

VALLEY VIEWS

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The Miracle of Bird Song

by Wil Hershberger

As May waxes on, the woodlands, fields, and thickets seemingly explode with the songs of birds. From the relative quiet of winter, the presence of all these songs is a retreat for the soul. The exuberant announcements, at the beginning of the day, that each male has survived the night unfold as the dawn chorus. He is singing to let his mate and his neighbors know that he is still there and will defend his territory. As the sun rises, this dawn chorus spreads ever farther west, like a tidal wave of song ushering in the new day. At any time of year there is a dawn chorus happening somewhere on the planet. Either in the Northern hemisphere or the Southern, there is always a dawn chorus rushing westward before the sun.

*Think, every morning when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!
And when you think of this, remember too
'T is always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents; from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.*

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

So why make all this sound? It seems like it would draw undo attention from predators to the singer. Chemical signals are stealthy, however they are subject to the wind and cannot travel very far. A visual signal would really expose the signaler to predation. Producing a sound allows the singer to either remain hidden or to be exposed, and song will radiate out in all directions. Different environments require the singer to produce different types of sounds. Low pitched, long notes travel better in dense vegetation. High pitched, short notes can be heard farther in open habitats. In order to be heard, different species have evolved different singing strategies for the habitats in which they live.

Some species are very much like humans; they learn the sounds that they produce from adults of the same species. These are the learners, the songbirds, they have an innate pattern of what the song should sound like, but they must learn the fine structure of the song from adults and how to produce those notes through practice. Young songbirds babble just as human babies do. At some point they start to produce notes that sound very adult-like, just as a baby human will start to say a word or two. Then the young

bird will start to string these well-formed notes into song elements, just like short sentences. Then he stops practicing out loud and falls silent for the winter months. As spring arrives he resumes his practicing, comparing what he is singing with the templates that he learned from the males he heard the summer before. Soon, he will be singing adult songs, crystallized songs, and setting up his own territory in the area where he was listening to the singing males that first summer.



Eastern Towhee

Photo © Wil Hershberger

Other species of birds do not learn their songs from adults. Their songs are somehow encoded within their DNA. They have a genetic predisposition to produce the songs of their species. If you were to take a very young, just-hatched male of one of these species from its nest and raise it in isolation, it would eventually sing a very good rendition of that species song. This experiment has been done with Eastern Phoebes; these isolated males will sing the typical phoebe song even though they have never heard another adult singing while growing up.

Birdsong has had a tremendous impact on humans over the centuries. Thousands of poems have been written about the wondrous songs that some species sing. The notes and songs of birds have inspired many musical compositions. Many of us find solace while sitting quietly, in a quiet place, surrounded by birdsong. I could not have expressed the feeling better myself than this comment by my dear friend Lang Elliott:

[B]e assured that a world of heightened appreciation awaits you if you go outdoors and embrace the music of the birds. But beware! You may end up like me, waiting impatiently for the snow and ice to melt, listening quietly for the first cheerful notes, and finally celebrating with joy those glorious days when spring has arrived and the birds are in full song.

For a version of this article with embedded sound examples see <http://miracleofnature.org/blog/the-miracle-of-birdsong>.

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

President's Perch

by Diana Mullis, PVAS President

Spring Greetings, PVAS members!

As the transitional season finally arrives with the return of wildflowers and phoebes, it is time to begin thinking of transitioning PVAS leadership as well!

With this month's newsletter you will find a ballot regarding two things for which we need your vote: 1) our annual election of Directors and Officers, and 2) a proposal to modify our Bylaws. We need at least 10% of our membership to vote on each of these items, so please take the time to vote on these two issues and mail back the insert to us. (One vote per household.)

A short bio for each Board Member can be found at www.potomacaudubon.org/gov/2014Nominees so you learn about each person before placing your vote. We have a fantastic slate lined up (but some slots are still open if anyone is interested in serving!).

For information about the proposed updates to the Bylaws, please go to our website to see a summary of the proposed changes at:

http://www.potomacaudubon.org/Resources/Documents/PROPOSED_2014_PVAS_bylaws_const.pdf

The 2007 document, under which PVAS currently operates, is available for comparison at:

www.potomacaudubon.org/Resources/Documents/PVAS_bylaws_const.pdf

PVAS is YOUR organization, so we'd love YOUR vote. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read about our candidates and Bylaws, for filling out the ballot, and for sending it in!

Happy Spring!



Election of Board Members

It's time to vote for PVAS Board members! As mentioned in the President's Perch, you'll notice there is a ballot included with this month's Valley Views. PVAS holds elections of its Board of Directors annually. Votes are accepted by mail-in ballot as well as at the annual member meeting which will take place May 31 this year. There are thirteen board positions called for in the PVAS Bylaws. Four of the positions are officers, and the remainder serve as at-large members. The new terms will begin July 1, 2014.

Election of board members is staggered to avoid an entirely new slate of officers and directors at one time. The newly proposed term of office for all board members is two years with a maximum of three consecutive terms; however, a person that serves three consecutive terms and is elected as an officer may extend his or her board membership/officer position by one additional term by unanimous decision of the board.

Several of our Board members have reached their term limits: Lex Miller (Treasurer), Mina Goodrich (Secretary), and Leigh Jenkins (Youth Program Chair).

We are fortunate to have three current PVAS Board members nominated to serve on the Executive Committee next year: Jane Vanderhook (nominated for President), Mike Sullivan (nominated for Vice President), and Diana Gaviria (nominated for Secretary). We do not have a candidate for Treasurer at this time.

For the remaining "at large" positions, Joe Hankins, Susan Jones, Lainie Weber, Matt Patterson, and Kara Klein Gibson have been nominated. This leaves one at-large slot remaining to be filled.

A short biography of each candidate has been compiled and is available on our website. To learn more about each of the candidates, please go to www.potomacaudubon.org/gov/2014Nominees. If you do not have access to the internet to read about these candidates, we are happy to mail their biographies to you! Please request this option by calling 304-676-3397. (If there is no answer, please leave a message with your name and your request.)

Thank you so much for your interest and your vote.

A Note of Thanks

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

The PVAS membership and its leaders have once again outdone themselves.

As of March 31, the end of the Annual Appeal, we have received \$37,625 from 196 donations. This trumps last year's record-breaking year by nearly \$1,500. We are truly grateful for each and every contribution. Thank you!

PVAS is growing every year in programs and services, and the support from our members and friends will allow this growth to continue. You can look forward to more workshops for adults than ever before as well as expanded youth program offerings. We are also planning ways to better serve our members and donors so you know how much we appreciate your support.

Thank you for the many ways you give to PVAS!

PVAS Bylaws Revisions

In the almost eight years since our Bylaws were last revised, it has become apparent that they need to be revised again to resolve ambiguities, to clarify certain procedures that were unstated in the current version of our Bylaws, and to ensure the Board does in fact operate according to our Bylaws. The Board of Directors has approved a set of proposed changes that achieve these goals, and now presents them to the full PVAS membership for adoption. A detailed summary of these changes and the full text of the proposed new Bylaws are available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org/gov/2014Nominees. The major changes are highlighted below:

- Terms for officers and directors are set as two years, instead of three, with a limit of three consecutive terms, instead of two.
- Procedures for conducting Board Meetings in closed sessions are clarified.

- The previous expectation that the Executive Committee should meet on a regular basis is reframed as a requirement.
- The Finance Committee is established as an Essential Committee.
- The procedures for appointing committee chairs are clarified, along with the length of their terms. Previous term limits are abolished.

In order for the new Bylaws to take effect, they must be accepted by vote of the membership. In an effort to conclude this vote by the start of the new fiscal year, we request that you return this ballot form by May 31, 2014. (NOTE: You MUST be a Potomac Valley Audubon Society member in good standing in order to participate in this ballot!)

Member BBQ and Meeting May 31

PVAS members are invited to enjoy a pork BBQ dinner at the Yankauer Preserve this year for our Annual Member Meeting. Gary and Diane Sylvester have volunteered to fire up the smoker and treat members to their delicious barbecue.

The event will kick off at 6:30pm with a short business meeting where official votes on incoming Board Members will be held, and those Board members who are stepping off the Board will be recognized for their contributions.

Immediately following the business portion of the meeting, members will enjoy pork BBQ and all the “fixin’s” courtesy of PVAS Board members and volunteers. You don’t even have to bring your own plates this year thanks to volunteers providing reusable place settings and dishwashing services.

We hope you’ll join us! This is a members-only (and free) event. For planning purposes, please RSVP to Melanie Snyder at Admin@PotomacAudubon.org or (703) 973-5419 to let us know how many people from your party to expect for dinner!

Winston Gardens Nursery Donations

The Winston Gardens Native Plant Nursery has once again pledged to donate 15 percent of the proceeds from its upcoming spring Open House Plant Sale to PVAS. The donation will be used to support our Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve in the Back Creek section of Berkeley County.

The Open House will be held the weekend of May 3 and 4, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day. Light refreshments will be served and a door prize will be offered. The nursery is located in northeastern Berkeley County, at 1121 Hollida Lane, one mile off Swan Pond Road.

Operated by noted area landscape designer Virginia Winston and her husband Eldon, it specializes in trees and shrubs that are native to this region. It typically offers more than two dozen different species for sale. These range from popular favorites like Sugar Maples and Redbuds to hard-to-find species like Fringe Tree, Witch Hazel, and Chokeberry.

For directions and a full list of the plants available, go to the Nursery’s website at www.winstongardens.com or contact the Winstons at 304-267-6924 or virginia@winstongardens.com.

Shepherdstown Shop Continues Annual Donations to PVAS

Shepherdstown’s On the Wings of Dreams shop has once again donated a portion of its sales proceeds to the PVAS. For the past seven years shop owner Laura Rau has set aside three cents from each crystal and mineral sold during the year to donate to us. This year’s donation totals \$250 and is based on 2013 sales. It brings the shop’s total donations to PVAS to \$1,565. All these donations have been used to support our programs for children.

This year’s donation was presented to PVAS on April 2 at the store. The accompanying photo shows Laura, right, and PVAS Executive Director Kristin Alexander, left, with the store dog, Sedona. Behind Laura are two of the largest crystals currently in the store’s inventory: a rare pair of amethyst cathedral geodes from Brazil.



“We’re so grateful to Laura and her colleagues at the store for their generosity,” Ms. Alexander said. “It’s been a wonderful source of support for our programs.”

Ms. Rau said:

Supporting PVAS gives us the opportunity to participate in both environmental and humanitarian efforts. The Society’s work to protect and preserve wetlands and other sensitive natural environments are vital in this fast-growing area. PVAS also sponsors numerous programs to educate children about the environment, encouraging them to get out in nature and away from the computer or TV. It’s an important investment in the future all around.

I want to give sincere thanks to our loyal employees for their ongoing efforts toward the success of the shop, which in turn benefits PVAS: Herb Clark, Melanie Climis, Dana Mitchell and Jacqueline Binkley, all from Shepherdstown. A very special thank you is also in order for the many customers of the shop whose crystal purchases in 2013 contributed to the PVAS donation.

Laura recently attended the Tucson Gem Show, the largest gem and mineral show in the world, and has returned with many beautiful specimens that will contribute to next year’s donation.

The store is located at 139 West German Street. In addition to crystals, it offers a wide variety of sterling silver and natural stone jewelry; Native American jewelry, books and music; incense; sages, shells and prayer feathers; magical and ceremonial herbs; tools and statuary for practitioners of Buddhist, Hindu and Earth-Based spiritualities; essential oils; prayer flags and Tibetan and crystal singing bowls. Its website can be found at www.WingsOfDreamsShop.com.

This Race is for the Birds!

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society's *This Race is for the Birds!* 2014 was a huge success! After a long winter with lots of cold temperatures and snow, the weather cleared to welcome over 300 runners to the trails of the National Conservation Training Center. The trails were in perfect condition for the runners, just enough mud to keep it interesting and fun! Of course a highlight for the runners was observing the eagles in flight and their large nest with eaglets.



The kids fun run was one mile of smiles for about 50 kids ages 2–9 years. Not only did the kids love being part of this big event—with their own trail run, bib numbers and a water station to boot—but they also loved their awards table waiting for them as they crossed the finish line. What a fantastic way to get kids excited about being physically active outside and enjoying nature!

The National Conservation Training Center is an amazing venue for our race, and we are very lucky to utilize their beautiful trails and facilities. In addition, PVAS is blessed with an wonderful group of talented and generous volunteers who gave their time and energy for everything from planning to race clean-up. PVAS would like to thank James Munnis, Carolyn Thomas, Bruce Thomas, Peter Smith, Diana Gaviria, Susan Brookreson, Joe Brookreson, Mark Cucuzzella, Chris Amores, Sandy Brown, Walt Burke, Susan Busey, Larry Dean, Kaitlyn Domizio, John Fairchild, Melanie Files, Heather Gayle, Jennifer Gayle, Emily Gross, Nate Hawley, Tayah Hawley, Olivia Lana, Lydian Janotta, Dan Householder, Georgia Jeppesen, Rebecca Jester, Zach Leslie, Rick Lowman, Kirke Martin, Chelsea McKinney, Lex Miller, Wanda Miller, Marcyanna Millet, Jean Neely, Jon Pike, Ashley Sandy, Leef Sandy, Melinda Schmitt, Beth Shanholtzer, Tom Shantz, Karen Shantz, Melanie Snyder, Sally Thomas, Mari VanValkenburgh, Ellen Murphy, Jane Vanderhook, Flo Wilbik, and especially Nan Johnson—who led the way this year as our volunteer extraordinaire and race director.

Looking forward to seeing you on the trails in spring 2015 for our 14th annual Race For The Birds!

Thank You Race Sponsors!

Each year PVAS is fortunate to have local businesses sponsor the annual “This Race is for the Birds!” Held each spring at the National Conservation Training Center, the event supports PVAS programs while allowing the community to enjoy the trails for the 7+ and 4+ mile runs, the 2-mile walk/run, and the kids “Fun Run.”

We sincerely thank each and every race sponsor:

HFI Wealth Management was the race’s “**Platinum**” Level sponsor, contributing \$1,000. The accompanying photo shows, from left to right, the following members of the HFI team: Back Row: Stacy Lindberg, Amanda Runkles, Rob Hoxton; Front Row: Leota Trainor, Jessie Gleason, Allie Nasteff.

Gold Level sponsors (\$500 or more). *Martinsburg Journal*; *The Observer* newspaper; Friends of Mark Benedict; Shepherd Univer-

sity Wellness Center; *Shepherdstown Chronicle*; *Spirit of Jefferson* newspaper; Two Rivers Treads; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center.

Silver Level sponsors (\$250 or more). Associated Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons; Briarwood Dental Clinic; Joe and Susan Brookreson; Chick-fil-A of Martinsburg; HypnoCoffee Coffee Roaster-Coffee Bar; Jefferson Security Bank; Miller’s Electric Company, Inc.; Progressive Printing; Roach Energy/ROCS Convenience.

Bronze Level sponsors (\$100 or more). AC&T Co., Inc.; Anne R. Basham, DDS; Bavarian Inn; Caribbean Islands Travel Service; Clayton Johnson; d’Accord Boutique; Davitt McAteer & Associates; David Miljour D.C.; Depot Florist; Dickinson & Wait Craft Gallery; Domestic American Restaurant; John A. Draper, Jr., MD; Edward Jones Investments, Shepherdstown; German Street Coffee and Candlery, a MARKETPLACE; Grapes and Grains Gourmet; Jefferson Chiropractic Center; La Trattoria Italian Eatery, Martinsburg; Ted Leslie, DDS; Lynne Wiseman@ERA.com, Realtor; Medicap Pharmacy; Mountain View Solar; Patthoff General Dentistry; Potomac-Mecklenburg Garden Club; The Press Room; Shepherdstown Pharmacy; Shepherdstown Sweet Shop; United Bank; William F. Queen, DDS & Whitney Queen, DDS.

Other contributors included Mary Bell; Clissy Funkhouser, Funky CPA; Hau Ink; Martin’s Supermarkets; and Royalicious Bakery.

Members and friends, please thank these sponsors for their support when you patronize their businesses!



HFI Wealth Management team

May Program Will Feature Presentation on Vultures

The monthly PVAS program for May will feature a presentation entitled “The Vulture: Invaluable Friend, Unfortunate Underdog.” at 7:00 p.m. May 14 at the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown. It will be held in room 114 of the Center’s Instructional East Building. Admission is free and everyone is

welcome to attend.

The speaker will be Katie Fallon, a West Virginia birder and writer who lives in Morgantown. She will discuss the ways in which vultures provide a key and valuable service for the ecosystems in which they live. Katie has taught creative writing at West Virginia University and Virginia Tech. An avid birder, she is also one of the founders of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, a nonprofit organization devoted to conserving birds through research, education, and rehabilitation. She is the author of numerous nonfiction articles and essays and a recent book about Cerulean warblers: *Cerulean Blues—A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird* (Ruka Press, 2011). She spoke about this book at a PVAS meeting last spring. She has a BA from Penn State University and an MFA from WVU.



Turkey Vulture

The May 14 program will mark the culmination of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society's ten-day celebration of this year's International Migratory Birding Day (IMBD) celebration. The theme for this year's IMBD is "Why Birds Matter."

Don't Forget Upcoming Migratory Bird Day Activities

PVAS has teamed up with other organizations to put together a special series of local events in May to mark the 22nd annual observance of International Migratory Bird Day. The events begin April 30 and run through May 14. They include the Fifth Annual Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon, which is scheduled for May 3.

The full schedule was published in the April *Valley Views* and is also available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org/imbdevents.

All the events will be free, and all are invited. Pre-registration is required for the Birdathon event; it is encouraged but not required for all the other events. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website at the location shown above.

For additional information about specific events contact the individual(s) mentioned in the event description(s) or contact Sandy Sagalkin at mansansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

PVAS Field Trips

Listed below are PVAS field trips scheduled for May. For more information, use the web address or phone number given in the article, or visit the PVAS website www.PotomacAudubon.org. Participants should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions; bring insect repellent, water, and sunscreen; and wear

comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots. A snack might be useful for the longer trips. The trips are open to all and are free unless otherwise noted in the article. In some cases pre-registration is required or recommended and there may be a fee.

• Hardy Co. Geology Tour

A geology tour of Hardy County, WV, will be held on Saturday, May 10 and led by Geologist Mike O'Donnell, who teaches at Lord Fairfax Community College in Middletown, VA. The county contains many interesting geological features, and the tour will concentrate on sites that are easily accessible from the roadside. This event is one of a series of Natural History Workshops on different natural history topics the PVAS is sponsoring this year.

Everyone is welcome but space is limited, and pre-registration and a fee are required. Easy pre-registration is available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. The fee is \$15 for PVAS members and the general public and \$10 for members and students of the our Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program.

Participants should plan to meet in University of Charleston parking lot on Viking Way in Martinsburg (at I-81 Exit 13) at 8:30 am and carpool to Hardy County from there. Because this will be a road tour, carpooling will be essential. If you prefer to travel to Hardy County on your own, contact Wanda Miller at bioed54@gmail.com for more information on where and when to link up with the tour group. Once in Hardy County, the tour will last from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Afterwards, participants will be welcome to join a dutch-treat lunch with the tour leader.

For more information contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 304-876-8471.

The following two hikes in May and June are part of PVAS's "Outdoor Explore!" program, which is intended to give youngsters and their parents a better understanding and appreciation of the natural world in a safe, supervised way. Its activities include hiking, exploration of different local habitats, plant and animal identification, and other natural science activities. The program was initiated in 2012 with the help of a grant from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. Pre-registration is required and there is a small fee for each child. Register at www.PotomacAudubon.org/outdoorexplre.

• Family Nature Hike at Stauffer's Marsh

PVAS will offer an "Outdoor Explore!" hike at its Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Saturday, May 17 from 10:00 a.m. to about 1:00 p.m. Jan Hummer, an experienced natural science educator, will lead the hike and will explain the preserve's plants, animals, and other natural features.



Stauffer's Marsh

...Field Trips continued on page 6

....Field Trips *continued from page 5*

The Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve is located in Back Creek Valley, one-half mile south of Shanghai, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7). Hike participants should meet in the gravel parking area at the Preserve's north end. The Preserve is owned by PVAS. Although it is only 46 acres in size, it includes a rich variety of wildlife habitats, including shallow ponds, marshy areas, meadowlands, woods, edge lands and Back Creek frontage. It is especially attractive to birds: to date some 150 different species of birds have been identified here.

Enrollment for the hike is limited and pre-registration is required. There is a modest fee of \$5 per child. To register or get more information go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org/imbdevents or contact Jan at janhummer@hotmail.com or 304-839-5128.

• June Family Hike Along Opequeon Creek

PVAS will offer an "Outdoor Explore!" hike along a stretch of Opequeon Creek in Berkeley County on Saturday, June 7 from 9:00 a.m. to about 12 noon. River shoes or old tennis shoes are recommended.

The hike will be led by Jan Hummer, an experienced natural science educator. The creek will be explored in an up close and personal way. Jan will help participating children and their families to gain a better understanding of the role such streams play in our natural landscape, including the ways in which they provide habitat for a wide variety of native fish, birds, insects and other animals.

Enrollment in the hike is limited and pre-registration is required. There is a modest fee of \$5 per child. To register or get more information go to the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org/imbdevents or contact Jan at janhummer@hotmail.com or 304-839-5128. The area of the creek that will be visited will be in the vicinity of Route 45, east of Martinsburg. Exact directions will be provided on registration.

Hagerstown City Park Bird Walk Ideal for Beginners

The City of Hagerstown, the Washington County Bird Club, and PVAS are sponsoring a bird walk at Hagerstown's City Park on Sunday May 25. Led by Sandy Sagalkin, a PVAS birding committee member, the walk will begin at 8:00 a.m at the Hager House parking lot inside the park and will last about two hours. The walk, over easy terrain, will focus on a variety of spring migrants and will be a perfect trip for beginning birders. The walk will be cancelled only if there is a steady rain.



American Robin
©Wil Hershberger

Everyone is welcome and there is no fee, but pre-registration is required. To register, contact Sandy at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

Butterfly Workshop Set for Late May



PVAS will sponsor a Natural History Workshop on butterflies in late May that will have two parts. First, there will be a 7:00-9:00 p.m. evening classroom session on Wednesday, May 21, at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, which will provide an overview of the subject and cover such topics as the life cycle of butterflies, identification of different species, and species common to this area. Participants will then amplify their classroom knowledge by joining in a 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. field trip on Saturday, May 24.

The workshop will be taught by local expert Matt Orsie and is open to everyone. However, enrollment will be limited to 16 persons so pre-registration is essential. The fee for the workshop is \$60 for PVAS members and members of the PVAS's Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, and \$65 for the general public. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

For the field trip portion of the workshop, participants should plan to wear comfortable hiking shoes and bring along water, bug spray, sunscreen and a snack or bag lunch.

For more information go to the PVAS website or contact Mr. Orsie at 304-261-5602 or wvbird@comcast.net.

PVAS's Natural History Workshops are intended for people who are interested in learning about particular natural history topics in considerable depth but do not wish to pursue the much more comprehensive natural history education available through PVAS's Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, which can take a year or more to complete.

Last Call for Summer Camp

It's not really the final call, but our summer camp sessions are rapidly filling up and we have only a few spots still available for the summer season. Don't wait to sign up or you may miss your chance. Waiting Lists are established as each session fills. The extension of school calendars this year is impacting our first Camp Survivor session, but we are going ahead with the session as planned the week of June 9-13. (If registration demands, we may be able to add another session later in the summer, but that decision will not be made until later in the year.)



Camp fees can be paid online. T-shirts must be pre-ordered by May 15 to guarantee availability. Full information about what to bring to camp and other things parents want to know is found on the PVAS website at www.PotomacAudubon.org/discovercamp. If you have questions about camp sessions, contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org.

Early Reservations Essential For Midsummer Shorebirds Workshop

This summer PVAS will sponsor a Natural History Workshop on shorebirds that will have both a classroom session and a field trip. The classroom session—from 7:00-9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 30, at the National Conservation Training Center (in Room 205 of the Instructional East Building)—will provide an overview of the more than 20 shorebird species likely to be found in our coastal regions, along with instruction on the finer points of some of the tougher shorebird identifications. Participants will then join in a field trip to the Delaware shore that will leave at about noon Friday, August 1 and return on Sunday, August 3.

The workshop, led by Matt Orsie and Sandy Sagalkin, is part of PVAS's Advanced Birding Series and is not intended for beginning birders. Participants must be PVAS "Birding 101" graduates or have commensurate birding experience.

Enrollment is limited to 12 persons, so pre-registration is essential. The fee for the workshop will be \$60 for PVAS members and members of the Society's Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, and \$65 for the general public. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org. These fees do not include transportation to Delaware or lodging there on Friday and Saturday nights; workshop participants will be expected to make their own transportation and lodging arrangements. (Carpooling to Delaware can be an option if enough participants are interested in doing so.) The workshop leaders will be staying at the Dover Microtel Inn and Suites in Dover, Delaware (telephone 302-674-3800). There are a number of other lodging opportunities in and around Dover.

The workshop is being publicized now because summertime Eastern Shore accommodations fill up fast, and participants should make their lodging reservations as soon as possible.

Wherever participants choose to stay, they should plan on meeting Matt and Sandy at 6:30 a.m. Saturday morning in the lobby of the Microtel Inn and Suites. At that point, those not already carpooling can consolidate cars to save on entry fees to the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Participants should plan to wear comfortable walking or hiking boots; bring along bug spray; and bring water and, as necessary, a hat, sunscreen or rain gear.

For more information, contact Matt at 304-261-5602 or wv-birder@comcast.net or Sandy at monsansagalkin@myactv.net.



Eastern Shore Oystercatcher

An Egg-citing Spring Hunt!

Almost 30 children and their families enjoyed our seventh annual Spring Egg Hunt at Yankauer Preserve on April 13. Although the big draw is the actual hunt, there were other activities for the preschoolers. Children enjoyed activities that helped them learn which animals lay eggs (fish and alligators and snakes, but not rabbits!), read egg-themed books, decorated eggs, and tried balancing giant eggs on spoons. A new activity this year encouraged children to feel different egg shapes without looking and then guess what animal might lay such an egg: the "frog eggs" were a real surprise!

The actual egg hunt featured eggs painted to resemble wild bird eggs, but the effective camouflage didn't slow the egg hunters down. Two lucky children found the special eggs and traded them in for a special nature matching game.

Special thanks go to Master Naturalists Emily Gross and Elizabeth Morningstar who helped with the activities, Warren Morningstar who took pictures during the event, Susan Fluharty who baked and decorated cookies the children took home, and Diana Mullis who baked egg-shaped cookies that were decorated during the event.



Photo by Warren Morningstar

Photo Camp at Shepherd University



Teens entering high school, with an interest in learning about digital photography, should consider our Teen Digital Photo Camp at Shepherd University the week of June 23-27.

Students will learn the basics of digital photography including composition, lighting, and other techniques that can create a great picture. Campers will spend much of their day outside taking pictures and then using the Shepherd University Photo Lab to download and manipulate their photographs.

Each student has the use of a Nikon SLR digital camera during the week, and students can keep all their photographs. Contact Ellen Murphy Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org with questions about the camp.

The Wildflowers Were Showing Off at our Wildflower Festival



*Kathy Bilton leading a group
Photo by Don Henry*

Over 60 people, including many families, took advantage of the great weather and visited Yankauer Preserve during the annual Wildflower Festival. Although the winter did delay the advent of many wildflowers, several of the early varieties were up: Twinleaf, Dutchman's Breeches, Spring Beauties, and Bloodroot were beginning to bloom. Even the Rattlesnake Weed was up (although it doesn't bloom until summer). Guided wildflower walks were led by PVAS volunteers Kathy Bilton, Kathryn Henry, Mary Duke, Mary Beth Ross, Wanda Miller, and

Clark Dixon. Professional photographer Frank Ceravalo also led a casual hike, focused on "Photographing Nature and Wildflowers." Children's activities in the preserve pavilion were coordinated by Flo Wilbik and Amy Evrad, and a StoryWalk on the Cedar Loop featured the book *On Meadowview Street*. A special display this year featured flower artwork provided by students at Shepherdstown Elementary School. Kendra Atkins coordinated poetry that was posted on the Kingfisher Trail. We're so glad we were able to meet so many new visitors to Yankauer Preserve during the festival and are totally appreciative of all the time and effort provided by our volunteers who made the program a success. Be assured, the wildflowers at Yankauer Preserve will continue blooming for several more weeks so we hope you find the time to take a walk and enjoy them.



*Bloodroot at Yankauer
Photo by Don Henry*

Volunteers Have Fun, Too!

If you've been thinking that kids have all the fun at PVAS programs, you can join in by volunteering to help. We have something that interests everyone who'd like to help, from working with kids at camp to getting your hands dirty. During summer camp sessions, volunteers can help the staff with preparing and leading activities with our campers. Kids at camp love the extra attention. Camp sessions are held at Yankauer Preserve, CraftWorks, and Peter Burr Farm between June 2 and July 18.

If you'd rather tackle a project that involves dirt, Master Naturalists have been asked to help with grass mowing at the Peter Burr Farm this summer, but you don't need to be a member of that program to volunteer. Contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org to help out.

Ash Trees at Morgan's Grove Park

by Kristin Alexander

Many of you are aware of the emerald ash borer (EAB) and the devastating toll it has taken on native ash tree populations. The EAB could impact significantly the mature ash population in our own historic Morgan's Grove Park in Shepherdstown.

While Jefferson County's Parks & Recreation Division provides invaluable maintenance services for Morgan's Grove Park, the Shepherdstown Community Club actually owns the land. Therefore they are the ones forced to address three big management questions: Do we treat or not? If we do, how do we pay for it? If not, how do we deal with the hazard and cost of large standing dead trees? After weighing various options, the Community Club has decided to go forward with treatment to protect the trees and they are beginning efforts to raise funds for this costly endeavor.

A little background: West Virginia is on the growing list of 22 US states where EAB has been confirmed and the impact is already being felt in the eastern panhandle. Much of the ash population in Morgan County has been wiped out and a great number of trees are succumbing in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties as well.

Morgan's Grove Park is populated with stately ash trees and West Virginia's third largest green ash is a part of that population. Shawn Walker, of Trees 101, has conducted a preliminary survey that shows a mature population of 61 ash trees in the actively used eastern portion of the park that includes the playground, the pavilion and a long stretch of Town Run (there are 9 large ash trees immediately at the water's edge). These trees average 19.5 inches DBH (diameter at breast height). Age is difficult to ascribe but many appear to be in the 50-year range while some could be up to 150 years old. They occupy a vast majority of the mature tree population in this area and contribute a significant amount to the canopy in the stretch of woods that runs along Morgan Grove Road.

The good news is that these trees are not yet showing signs of EAB impacts that can be detected from the ground, meaning they are candidates for preventative and/or therapeutic treatment. Basically, with properly timed and performed insecticidal injections these ash should be able to fight off EAB, even if they are experiencing an infestation in up to 30% of their crown.

Of course there are other questions that might arise, so I asked Shawn Walker for some details...

Is treatment worth it economically?

The average cost for treating a tree once would be around \$200. Jefferson County recently paid \$1500 to have one hazard tree removed. Treating 80 trees could cost \$16,000 but removing those trees could cost around \$100,000. Of course, one final option is to have the trees harvested before they degrade and have no market value. The harvested timber could pay for the cost of removing the trees from the park.

How long will treatment have to continue?

If EAB pressure remains heavy in the region, then treatments should be repeated every two to three years. If the pest runs out of food (living ash trees) and thins out, then injection can be at greater intervals until the EAB wave has moved on. That's the ultimate

hope – that one preserves selected trees until the day that EAB populations can no longer sustain themselves. Three or four total treatments should be the maximum.

What are the environmental impacts of treatment?

Shawn is very up front about this, stating that in truth, no one knows the full impacts of introducing a chemical (synthetic or natural) into a plant. There will always be unintended consequences. That said, his understanding of the potential impacts of treatment by the product (emamectin benzoate, brand name Tree-Age®) recommended by West Virginia’s Division of Forestry as most effective, is summarized below:

Soil – Other than by accidental spill, no contamination occurs as this product is injected directly into the tree’s vascular system and stays within the physical parts of the tree. This is a great benefit when compared to soil drenches, soil injections or bark sprays that are required for other products.

Water – Same as soil.

Bees, other insects – No harm has been documented for bees. Ashes are wind pollinated and therefore do not serve as a nectar source for bees. Environmentalists do worry that we may be overlooking the fact that pollen is a general protein source and the neurotoxicity of the chemical could be transmitted to bees and other insects through this vector. There will be a number of insects that feed on live ash tree parts (similar to EAB) that will be impacted.

Other animals/birds – Harmful effects have not been shown.

It is important to remember that there is no way to guarantee success with EAB treatment within any given tree, despite the high level of success that these techniques and products have shown over the years.

To learn more, please visit this multi-agency website that addresses these topics and provides a wide range of references about emerald ash borer. www.emeraldashborer.info

If you want to support the Community Club’s efforts to treat the Ash Trees of Morgan’s Grove Park, they are accepting donations to help offset the costs at: Shepherdstown Community Club, PO Box 463, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

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:

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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: _____

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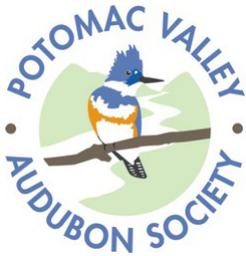
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If you’d rather join the National Audubon Society:

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.

**Don’t forget to vote for PVAS
Bylaw changes and for new
members of the Executive
Committee and the Board!**



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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

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

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

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- Treasurer: Lex Miller (2014)..... pamandlex@frontiernet.net
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