

# VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

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October 2012

## Lincoln's Sparrow

by Wil Hershberger

October is a time of transition in the PVAS area. Many of our song birds have left for warmer climes to the South and migratory birds from the north are still moving through our area.

One of the species that we get to see during October

is the Lincoln's Sparrow. Although it is very shy and reclusive during its south-bound migration, the sight of this handsome sparrow is more than worth the effort to find one.

Closely related to the Song Sparrow, the Lincoln's Sparrow is decked out in shades of brown and buff. The sides of the belly and breast as well as the breast and throat are finely streaked with short dark stripes on a white background. There is a buffy wash to the upper breast that, in my opinion, makes it one of the most attractive sparrows in our area.

Lincoln's Sparrows are typically found nesting in boggy, mossy habitats far to the north where their nests of coarse grasses or sedges are built on the ground. These special habitats absorb sounds rather efficiently. Therefore, the song of the Lincoln's Sparrow is loud and warbling. Some call the songs wren-like.

Research has shown that trills (a single syllable repeated in rapid succession) are harder for birds to produce than pure-toned whistles. A wide frequency range for the notes of a trill and a short time for the delivery of the notes appear to be mutually exclusive; a bird might be able to produce a rapid trill of notes that span a narrow frequency range but would have to sing the trill at a slower pace if the notes covered a broader frequency range. These trills are very closely listened to by the female Lincoln's Sparrow as she assesses the condition and genetics of a prospective mate. The better he can

*"Sparrow" continues on page 2*



© Wil Hershberger

## Children's Halloween Season Event at Yankauer Preserve

PVAS will offer a special evening children's event at the Yankauer Nature Preserve on Saturday, October 13, which will last from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. The event will be for children ages 6-9.

Entitled "Bugs, Bones and Bats," it is intended as an educational alternative to the haunted houses that are so prevalent around Halloween. Children will explore the preserve's woods and learn about the animals and insects that are active there during the early evening at this time of year.

There will be a \$5.00 fee for each child. Enrollment will be strictly limited to ensure that all children receive personal attention, and pre-registration is required.

To register or get more information go to the PVAS website at or contact Ellen Murphy at 304-676-8739 or [Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).

This event is part of a new program, called "Outdoor Explore!," which is intended to give youngsters 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. All sessions are aimed at children ages 6-9.

Jan Hummer, an experienced natural science educator, is leading each program session. The program is being made possible by a grant from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.



## Bird Seed Sale

It's that time of year again! Enclosed is your 2012 Birdseed Order Form with an order Deadline of **October 15**. If you would like an additional order form, have questions or comments, or would like to volunteer your help at Berkeley Springs or Williamsport on pick-up day (Saturday, November 3), call Diana Mullis at 304-267-3482 or email: [dianamullis@aol.com](mailto:dianamullis@aol.com).

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

## Reflections on PVAS

*Bob Reynolds, PVAS President*

The list of projects at Yankauer Nature Preserve included weeding and mulching the butterfly garden, lining the new accessible trail with cedar logs, clearing brush in the parking lot, and mulching eroding sections of the nature trail. Could all these projects be completed by volunteers in a single day – September 11, 2012, United Way’s Day of Caring? The answer is, No, it cannot be done in a single day.

While these tasks were indeed all completed by the end of the day, the volunteer effort that made this possible began much earlier. Tim Murphy inventoried needs and generated work assignments, and Cam Tabb donated and delivered 35 yards of mulch. The remarkable PVAS Events Committee of Jane Vanderhook, Diana Mullis, Alice Barkus, and Jim Vanderhook met to plan lunch for the volunteers, and Wanda Miller, Mina Goodrich, Gretchen Meadows, Alice Barkus, and Vicki Smith baked cookies for the day.

These PVAS volunteers are not short-termers, and their support over the years is fabled. During a PVAS butterfly outing two weeks earlier, PVAS member Virginia Winston was overheard recruiting volunteers for the Day of Caring with the promise that volunteers were certain to enjoy the lunch provided!

The reputation provided by steadfast volunteers pays off for PVAS. On the Day of Caring, 75 volunteers from the Jr. ROTC, Jefferson Pop Singers, Sir Speedy Printing, the Master Gardeners, the Master Naturalists, and PVAS worked efficiently to complete Tim’s list of tasks. By my observation, they also heartily enjoyed the meat ball sandwiches, rice, beans, veggies, and trays of cookies! Our heartfelt thanks to United Way and to all the volunteers who made the “day” such a success.



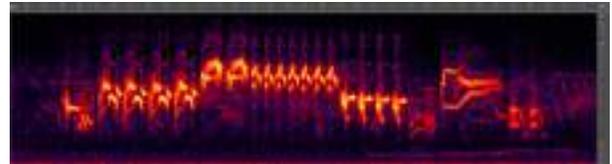
*“Sparrow” continues from page 1:*

trill the more likely she will pick him for her mate; he is probably healthier and of a better genetic stock than other males that cannot sing the trills as well.

Male Lincoln’s Sparrows also listen to the songs of other males and determines where each of his neighbors are located. Once territories are established, each male knows who his neighbors are by their songs and can accurately locate where the songs are coming from. If a neighbor suddenly starts singing from the wrong side of a male’s territory, he would perceive that as a threat and respond vigorously while, if the same song was coming from the neighbors’ correct territory, the resident male would not be so inclined to escalate the situation.

The song of the Lincoln’s Sparrow has a haunting quality to it that seems perfectly suited to the habitats where they are found. Listening to this melancholy song echoing over a bog is a treat for the ears and a sound I always listen to for many minutes on end when I hear it. The sonogram of a single Lincoln’s Sparrow song (shown below) has time on the X-axis and frequency on the Y-axis, with the brighter orange traces being louder sounds.

Here are links to a recording of a Lincoln’s Sparrow I recorded



in Michigan on May 21, 2011 in the Huron National Forest. The movie shows the sonogram as well as plays the sound but is a larger file and will take longer to load. The mp3 is a smaller file and is only the sound:

[http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Lincolns\\_sparrow.mov](http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Lincolns_sparrow.mov)

[http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Lincolns\\_sparrow.mp3](http://www.natureimagesandsounds.com/assets/Lincolns_sparrow.mp3)

## New PVAS Conservation Committee Seeks Members

Hello PVAS members and friends, I am Heather McSharry, PVAS Board of Directors member and Chair of the new Conservation Committee. Are you interested in helping PVAS implement meaningful conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats in our area? If you answered “yes”, please consider joining us. The Conservation Committee will provide an administrative “home” for efforts that are already in the works like a Grasslands Birds Initiative Program and discussion on bird-friendly coffee options for the PVAS area. It will also take on new ideas like developing a policy for PVAS adoption of public advocacy positions. If you would like to help with any of these efforts or have an idea for another initiative that would further the conservation portion of the PVAS mission, please contact me at [Heather\\_McSharry@yahoo.com](mailto:Heather_McSharry@yahoo.com) or 304-707-5758.



## Remember United Way/CFC Fund Drives

If you give to United Way or the Combined Federal Campaign, don’t forget that you can designate PVAS for directed contributions. To designate CFC contributions to PVAS, enter PVAS’s CFC number (29061) on the CFC form that you file with your employing agency.

Please note that United Way and CFC deduct a percentage from all designated contributions to cover their administrative costs. Any questions, contact Kristin Alexander at [pvasmail@aol.com](mailto:pvasmail@aol.com) or 304-676-3397.

## Director's Report

*Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director*

I'm back! At least partially. After a three-month hiatus to focus on my new role as a mom, I've returned to the "nest" of PVAS as part time Executive Director. It's good to be back, though I admit it was a wonderful three months. I can't thank the organization enough for the flexibility and support so I could fully enjoy and focus on the new little adventure that is our son JJ.



Special and heartfelt thanks go to Peter Smith and Ellen Murphy for covering administrative and programmatic tasks while I was off. The dedication these two showed to PVAS was truly above and beyond – especially when my maternity leave was forced to begin six weeks earlier than anticipated! Amazingly, not a ball was dropped and I credit this to both these individuals and the amazing volunteers of PVAS.

The annual "This Race is for the Birds!" Spring Wildflower Festival, fundraiser at the McMillan home, summer camp and many other activities were all a success thanks to all of the incredible PVAS volunteers, staff and Board members. No one would even let me help when I offered! They had it covered, and I had full confidence because PVAS is blessed with the most dedicated, quality, professional, and generous batch of people I've ever encountered.

And that's why I'm back. Little JJ Alexander Feldman is very cute, and I love him beyond words, but I also love my job – particularly the people with whom I get to interact and who demonstrate every day what it is to give.

It's true - PVAS now has more competition for my time and attention, but the mission is one in which I truly believe. Thank you for all of the well wishes and support! There is no doubt that PVAS is an organization worth coming back to!

## PVAS Adopts New Committee Structure

In an attempt to streamline activities and better support PVAS' core services, PVAS has restructured to form five board committees: Adult Services, Youth Services, Conservation, Land Management, and Board Development/Administration. Each committee will be headed up by a Board member who will recruit helpers for each of their areas.

The **Adult Services Committee** will be chaired by Sandy Saggalkin. Initial focus will be given to the new service initiatives of the birding committee such as the master birder program, and our fledging hiking group.

Jim Jenkins has volunteered to chair the **Youth Services Committee**. Initial focus will be exploration of options for PVAS sponsored outdoor experiences for youth and collaboration with the local Boy Scout Council providing expert assistance with nature related merit badges.

Heather McSharry has volunteered to chair the **Conservation Committee**. Initial focus will be on efforts to expand the availability

of bird certified coffee throughout our PVAS service area, a PVAS initiative to encourage bird friendly mowing of grasslands in our PVAS service area, and development of a proposed policy for PVAS adoption of public advocacy positions.

Lou Scavnicky has volunteered to chair the **Land Management Committee**. Initial focus will be the creation of a Yankauer project inventory and a priority schedule for addressing these projects. The committee will also support the development of educational trail guides for Yankauer, and will provide review for the land management and capital development plan currently in development for Stauffer's Marsh.

PVAS President Bob Reynolds and Vice-President Gary Heichel have volunteered to co-chair the **Administrative Services and Board Development Committee**. The primary focus of this committee will be planning support for the fundraising, internal communications, membership, publicity, finance, and board development responsibilities of PVAS.

The PVAS President shall be responsible for the coordination and integration of all committees, and shall be responsible for the supervision of Committee activities. In addition, the Executive Director shall serve as liaison to or ex officio member of all standing and ad hoc committees and participate on the committees as needed.

All of these committees will be seeking volunteers to support existing programs as well as new initiatives, so please contact the Chairperson of the committee of interest to you if you'd like to get involved! Contact information for all Board members and staff is available on the last page of this newsletter.

We thank these Board members for stepping into these leadership roles, and thank PVAS members and friends in advance for helping them!

### Ideas for Speakers?

PVAS is currently seeking program speakers and topics for the spring. If you have a suggestion, please contact Kristin Alexander at [Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org).

## Eidolon Nature Tower Demolition

Demolition of the Federal Aviation Administration tower at the Eidolon Nature Preserve got underway September 13. Machinery will be moving up and down the preserve road while this project is in progress and the preserve has been declared a work zone for safety reasons. Accordingly, the preserve will be closed to visitors until the project is completed, sometime around the beginning of October. Notice will be given when the preserve is reopened.

The tower was built by Western Union in 1962, as part of an upgrade of a nationwide network of some 400 towers that used microwave signals to relay radio signals from point to point. During the Cold War era, the network played a role in national defense communications as well as commercial communications. Western Union sold off its tower network in the 1980s and the FAA acquired the Eidolon tower at that time.

Recent advances in communications technology have rendered the tower obsolete.

**View from the Eagle's Nest**

by Sandy Sagalkin

"It looks like a tailgate party," I said to one of the parents of our Youth Bird Club as we tried to find a parking spot at the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch. Cars were already parked in double rows at the commuter parking lot that doubles as an official hawk watch, located east of Berryville where route 7 crosses the Blue Ridge Mountains near the Appalachian Trail. Several dozen hawk watchers were out with binoculars and spotting scopes, some sitting in folding chairs. Matt Orsie and Wil Hershberger were there with PVAS's Raptor Workshop, part of the new PVAS Master Birder Program.

As we climbed out of our cars, Black Vultures were circling nearby. "Watch for their cutoff tails and how they flap and glide. And they hold their wings out flat," I said to my young charges. Turkey Vultures were off in the distance as well as a few "kettles" (hawks circling and rising, rising up in a thermal) of Broad-winged Hawks. We had come to Snickers Gap to catch what we hoped was the beginning of the peak week of the famous Broad-winged Hawk migration.

Birding in the Eastern Panhandle can be very rewarding. But nothing stirs the blood like the fall migration of raptors. And most spectacular is the migration of Broad-winged Hawks. Last year over 37,000 Broad-wings swept past Snickers Gap, and close to 14,000 in a single day in mid-September. That's a staggering number.

The bulk of the Broad-wing population passes through our area in about a 10-day period

So I was hoping to stir the blood of our new Youth Bird Club by taking them to Snicker's Gap the morning of September 15<sup>th</sup>. The weather was perfect, sunny but not too hot. The sky was cloudless, which makes it harder to see the birds against the blue sky. We stayed for an hour and a half and had good looks at six adult Bald Eagles, several Osprey, and several "kettles" of Broad-wings off in the distance. We watched an occasional American Kestrel and Sharp-shinned Hawk as they flew by. Although the Broad-wings failed to show up in large numbers as hoped, everyone enjoyed their first time at a hawk watch. "You should have been here tomorrow," I thought to myself, a variant of the old fisherman's saw.

That was yesterday. After I finish this article, I'm heading up to the Washington Monument Hawk Watch, which is about 20 minutes from my house, hoping for a bigger flight. The traditional peak day, always dependent on the weather, is around September 18<sup>th</sup>. For further information on PVAS's hawk watch outings, contact me at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

**Wetland Walk at Cool Spring Farm**

On August 30<sup>th</sup>, PVAS sponsored a wetland nature walk with emphasis on butterflies, dragonflies, plants and birds. The outing drew 20 participants joining the two trip leaders, Bruni Haydl and Carol Del-Colle. It was held at Cool Spring Farm, which encompasses 81-acres including a rare marl marsh near Charles Town, W.Va. Marl marshes are unique ecosystems where several rare plants may be found. Only two such marshes exist in our area, with the other being Altona Marsh.

Some of the many interesting plants observed on the outing included New York Ironweed, Wingstem, Giant Blue Lobelia,

Hemp- Dogbane, Milkweed, Mistflower, Joe-Pye Weed, Boneset, Spotted Touch-me-nots, Queen Anne's Lace, Common Milkweed, and Wineberry.

A variety of butterflies could be seen flitting around this wonderfully diverse habitat. As we began our walk, a very friendly Hackberry Emperor even landed on one of the participants. Other species there were Red-spotted Purple, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Pearl Crescent, Question Mark, Buckeye, Cloudless Sulphur, Clouded Sulphur, Monarch and Skippers.

Saddleback Caterpillars residing on the underside of some Sycamore leaves were a highlight of the walk. These interesting caterpillars are brown or charcoal black with white-edged, lime green saddle-like patterns on their backs with brown oval centers. They have knobs and fingerlike projections with bristle and stinging spines. Their sting burns and may leave a rash. Clearly these little guys should carry a sign—"Look but don't Touch!" The moths they turn into are less likely to be seen.

Several Monarch Butterfly caterpillars of various sizes were also discovered, as were two "mystery" caterpillars. Some pictures were taken of these small caterpillars with soft white / grayish hairs. After some research, it was decided that these were examples of the moth species known as Delicate Cycnia.

Birds too, graced the landscape. Seen and heard were Cedar Waxwings, Carolina Wrens, Gray Catbirds, Barn Swallow, American Goldfinch, and an Eastern Wood-pewee.

Near the end of the walk, everyone was treated to the lovely mating display of a male and female Ebony Jewelwing. This species of Damselfly may be found darting along shady streams or resting on nearby vegetation. As they move and catch the light they are striking. Being able to observe them dancing over the water, was a wonderful way to conclude our nature walk.

- Carol Del- Colle

**October Local Birding Trips**

PVAS has scheduled four local birding trips for September. All the trips will focus on migrating hawks, particularly Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels.

As usual, all are free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children will be welcome. Only two trips require pre-registration: the hawk-watching trips to the Washington Monument State Park. No pre-registration is needed for the other two trips.

For each trip, participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water and bug spray. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

Trips will be cancelled in the event of rain because hawks do not fly in such weather.

Full details can be found on the PVAS website. For more information, including plans if rain is forecast, contact Sandy Sagalkin at 240-291-6465 or [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net).

The specific dates, destinations and details are as follows:

**Saturday, October 6 and Saturday, October 27: Hawk-watching trip to Snicker's Gap**, in Virginia on the Clark/Loudoun County line just below Jefferson County WV. Participants will meet to carpool to the site at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot in front of the Martin's supermarket in the Jefferson Crossroads Shopping Center just off Route 340 east of Charles Town.

**Wednesday, October 17 and Wednesday, October 31: Hawk-watching trip to the Washington Monument State Park** on South Mountain, outside Boonsboro, MD. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Park's upper parking lot just below the Monument. Pre-registration is essential because space constraints at the viewing site will limit participation to just eight people. To register and get directions, contact Sandy at the phone number or email address shown above.

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## Sign Up Now for Nov. 10 Owl-banding Trip

PVAS is again sponsoring a special nighttime field trip to watch an expert catch, band, and release migrating owls on South Mountain, in Washington County, MD. The trip will be held on Saturday, November 10. It will start at about 9:00 p.m. and last until approximately 11:30 p.m.

Participants will meet at the commuter parking lot on Route 67 (Rohersville Road) just off Route 40 (Old National Pike), next to Thompson's Gas, and carpool from there.

These trips have long been a favorite for families.

Anyone is welcome to participate but early pre-registration is essential because these trips fill up fast (space is limited to 25 persons). Register online at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org) or contact Carolyn Thomas at [webethomas@aol.com](mailto:webethomas@aol.com) or 304-267-3115.

There is no fee but a donation of \$10 to the South Mountain owl banding station is suggested. This will help support the station's work.

The expert who will conduct the banding is Steve Huy, who has been banding owls on the mountain for many years as part of Project OwlNet. The owls he will be banding are the Northern Saw-Whet Owl, the smallest owl in eastern North America. Visits to his banding site offer a unique opportunity to see these birds up close and learn about their life history.

This trip involves a walk over uneven ground and it is therefore not recommended for anyone who needs assistance. Participants should bring a flashlight and be sure to dress warmly.

Owls do not fly if it is raining, so the trip may be cancelled if conditions are not favorable.



## Birds, Bees and Butterflies

The PVAS Board recently decided to form some new committees and I've been asked to chair the Adult Services committee. Hence, the title of the article. Actually, I wanted to call it "Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies" but liked the alliteration.

I've been chairing the PVAS Birding Committee for over two years and it now will have a home in the Adult Services committee. I don't plan a major departure into new adult activities all at once. I see this as incremental process, adding activities one at a time.

What do I see as new possibilities? Many organizations like PVAS already are into butterflies and dragonflies. I think this is a natural for PVAS. I was recently at Stauffer's Marsh and there were more butterflies than birds – so we looked at butterflies. We already have members that know butterflies. In another article, Carol Del-Colle described her well-attended Wetlands walk at Cool Spring Farm, which focused on butterflies, caterpillars, plants and birds. Is there someone out there that knows their dragonflies?

What else? How about a river outing on the Potomac or Shenandoah river? We could hire a river outfitter for this. A PVAS Hiking Club? Biking the towpath? Amphibians? Reptiles? Wildflowers? Plants? Anything else you are interested in? We can only do this by tapping the PVAS talent pool.

Are these just "adult" activities? Can families bring children to events like this? Sure. That's the idea.

If you want to help by being a committee member or joining the talent pool to start the building process, you can contact me at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net) or 240-291-6465.

- Sandy Sagalkin

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## Another Wild Time at Wild Goose Farm!

Support PVAS' educational programs while having a great time on October 27, 2012 from 1-4pm. We're back at Wild Goose Farm, just outside Shepherdstown, in the beautiful hand-crafted timberframe barn built in 2002. PVAS held its very first major fundraising event there eight years ago. We repeated the event last year with great success, and we're grateful that the owners, Cricky and Michelle Shultz are willing to have us back!

We'll serve a delicious pork barbecue dinner with all the fixins', along with wine, beer, cider, and other delicious treats. (Vegetarian options will be available!) Enjoy a champagne hayride, an old-fashioned "cake walk", live music, an auction, and lots of other activities.

As with our other fundraisers, prepaid reservations are required. Individual tickets are \$45/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.

If you'd like to receive an invitation to this event, contact Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or [Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org) and provide your name, address, e-mail, and phone number. A detailed schedule and a list of auction items will be available at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org) as the event approaches. We hope to see you there!

## We Have a Job For You!

PVAS is an active organization, but everything depends on volunteers. If you, or anyone you know, are interested in volunteering for PVAS, we have a job to please just about anyone! We need people to:

- Represent us at contact booths at local fairs and festivals.
- Weed the gardens at Yankauer Preserve.
- Trim and repair trails at Yankauer, Eidolon, and Stauffer's Marsh.
- Lead nature and birding walks at locations all around the Eastern Panhandle.
- Help with PVAS events like the Wildflower Festival and Race For The Birds.
- Present workshop programs to Master Naturalists.
- Support Fundraisers by stuffing envelopes, providing refreshments, or helping to plan the events.
- Help with educational programs at Yankauer Preserve!

We offer training for every job. Please contact us via phone, email, Facebook, snail mail, smoke signal, carrier pigeon, or in person. We will be happy to hear from you.

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## Join A Hike to Jefferson's Rock

PVAS invites hikers of all ages and abilities to join veteran trail hikers Dave and Brenda Michener for a short hike up to Jefferson's Rock at Harpers Ferry on Saturday, October 20. Participants will meet at the Harpers Ferry train station at 9:00 a.m. Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along. There is no fee for the hike but parking in the train station lot will cost \$5. The date of this hike is only five days short of the 229th anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's visit to the place now known as Jefferson's Rock, on October 25, 1783.

Bring a camera to capture the amazing views from this spot; Jefferson called it "perhaps one of the most stupendous scenes in nature." As an extra bonus, fall colors should be close to their peak at this time, and the hike will offer an excellent vantage point for viewing them.

On the way back to the train station, the group will hike along part of the Appalachian Trail. This hike will be relatively easy but it will include some steep steps. It will take about an hour. It will take place rain or shine. Participants should wear sturdy footwear and dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions.

Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. To pre-register go to the PVAS website at [www.potomacaudubon.org](http://www.potomacaudubon.org) or contact Dave at [DaveMichener@msn.com](mailto:DaveMichener@msn.com) or 703-973-6435.

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## See You in Berkeley Springs!

If you have plans to attend the Apple Butter Festival in Berkeley Springs on October 6 and 7, be sure to look for the PVAS display and stop by to chat. Volunteers will be there to tell you more about PVAS programs as well as the Master Naturalist program. This is the 39<sup>th</sup> year for the festival and it is always popular with families.

## Join Cape May Hawk-watch Trip

Here's a reminder that PVAS is sponsoring a hawk-watching trip to Cape May, NJ the weekend of October 13-14. Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate and there will be no fee. But participants will be expected to furnish their own transportation and arrange for their own accommodations.

The trip will be led by local birder Sandy Sagalkin, and it will focus on several hawk-watching sites in the Cape May area.

Those who participate will also be able to take advantage of a variety of free educational opportunities offered by the Cape May Bird Observatory and the New Jersey Audubon Society.

If you want to come along, pre-register by contacting Sandy by phone at 240-291-6465. For more information, contact him by email at [monsansagalkin@myactv.net](mailto:monsansagalkin@myactv.net).

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## Shorebirds in the Eastern Panhandle

Want to see shorebirds without driving three or more hours to the Eastern Shore? You can see them right here in our backyard in Jefferson and Berkeley counties during certain months of the year. Problem number 1: You have to hang out at drainage ponds of subdivisions and industrial parks. How do you look like you belong at a drainage pond at 8 in the morning while hovering over a spotting scope? "Hey! What are you looking at?," the man in the SUV asked as he drove by at the Archer's Rock subdivision in Berkeley county during a PVAS shorebird circuit in early September. "Shorebirds" was our answer. Being a few hundred miles from any shoreline, that answer is usually enough to cause the driver to pull away with a puzzled look on his face.

Shorebirds consist of several families of small to medium size birds with relatively thin bills and long legs that often frequent shoreline habitats. They include Sandpipers, Plovers, Oystercatchers and others (see my article in last month's newsletter on our Eastern Shore trip). But not all "shorebirds" frequent the shore. The omnipresent Killdeer is a shorebird that we often see in farmlands and fields. So is the American Woodcock. And at least eight species of shorebirds can be seen regularly right around here during their spring and fall migration.

Like so many beginning and intermediate level birders, I struggled with shorebird identification for several years before finally deciding to take a workshop with Michael O'Brien, at the Cape May Bird Observatory. He's the author of "The Shorebird Guide," the bible for shorebird identification. I've also been to the Eastern Shore with our local bird expert, Matt Orsie. "They are not that hard to identify" I remember Matt telling me a few years ago on our way to the Eastern Shore. "For the eastern panhandle there are less than 20 species to learn." Problem number 2: You not only have to learn the birds in breeding plumage, but also in non-breeding (basic) plumage and during its transitional periods when it "molts". (Changes between breeding and non-breeding plumage). So that means learning 60 birds. But Matt was right. It isn't that difficult, especially if you are looking at the birds that frequent the Eastern Panhandle during migration. You can also learn them by coming on our annual trips to the Eastern Shore.

The key to breaking the code is forgetting what you've learned in your bird guides about identification based on plumage field marks and look first to the bird's size, its shape and structure, the habitat the bird is in, and its behavior. These are usually enough to make an identification. It takes a different mindset to look at plumage last.

Check out the various shorebird locations that local birders go to on the PVAS Birding Trail map on the PVAS website.

- Sandy Sagalkin

## October Wee Naturalists Program

Our October Wee Naturalists program for preschoolers, "Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf," will be held at the Yankauer Nature Preserve and focus on changing leaf colors and other signs of fall.

Two sessions will be offered: one on Monday, the 15th and another on Tuesday, the 16th. Each session will last from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The Wee Naturalists program is designed to provide regular opportunities for children ages 3-5 to explore nature together safely under the guidance of an experienced PVAS instructor. At each session, children must be accompanied by a parent, grandparent, other adult relative, or guardian.

To ensure that everyone receives close, personal attention, enrollment is limited and pre-registration is required. Easy on-line registration is available on our website. The fee is \$5 per child/adult team per session.

The program is led by Suzi Taylor, of Sharpsburg, MD, a veteran Audubon camp director who has a degree in environmental education. For more information, contact Suzi at 301-432-1908 or [tomandsuzi506@cs.com](mailto:tomandsuzi506@cs.com).

The Wee Naturalists program was established in 2009 with support from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's Two Rivers Giving Circle.

## 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:

- Access to a wide variety of PVAS programs and events for adults and children, including field trips, special events, workshops and courses, and environmental projects.
- A subscription to Valley Views, the PVAS newsletter
- E-mail alerts about events and programs of special interest
- Satisfaction of supporting conservation efforts, youth and adult nature education, individual and family recreation, and a wide array of programs in your community.

To become a local member, send in the form below and enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Make the check out to "PVAS." This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year.

### Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*To save postage costs, PVAS regularly sends its newsletter by e-mail. You can be assured that we do not share email addresses with anyone. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by U.S. mail check here: \_\_\_\_.*

**Clip and mail this form to:**

**Membership Chair, PVAS  
 PO Box 578  
 Shepherdstown, WV 25443**

**Thank you for your support!**



## October Program: Solar Energy

On October 10, 2012, Mike McKechnie, President of Mountain View Solar, will be presenting a PVAS program on Solar Energy – from evaluation to installation, how it works and the tax credits currently available.

Mike and his brother Pete discovered the power and benefits of solar energy during their time as green homebuilders with their company Mountain View Builders, based in Berkeley Springs, WV. In 2009 they decided to add renewable energy to their company's portfolio and eventually did a full conversion from building homes to installing solar energy systems. Mike has won several awards for his work throughout the state and continues to be a charismatic and passionate advocate for renewable energy and its job-creating potential. In addition to spreading the good word of solar, he works as a consultant to an array of professionals and building owners involved in the green building industry.

The program will be held at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in room 151 Instructional West at 7pm. Admission is free, and anyone is welcome to attend.

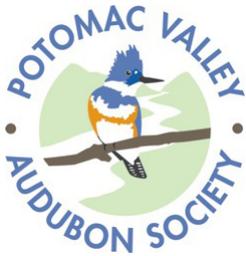
## If you'd rather join the National Audubon Society:

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](http://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.

### RED TEXT - DOT ALERT

If red text or 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 Local membership. If you are a National Audubon Society member, the National Society will notify you directly when your membership is up for renewal.





Potomac Valley Audubon Society  
 P O Box 578  
 Shepherdstown, WV 25443  
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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 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.

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

**PVAS Officers and Board Members**

- President: Bob Reynolds (2015) .....robert.reynolds40@gmail.com
- Vice President: Gary Heichel (2015) ..... GaryIris.Heichel@frontier.com
- Secretary: Mina Goodrich (2013) ..... larrymina@peoplepc.com
- Treasurer: Lex Miller (2014).....pamandlex@frontiernet.net
- Board Members-at-Large:
  - Don Briggs (2015) ..... ldonaldbriggs@gmail.com
  - Jim Jenkins (2013) .....jenkinsjim@vzw.blackberry.net
  - Leigh Jenkins (2013).....jenkinsleigh@hotmail.com
  - Heather McSharry (2014) .....heather\_mcsharry@yahoo.com
  - Jesse Morgan (2013) .....jmorgan@a-zoneenvironmental.com
  - Sandy Salgakin (2015) .....monsansagalkin@myactv.net
  - Lou Scavnicky (2015)..... captainlou@comcast.net
  - Kathy Stolzenburg (2013)..... kstolzenburg@gmail.com
  - Jane Vanderhook (2013)..... janehook@frontiernet.net

- Ex Officio Board Member:** Peter Smith ..... pvsmitth@frontiernet.net
- Emeritus Board Member:** Jean Neely .....jeaneely@comcast.net

**Special Contacts**

- Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397) .....Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
- Program Director: Ellen Murphy (304-676-3397)..... Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org
- Web Master: Kathy Bilton.....kathy@fred.net
- PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-267-3482)..... dianamullis@aol.com