on a day that featured absolutely perfect weather! The event was declared "the best egg hunt ever" by at least one attendee. Eggs painted to resemble wild bird eggs were hidden along the Cedar Loop and children "attacked" from both ends of the trail. The collected eggs were traded in for cookies, lemonade, and a fabulous Egg Cake baked especially for the event. Two of the intrepid hunters found special prize winning eggs which were exchanged for a large chocolate covered, butter cream egg. Among the other activities offered during the event were spatter painting a picture of a nest, learning how an egg actually hatches, a special reading of *The Odd Egg*, and comparing an Ostrich egg (5" tall) with the extinct Elephant Bird egg (14" tall). The event received front page coverage in the April 6 Martinsburg *Journal*. Special thanks is given to the volunteers who made the event happen: Madeline Madison; Jackson Crouse; and Master Naturalists Debbie Crouse, Carol Wood, Tamra Monroe, Sherry Arnold, Paula Donohue, Susan Marklin, and Diana Mullis.



Wildflower Festival, April 18

This year's Wildflower Festival, held at the Yankauer Preserve for the fifth year, was graced with a beautiful day. An estimated 75 people attended the festival to enjoy wildflower walks and children's activities led by volunteers.

For the second year, the trail was lined with poetry about wildflowers, spring, and nature which was written by local poets including some Shepherd University students. The poetry aspect of the festival is proving to be a very popular addition. Many thanks to the many volunteers who made the festival possible, and to those who submitted poetry for the festival.



Joe Metzger guides a group

Sign Up Now for Special June 13 Tour of National Zoo's Front Royal Center

PVAS has arranged for a special private tour of the National Zoo's Conservation and Research Center near Front Royal, Virginia, on Saturday, June 13.

The tour will be held starting at 10:00 a.m. It will be guided by a trained docent and last at least 2 hours. Because of this tour's length, the Center does not recommend bringing children below the age of 12.

There will be a fee of \$10 per person, which will be collected by Center personnel before the tour begins.

Tour participants will be expected to arrange their own transportation to the Center, which is about an hour and a quarter's drive from the Charles Town area.

Once there, we will be ferried around the Center's expansive campus in 14-passenger vans. The center has only two of these, so the maximum capacity for our tour will be 28 people.

Right now, we have only made arrangements for one van. If we fill that up, we can arrange for a second van but we will have to do this by the end of May.

Therefore, if you'd like to join this tour please make a reservation as soon as you can (no later than May 25) by contacting our field trip coordinator, Sheri Fedorchak, at stelladog@hotmail.com or 304-876-8432.

Sheri can also provide you with directions.

This will be a great opportunity to see this world-renowned zoological research facility—which is not regularly open to the public—in an up-close and personal way.

The Center encompasses 3,200 acres in the Blue Ridge foothills. Its scientists are in the forefront of efforts to preserve threatened and endangered animal species, protect habitats, and restore species to the wild.

The facility houses between 30 and 40 endangered species at any given time, which can change from year to year depending on research needs and recommendations from the Zoo and the conservation community.

Species currently on hand include clouded leopards (one of whom recently made news by giving birth to two cubs) cheetas, South American maned wolves, red pandas, Mongolian wild horses, Chinese tufted deer, and a variety of birds.



Mongolian Wild Horses

Our tour group will have the opportunity to see several of these animals. We will also learn about endangered-species research being conducted at the Center, the National Zoo, and around the world.

To learn more about the center, visit its website at <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/CRC/FrontRoyal/>.

May 10 Nature Walk Will Focus on Rare Marsh Plant Life

PVAS will sponsor a nature walk on Sunday, May 10, at Cool Spring, an 81-acre preserve that is also the home of CraftWorks, an art and craft school for adults.

The walk will focus on Cool Spring Marsh, a marl marsh on the property that is West Virginia's first identified Shenandoah Valley Wet Prairie.

The marsh supports at least 18 species of rare West Virginia plants and a wide variety of animal life. It is sustained by Bullskin Run, which runs through the property.

Some of its plants are considered very rare, and one—the Vetchling peavine—has not been observed elsewhere in the state for more than 20 years.

The walk will be led by The Nature Conservancy's state Director, Rodney Bartgis, who is well versed in marsh habitats.

The walk will begin at 2:00 p.m. Anyone is welcome to participate, and there will be no fee.

The marsh is not normally open to the public, so this will be a unique opportunity to visit in the company of a recognized expert. Cool Spring is located at 1735 Lloyd Road, about 5 miles southwest of Charles Town.

Directions from Charles Town are as follows: Take Washington Street west to the west edge of town. When Route 51 branches off to the right (northwest) keep going straight onto the Summit Point Road (County Route 13). Follow that road for 3.9 miles, and turn left onto Lloyd Road. Follow Lloyd Road for 0.5 miles to the farm driveway on the right (look for a sign that says "CraftWorks"). Follow the driveway to the barn and park in the circular drive at the pond.

For further information, contact Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmitth@frontiernet.net.

Birding Walk Set at Eidolon for May 23

PVAS Vice President Nancy Kirschbaum will lead a birding walk at the Eidolon Nature Preserve in Morgan County on Saturday, May 23.

The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. and last until about 11:00 a.m.

This will be a good opportunity to explore this beautiful, 354-acre mountain property with a veteran birder who knows it well.

Bird species likely to be sighted include Cerulean Warblers, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Great Crested Flycatchers, and other spring migrants.

The walk group will be limited to no more than 15 people, and those who wish to participate must pre-register by contacting Nancy ahead of time at 304-876-6881 or nancyk500@comcast.net.

The Eidolon trails include some steep, rough sections so participants should be prepared for some relatively strenuous walking. Sturdy footwear will be essential and insect repellent is recommended.

The preserve is located about seven miles west of Berkeley Springs, on Orleans Road on Sideling Hill Mountain. Directions can be found on the PVAS website.

Learn About the Effort to Reintroduce American Chestnut Trees

On May 30, PVAS will sponsor a field trip to the American Hybrid Chestnut Tree Orchard and Reforestation Project in Frederick County, Maryland.

The Project site is located in the Thorpewood Nature Center in the Cactocin Mountains.

A collaboration between the American Chestnut Foundation, Hood College and other partners, it is one of a series of sites in the eastern U.S. aimed at helping scientists develop strains of hybrid American



Historical Photograph

chestnut trees that will be resistant to the blight that all but wiped out the species in the early 20th century.

Trip participants will see hybrid trees in various stages of development and learn about the hybridization effort.

The tour will begin at 10:30 a.m., and will be led by Robert Strasser, the research associate who manages it.

Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate. There will be no fee.

Directions from Frederick, Maryland, are as follows:

- Take Route 15 North to Thurmont. At Thurmont, take the second exit, for Route 77. The exit ramp is a very sharp curve and the deceleration lane is short, so take care here. At the stop sign turn Right onto Route 77 West, towards Hagerstown and Smithsburg.
- Stay on this windy, climbing road for approximately 2.9 miles, and just after Park Central Road on the right, turn left onto Catoctin Hollow Road. At this point, you are entering Cunningham Falls State Park (William Houck Area) and you will see the lake on your right through the trees.
- Continue on Catoctin Hollow Road approximately 2.8 miles, pass Wigville Road, and turn Right onto Mink Farm Road.
- Continue on Mink Farm Road past a “ThorpeWood Garden” sign on the left, to a lane marked “Stoney Lick Farm” on the right. Follow the lane straight to the large parking lot.

The American chestnut originally constituted about one-quarter of the hardwood-tree population over more than 200 million acres of eastern woodlands from Maine to Florida.

It was an important food source for wildlife, and rural communities depended upon the annual nut harvest as a cash crop to feed

livestock. In addition, the chestnut lumber industry was a major sector of rural economies.

The blight that destroyed the trees came from chestnut trees imported to the U.S. from Asia.

The current effort to breed blight-resistant American chestnuts was launched about 25 years ago by the American Chestnut Foundation.

It began by crossing Chinese chestnuts, which are naturally resistant to the blight, with American chestnuts.

The resulting trees were then repeatedly backcrossed to the American species with the goal of producing an American chestnut that retains no Chinese characteristics other than blight resistance.

This goal has now been achieved, and the resulting hybrids are now beginning to be planted in various areas of the American chestnut’s former range

For more information about the American chestnut and the effort to restore it, see the Foundation’s website at www.acf.org.

For more information about the trip contact Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmitth@frontiernet.net.

Value of Trees

According to Bob and Linda Harrington in their book *Testimony for Earth: A Worldview to Save the Planet and Ourselves*, “Forest studies by economists reveal that a tree 50 years old has produced \$196,250 in free benefits for the Earth in transpiration, soil protection, carbon storage, etc. Realizing that a small, protected area might protect genetic diversity, I bought 80 acres of forest. Averaging 300 trees per acre older than 50 years, there are 22,500 trees on 75 of these acres. Each provides \$4,000 of planetary benefits a year—roughly \$90 million annually.”

Bob Harrington’s comments were originally published in the letters section of the Spring 2009 issue of Bates Magazine, the college publication of his alma mater. Anyone interested in either one of their most recent books (2008) can get autographed copies from them for \$27 (post paid). Contact the Valley Views editor, wbraun@frontiernet.net, for information on reaching the Harringtons. They are also available at Amazon.com, or from the publisher hancockhouse.com

The 2009 Garlic Mustard Challenge!

The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area and the Monongahela National Forest have joined forces in an initiative to control (or at least dent) the garlic mustard problem in West Virginia. This very invasive plant is threatening the forest ecosystems of the state with its aggressive nature. Public pulling events are being organized throughout the state as part of the 2009 Garlic Mustard Challenge such as Big Bend Campground on April 25, Watoga State Park on May 9, Pocahontas County 4-H Camp on May 16, and Summit Lake on May 23. The group is encouraging residents to fight it wherever it is found, from local parks to backyards. Wherever you pull the plants, you can register your contribution to the challenge on the website, AFHA.US/garlic_mustard/. The website also has excellent information on methods of controlling garlic mustard, from pulling it to eating it. (Even several recipes are provided!) The group’s goal is to remove 10,000 pounds of garlic mustard from public lands in

2009. For more information, check out the website above, or you may email eburks@fs.fed.us for more information.

Got Nest Boxes?!

News Release: March 30, 2009 *Monitoring helps the Cornell Lab of Ornithology study climate change and nesting birds*
Ithaca, NY—

Anyone with one or more nest boxes can help scientists learn more about bird families and how they might be affected by climate change. Just register the nest box (or boxes) with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program (www.RegisterYourNestbox.org). It doesn't cost anything but yields valuable information needed to better understand breeding birds and how their natural rhythms may be changing. If you don't have a nest box, now is the time to set one up. Many species that build nests in cavities have become very accustomed to using wooden boxes set up by bird watchers to help the birds more easily find a home.

"It's time to lose the winter blues and focus on spring renewal," says project leader Tina Phillips. "NestWatch is easy and fun for adults and children. It helps all of us reconnect with nature which is good for our own health and well-being. NestWatch is a great activity to do on your own, in a classroom, or as a homeschool project. And it helps the birds too."

Studies have shown that some birds are laying their eggs sooner than in the past--as much as nine days earlier in the case of Tree Swallows--and that could spell trouble if the eggs hatch before a steady supply of insects is available for feeding the young. NestWatch participants visit nests once or twice per week and report what they see during each visit, such as which kinds of birds are using their nest boxes, when the first eggs are laid, and the total number of eggs and young. The project collects this information for all species of nesting birds in North America.

"Citizen scientists really make a big difference," says Phillips. "You can turn a nest-box hobby or a passion for bird watching into reliable data that, when combined with other observations from across the continent, increases our understanding of the impacts of environmental change and human land-use on breeding birds. These data allow us to detect trends on large scales, which are very powerful for diagnosing potential threats to breeding birds. Armed with that knowledge, we can take the steps needed to help them survive in this changing world."

All materials and instructions are available on the NestWatch web site, including directions on how to monitor nest boxes without disturbing the birds. Anyone interested in putting up nest boxes for the first time will find information on how to provide the best and safest boxes for bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, and other cavity-nesting birds online. NestWatch participants also monitor the nests of backyard birds that don't use nest boxes, such as phoebes, robins, and goldfinches.

The hugely popular NestCams are back in action—anyone can get a live peek into nests and nest boxes across the country. Live cameras are focused on Eastern Bluebirds, Barred Owls, Wood

Ducks, Barn Owls and more. Keep watching and see what hatches! (www.nestcam.org)

NestWatch is a free nest-monitoring project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in collaboration with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and funded by the National Science Foundation.

Note: Watch the "Early Birds and Spring" video about the NestWatch project posted on the ScienCentral website, www.sciencentral.com/video/2009/03/19/early-birds-springtime/.

Contact: Pat Leonard, (607) 254-2137, pe127@cornell.edu
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd, Ithaca NY 14850

Green Homes Tour an Overwhelming Success!

The Green Homes Tour on March 28 sparked tremendous interest in the community. Offered as part of a Green Building Conference sponsored by Potomac Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center, the Green Homes tour featured eight "green" homes in the Eastern Panhandle.

One hundred forty-four brochures were sold at the various sales outlets across the panhandle. Based on a survey at one of the homes, an average of 2.6 people were in each car. Using that average means approximately 374 people participated in the tour overall!

The throngs of folks coming through were enthusiastic about the opportunity to see what choices the homeowners had made in their construction, and many were inspired to consider including similar materials and technologies in their own home projects.

An enormous thank you goes to the organizer of the tour, Jeff Feldman. Jeff spent countless hours asking homeowners to participate, putting together the brochure, finding sponsors, and coordinating all the behind-the-scenes logistics.

We would also like to recognize the homeowners for opening their homes to the general public so others could learn from their experiences: Larry and Cathy Goodwin, Pinnacle Enterprises, Mike and Ruth Raubertas, Kate and David Didden, Kristin Alexander and Jeff Feldman, Gerry and Louise Fitzgerald, Matthew Grove and Lisa Dall'Olio, and Mike and Faith McKechnie.

The sponsors of the tour, Sir Speedy Printing, Martinsburg, and E-cycle Green Collective, helped offset costs of the tour to maximize income for PVAS' educational programs. All in all, the tour raised nearly \$2,000. On top of that, the education and inspiration that resulted from the tour is priceless.

Finally, we'd like to thank the businesses who agreed to sell the brochures out of their establishments: Dream House, Charles Town; Four Seasons Books, Shepherdstown; Good Natured, Martinsburg; and the Nature Niche, Berkeley Springs.

The team of folks involved made the tour a tremendous success, and for that we thank you.

Spring Programs at Yankauer Need Volunteers

Spring school and scout programs held at Yankauer Preserve are gearing up and volunteers are needed to help make them happen. Most programs are for elementary school children and involve both

a directed hike and other program activities focused on a specific theme which correlates with the WV learning objectives for their grade level. Themes include Senses, Plants vs. Animals, Animal Adaptations, and Cycles in Nature. School programs generally last from 9:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. while scout programs are generally in early evening. If you would like to help, contact Ellen Murphy at 304-676-8739 or pvasprograms@comcast.net for the specific dates. She also offers training for new volunteers on an ongoing basis.

**SUPPORT RECYCLING:
BUY GREEN**

The Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority wishes to remind residents that we have the best deal on mulch in the region. The Grapevine Road Recycling Center and the South Berkeley Recycling Center has mulch for sale at \$10.00 per tractor bucket. All mulch revenue is utilized to fund the county's recycling program.

The Grapevine Road Recycling Center is located at 870 Grapevine Road, Martinsburg and the South Berkeley Recycling Center is located at 637 Pilgrim Street, Inwood.

To find more information on the Berkeley County Recycling Program visit the webpage at: <http://www.berkeleycountycomm.org/links/recycle.cfm>

Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority at 304-671-2925 or email at berkeleycountyswa@msn.com

Sincerely,
Clint R. Hogbin
Chairman

PVAS Activity Calendar

- May 2 Annual "This Race is for the Birds" at NCTC
- May 9 Master Naturalist GPS Workshop at Cacapon State Park
- May 9 Boonsboro Green Fest
- May 10 Field Trip: Cool Spring Farm
- May 13 PVAS program at NCTC
- May 23 Birding at Eidolon Nature Preserve
- May 23 Save Our Streams Training at Cacapon State Park
- May 30 Field trip: American Hybrid Chestnut Orchard
- June 5-7 Nature Photography Workshop at NCTC
- June 6 Master Naturalist Dragonfly Workshop at Cacapon State Park
- June 13 Field trip: National Zoo Conservation and Research Center, Front Royal, VA
- June 26-28 Weekend family camping trip
- July 25 Master Naturalist Pollinators Workshop at NCTC
- August 1 Field trip to the Cranesville Swamp
- August 1-2 Morgan County Fair
- August 11 Annual meteor-watching party
- August 21-22 Insect walks at Cacapon State Park
- August 22 Master Naturalist "True Bugs" Workshop at NCTC
- September 4- 5 Evening "Insect walks" at C&O Canal
- September 9 PVAS Archeology Program at NCTC
- November 13-14 Master Naturalist "Leave No Trace" Workshop

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

We now offer two kinds of memberships:

1. PVAS Local Membership

Here's what you get:

- Access to a wide variety of PVAS programs and events for adults and children.
- Discounts for selected chapter activities, like children's summer camps.
- A subscription to PVAS's newsletter and e-mail alerts about events and programs of special interest.
- ALL your dues stay here to support local PVAS efforts!

To become a local member: Enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Please make check out to "PVAS." This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year.

2. Dual Membership with National Audubon

You get all the benefits of PVAS membership plus membership in the National Audubon Society, which includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. If you select this option, almost all of your dues will go to National Audubon. To obtain a dual membership, enclose a check for \$20 if you are joining NAS for the first time or \$35 to renew an existing NAS membership (\$15 in either case for seniors and students). Make check out to "National Audubon Society."

Membership Form

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

Membership Type (check one):

PVAS Local Membership _____
 (For PVAS local membership, check the box following if you do NOT want PVAS to share your contact information with National Audubon: _____)

Dual Membership with National Audubon _____

I'd like to get *Valley Views* by e-mail ___ US mail ___ (check one)

.....(Audubon chapter code Y54; source code 79N7)

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
 PO Box 578
 Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Thank you for your support!



RED DOT ALERT

● If 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 Dual membership or Local membership.

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(December 1, 2008-March 31, 2009)

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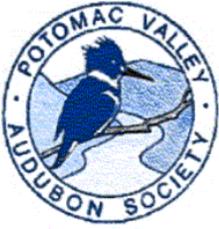
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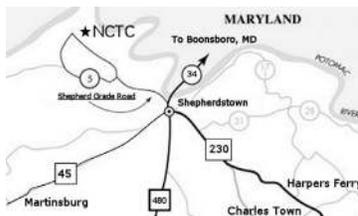


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May 2009

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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, at the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV, in the Instructional West Building. 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.

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

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