

VALLEY VIEWS

**Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society**

Volume 25, Issue 2

October 2006

Alaska Expert to Address October Meeting

Our October monthly meeting will feature a program on the importance of Alaska's natural areas to wildlife and the American public.

The program will be presented by Taldi Walter, who recently joined the National Audubon Society's Washington, DC, Policy Office as Alaska Field Coordinator.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 11, in the auditorium of the U.S. Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center, 11649 Leetown Road (County Route 1), Kearneysville.

Ms. Walter's program will include a slideshow showcasing some key Alaskan natural areas and the wildlife they harbor.

She will also highlight challenges and opportunities facing such areas as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Tongass National Forest, Chugach National Forest, and Alaskan national petroleum reserve lands.



Efforts to step up extraction of oil, gas, and mineral deposits from these areas have been increasing in recent years.

The National Audubon Society seeks a balance between resource extraction and protecting internationally critical habitat.

For more information about this event contact board president Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmith@frontiernet.net.

October Field Trips

October 7 - raptor migration at Washington Monument
October 14 - Cathedral State Park
October 28 - owl banding at South Mountain

--see pages 4 & 5 for details

PVAS Planning a Master Naturalist Program Chapter

PVAS held a meeting at the Leetown Science Center September 18 to discuss launching a local Master Naturalist Program chapter under PVAS's auspices.

Attendees included various PVAS officer and board representatives and members and other individuals who had indicated a strong interest in the program.

Rose Sullivan, who coordinates the Program statewide for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, briefed the group on the steps needed to start up a local chapter, and offered suggestions for organizing and managing program activities.

A decision was made to go ahead. Next steps include formalizing a Coordinating Committee, selecting co-chairs, beginning initial planning, and preparing an application for a charter from the state.

- Master Naturalist continues on page 2, bottom column 2

The Potomac Arts Festival: A Celebration of Nature and the Arts

The second annual festival kicks off November 3 at NCTC.

--see page 2 for more details.

Birdseed Orders Due October 15

It is that time of year again ... and your Birdseed Order Form is enclosed.

Please note: the delivery date has been moved to the second Saturday in November (**November 11 – 10:00 a.m. to noon**) so that you can attend our Potomac Arts Festival (the first weekend in November).

Volunteers are needed to assist with distribution at Gower's Feeds in Williamsport, MD, and Ranson, WV, and additional volunteers are needed to transport seed to Berkeley Springs for distribution (people with trucks or vans are encouraged to volunteer).

To volunteer and/or ask questions about birdseed ... call Diana Mullis at 304-267-3482.

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

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Hello, everyone:

The National Children and Nature Conference described elsewhere in this newsletter focused on an important issue: the increasing estrangement of children from the natural world.

That focus was sparked in no small part by the work of author Richard Louv, who has been arguing forcefully that a whole host of trends have created a "nature deficit disorder" in modern society.

Louvé says this disorder isn't just affecting the physical, mental, and spiritual health of today's children but also raises troubling questions about our future.

(The conference program stated some of these questions as follows: "... if children are detached from nature today, who will care for the land tomorrow? . . . What will our society be like if nature is considered irrelevant to our lives?")

These kinds of concerns aren't new.

Long before things like electronic media and children's soccer leagues were invented, people like William Wordsworth were very worried about the physical, mental, and spiritual implications of the increasing industrialization and urbanization of society.

A hundred years later, in a much more industrialized and urbanized era, people like Teddy Roosevelt were very worried about the same thing.

But now that we do, in fact, have electronic media and children's soccer leagues (and much, much more that Wordsworth and Roosevelt never dreamed of), there can be no doubt that the problem is worse than it's ever been.

So what do we do?

The Children and Nature Conference was billed as "a first step" that will hopefully lead to the implementation of strategies "to reconnect children and nature."

It remains to be seen how all this will work out. Talk is easier than action, and counteracting profound demographic, technological and cultural trends is no small feat.

In the meantime, it's up to local organizations like the Potomac Valley Audubon Society to keep chipping away at the problem as best they can in their own communities.

PVAS has learned to do this by delivering nature-education programs that are tailored to local needs and sensibilities and scaled in a way that allows close personal contact (with both children and parents) and lots of hands-on instruction.

We know this approach works because we're a small community and can see the results. For example, one woman came up to me this summer and told me that our Yankauer Audubon Discovery Camp had literally changed her daughter's life.

It doesn't get any better than that.



Potomac Arts Festival Nears

PVAS's second annual Potomac Arts Festival runs November 3-5. The three-day juried festival will be held at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in concert with the American Conservation Film Festival.

A total of 42 artists and craftspeople will be exhibiting and selling their work.

The Arts Festival hours will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, November 4, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, November 5. There will be no charge for admission but donations to PVAS are welcomed. This year the festival offers several art education activities for children on Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4:00 pm. These activities are organized jointly by the Potomac Arts Festival and Children's Treehouse Child Development Center.

A special preview exhibit and reception will be held at NCTC the evening of Friday, November 3, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Exhibits are open from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and the reception will run from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., including a silent auction and refreshments. Those who attend will be able to purchase works before the festival opens with 15 percent of all the evening's sales proceeds going to PVAS.

Admission to the preview exhibit and/or reception will be \$40 per person. Please note that tickets must be purchased in advance before October 12. Purchase tickets by contacting the festival coordinator at (304) 876-8321 or artfestival@potomacaudubon.org.

Sponsors for this year's festival include Premier Bank, Eden Design, and NCTC. *We need additional sponsors and volunteers* for this event, so please contact Sandy Sponaugle or Mary Dubay, 304-876-8321, if you can be a sponsor or volunteer.

-Master Naturalist continued from page 1

The current goal is to have a local chapter up and running next year, perhaps as early as the spring.

As the chapter takes shape, PVAS will be asking for volunteers with various skills (particularly organizational ability) to help with the project. If you would like to become involved now, please contact former PVAS president Kathryn Henry, who is acting as interim coordinator until co-chairs have been finalized. She can be reached by telephone at 304-876-6681 or by email at dhenny@myexcel.com.

Patterned after the 33-year-old Master Gardener Program, the Master Naturalist Program allows individuals to increase their knowledge of the natural world and encourages them to put that knowledge to work by assisting their communities.

Participants receive extensive classroom and field training in a broad range of topics in the fields of natural history and environmental education.

Once certified, these individuals help their communities in various ways, such as constructing and maintaining nature trails, assisting scientists with research, and giving presentations to school children and other groups.

—Peter Smith

Monongahela National Forest Wilderness Threatened

Would you like to know how you can help to save some wilderness areas in our beautiful state? The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, with the endorsement and support of numerous other organizations, is urging all of us who love and value the wild outdoors to write to the West Virginia Congressional Delegation about the future of the Monongahela National Forest.

The Monongahela stretches along the highest ridges in the state, from just south of Cathedral State Park in Preston County nearly to I-64 in Greenbrier County. It surrounds and/or encloses places that are familiar to most of us in PVAS – Spruce Knob; Seneca Rocks; Dolly Sods Wilderness Area; several state recreation areas, including Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks; plus many other important natural areas.

During its revision of the management plan for the Monongahela National Forest, the National Forest Service recently held a 90-day public comment period, during which 15,000 individuals submitted comments. Over 90 percent of these comments supported “Alternative 3”, which recommends the largest number of areas for extra protection as *wilderness areas*. Wilderness designation would allow hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, birding, and other outdoor activities. It would protect wildlife habitats and watersheds, and it would preserve a legacy for future generations. However, the Forest Service seems likely to go with “Alternative 2”, which rolls back protection and potentially opens new areas to road-building and logging, even though the economies of neighboring communities are likely to benefit more from tourism near wilderness areas than from logging in unprotected areas.



www.wvwild.org

Please join me and others around the state, by writing to Senators Byrd and Rockefeller and Representative Capito and asking them (1) *to urge the Forest Service to recommend more wilderness areas in their final plan* and (2) *to introduce legislation that will permanently protect these special places*. For more information go to the Wilderness Coalition web site at www.wvwild.org.

...Kathryn Henry

Correction to September Article: Thank You Camp Scholarship Sponsors!

Janet Stone was also a contributor to the camp scholarship fund. She was omitted from last month's list of contributors. Our apologies, Janet!

Children and Nature Conference

On September 7-9, Yankauer Director Kristin Alexander and several PVAS board members attended the national conference on “Children and Nature” held at National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown.

The conference was cosponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Conservation Fund. It was inspired by a book published last year: *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, by Richard Louv.

The premise of the conference was that children are becoming less and less connected to nature and the outdoors in general, and that this is profoundly affecting their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Speakers included U.S. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, and National Audubon Society president John Flicker. Experts from around the nation discussed various aspects of this problem.

An impressive mix of some 300 people from the health and education professions attended, including representatives of local-area health and education organizations. Local organizations hope to get together soon to continue the dialogue that was started there. PVAS will of course participate in this effort.

Specific issues to be addressed include: How can we encourage families to participate in outdoor activities more often with their children? How can we make sure that green space is accessible for all children? How can we increase opportunities for urban youth and minorities to interact with nature?

PVAS Leads Sessions

PVAS was asked to help lead two activities at the Children and Nature conference.

A focus group of middle school students was asked about the obstacles they face in spending time in nature. Typical responses were: nature is not accessible; schools take field trips to amusement parks instead of real parks with trails; schools are afraid of weather and won't let kids outside if it rains or if it's cold; schools are cutting recess, and even with recess the schoolyards are football fields instead of anything natural; school building design doesn't require or even encourage going outside; and nature isn't “cool” anymore.

The second activity in which PVAS participated was a demonstration session based on the digital nature photography camp we co-sponsored with NCTC this summer.

In this session children were given an opportunity to practice some nature photography under the supervision of Matt Poole, NCTC leader of this summer's nature photography camp. Nikon Corporation loaned cameras for the session, as it had done for this summer's camp.

The children were impressed when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall, and National Geographic Society Explorer in Residence Sylvia Earle observed the session for a time and interacted with them.

PVAS and NCTC would like to see nature photography camps and similar activities take root at wildlife refuges across the country as part of the effort to reconnect children with nature.

Volunteers Pitch In At Yankauer

August and September saw many improvements at PVAS's Yankauer Nature Preserve thanks to Shepherd University's Day of Service, a special PVAS volunteer day, and the United Way's Day of Caring.

On Shepherd's Day of Service, August 16, a group of 20 students came to the preserve as part of freshman orientation. The students cleaned the benches, weeded and prepared the butterfly garden area, cut ailanthus, cleaned up and prepared the wetland area, mulched around the pavilion, and generally spruced things up. The place looked great!



PVAS held a volunteer day of its own on August 25. Chris Robinson and Susan Brookreson removed some of the large ailanthus trees around the parking lot and pavilion, and Gary and Diane Sylvester brought their tractor to dig holes for the bumper installation around the parking lot.

On September 12, United Way's Day of Caring brought about 40 community volunteers to the preserve, including 20 leadership students from Hedgesville High School, Shepherd University's men's basketball team, and some master gardeners.

Trails were mulched, the butterfly/wildlife garden was installed (after 3 years of planning!), posts were installed for new trail signs, and stilt grass was removed. A special thank you goes to Alice Barkus for coordinating this PVAS's Day of Caring effort this year. Special thanks also to the following: Jane Vanderhook, Sue Pellish, Diana Mullis, and Susan Brookreson for providing lunch for volunteers; Cam Tabb for providing mulch for the trails; and the Yellow Brick Bank for providing bread for the volunteer lunch.

Come and visit and enjoy the hard work all these folks put in!

Birder's Paradise: Where Backyard Meets Field

Ever dream of a place where backyard birding is just as rewarding as field birding? Ken Hunter, who helped his wife Patsy as PVAS' field trips coordinators the past three years, describes this scene: anhingas pull out onto the dock to dry; snowy and great egrets, little blue, tricolor, and great blue herons stalk crabs, shrimp, and mullet near an oyster bar; osprey hover and dive; and every winter a flock of hooded mergansers arrive to patrol just beyond the oyster bar. All this, and a classic view across a bay, is enjoyed while sitting at the picture window of "Rose Bay Cottage" that Ken's father built near Daytona Beach, Florida, in the 1950s.

If this is your idea of a dream cottage, take heart, such places do exist. Time to do an inventory of friends, family, and places you've heard about to find your own little paradise. FYI, if you can't come up with your own destination, Ken and Patsy are willing to share. Call Ken or Patsy at (304) 725-3936 or email patsyhunter@gmail.com for information.

Field Trip to Cathedral State Park

PVAS is planning a special field trip to West Virginia's Cathedral State Park on Saturday, October 14.

Located in southeastern Preston County; the Park contains the only stand of mixed virgin timber left in West Virginia.

The park gets its name from its many ancient hemlocks, which reach majestic proportions and form spectacular natural cloisters. These trees reach up to 90 feet in height and 21 feet in circumference. They are one of the last remnants of a vast virgin hemlock forest which once flourished in the Appalachian highlands. In addition to its hemlocks, the Park contains over 170 species of vascular flora, including 9 species of fern, 3 species of club moss, over 30 tree species, and over 50 species of wildflowers.



Photo by:
Dr. Steve Keating

In all, the park encompasses a total of 133 acres. The terrain is gently sloping with an elevation varying from 2460 to 2620 feet.

The drive to the park from the Eastern Panhandle is about two-and-a-half hours long. Field trip participants will meet at the Food Lion supermarket parking lot on Route 51 in Inwood, just off I-81, and depart from there at 8:00 a.m. They will drive down I-81 to Route 50 at Winchester, and take Route 50 west to the park.

A guided tour of the park by a park ranger is scheduled for 11:00 a.m.

Afterwards, the field trip group will travel to nearby Blackwater Falls State Park for a 1:00 p.m. lunch before departing for home.

Because of the distances involved, carpooling is encouraged. Those willing to have their cars, SUVs, or vans serve as pool vehicles are asked to contact the trip coordinator, board member Clark Dixon, at 304-725-9634, beforehand so he has an idea of the number of pool vehicles that will be available.

Trip participants should wear comfortable walking shoes and dress for the season.

Potomac Valley Nature Photographers News

The Potomac Valley Nature Photographers will hold their next meeting at 7:00 p.m. October 27 in the National Conservation Training Center auditorium. Local nature photographer Wil Hershberger will present images from a recent trip to Yellowstone National Park, and winners of the September PVNP photography competition will be announced.

Happy Birthday, Lydia McGilton!

A special thank you goes to Lydia. Instead of gifts for her ninth birthday, she asked friends and family to donate bird feeders and money to PVAS for our new birding wayside at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. Thank you for thinking of us, Lydia, and happy birthday!

October Birdwatching Trips

PVAS is sponsoring two birdwatching trips to South Mountain, in Washington County, Maryland, in October.

The first trip, which is set for the morning of Saturday, October 7, will be to the mountain's Washington Monument to watch migrating raptors.

The annual fall raptor migration should be in full swing by then, and the monument offers an excellent vantage point to watch these magnificent birds as they ride the thermals that sweep along the mountain's ridgeline. We will hope to see several species.

Participants will gather at 8:30 a.m. in the uppermost parking lot of the Washington Monument State Park, which is located four miles east of Boonsboro and 1 1/2 miles north of Alternate Route 40 on Monument Road. From the parking lot, the group will walk the quarter-mile or so up to the monument at the summit. The trail is rather rough and not suitable for anyone who needs assistance.

The length of the stay at the monument will depend on how the hawk flight is going; conditions permitting, the trip leaders may stay until early afternoon. Participants may leave whenever they wish. Participants should bring binoculars and be prepared for chilly temperatures.

No pre-registration is needed for this trip. But please note that the trip will be cancelled if it is raining because hawks do not fly in such weather.

This trip will be led by board member Nancy Kirschbaum and her husband Elliot. For more information, contact them at 304-876-6881 or nancyk500@adelphia.net.

The second trip will be a special evening trip on Saturday, October 28, to join Steve Huy at his owl-banding station on South Mountain, part of Project OwlNet. Steve has shared his experiences with PVAS members for many years and looks forward to our return.

Using audio lures and mist nets, Steve captures, bands and releases Northern Saw-whet owls (smallest owl in eastern North America) during its fall migration. This trip offers a unique opportunity to see these birds up close and learn about their life history.

Steve had been able to work out of an old fire tower until this year when the tower was removed. Please consider making a donation to support construction of a new banding shelter with bunk beds for volunteers.

Participants in this trip will meet at 9:00 p.m. at the commuter parking lot on Route 67, just east of Boonsboro, and drive from there to the banding site on South Mountain. The trip group will stay at the banding site until about 11:00 p.m. This trip involves a walk over uneven ground and is not recommended for anyone who needs assistance. Participants should be sure to dress warmly.

Space for this trip is limited to 15 to 20 persons, so those wishing to participate are encouraged to register soon by contacting board member Carolyn Thomas at 304-267-3115 or webethomas@aol.com. If there is sufficient interest, a second trip to the owl-banding station may be added. Trips to this site will be cancelled if it is raining.

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 (\$15 for seniors and students) or \$35 to renew an existing NAS membership. 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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DATED MATERIALS

A proud partner of the United Way of Berkeley and Morgan Counties, United Way of Jefferson County, and the Combined Federal Campaign.



MAIL TO:

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The *Potomac Valley Audubon Society* meets at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April, in the auditorium at the USGS Leetown Science Center, Letown/Kearneysville, WV. 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://potomacaudubon.org>. *PVAS* serves the Easter Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

PVASBOARD
 The *PVAS*Board meets 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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