VALLEY VIEWS

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

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President's Note

by Michael Sullivan, PVAS President

Our many wonderful volunteers were at it again during September. They led bird and nature walks, hawk watching trips, assisted with capture, tagging and release at Monarch Discovery Days, provided maintenance assistance at Yankauer Preserve and Stauffer's Marsh under the United Way Day of Caring, served refreshments to nearly 2,000 bicyclists when they stopped at Yankauer on the Potomac Peddlers Back Roads Century cycling event, and more. A busy month, indeed. All of us at PVAS are very appreciative of the contributions made by our volunteers, particularly that most valuable commodity – time.

There is some very important late breaking news as the month of September 2016 draws to a close. PVAS just received a bequest of over $140,000 from the estate of the late Mary Etta Bennett of Martinsburg. This extremely generous bequest is unprecedented for our organization, and we are very grateful. It will enable PVAS to proceed on firm ground as it expands environmental education and conservation programs in the Eastern Panhandle and Washington County.

We don't yet know much about Mary Etta Bennett. She grew up in Marlinton in Pocahontas County, WV, graduated from Hillsboro High School, and attended Potomac State College. She worked for many years in Martinsburg at various establishments, including her late husband's insurance office. She had a great love of songbirds, and the work that PVAS does must have been important to her. PVAS will report on memorialization of this bequest from Mary Etta Bennett in a later issue of Valley Views.

Good things are happening. Enjoy October and all of the outdoor activities afforded during this beautiful month.

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Fall has arrived, and with it the opportunity to reflect

Birding 101 has been part of the fabric of PVAS for 30 years. Instructors over the years have included Wil Hershberger, Bob Dean, Lynne Wiseman, Jim Keel, Jean Neely, and Matt Orsie. Bob Dean and Wil Hershberger have been part of the team for each of the 30 years, and most of the photos and sounds used in the course are Wil's.

This incredible milestone demands celebration! We will be holding a Birding 101 Reunion and Celebration on December 1, 2016 from 6-9 p.m. at NCTC, free of charge. Join us in "The Commons" of NCTC at 7 p.m. around the fireplace in the Roosevelt Room to reminisce, share stories, roast an instructor or two, and celebrate the years of introducing the community to birding by sharing the passion and knowledge of these incredible instructors. We've arranged with NCTC the option for PVAS guests to purchase a meal prior to the program, between 6-7pm. A cash bar will also be available that evening.

If you'd like to join us for this celebration, Birding 101 alumnus or simply a fan of the instructors, registration is available on the website's event calendar at www.potomacaudubon.org under the date, December 1, 2016. Registration is required, due to NCTC Security.

The website's event listing will have more details, but we hope you'll join us for this significant milestone in PVAS history, and to celebrate generosity of those instructors who have helped PVAS achieve it. Please help us reconnect with folks who have taken the course. We have the most recent 15 years of participant registrations, but registrations from earlier years are proving difficult to track down. Please help us spread the word far and wide - in particular reaching those who were part of Birding 101 in the early days.

Hope to see you there!

Car Donations

Unfortunately, Peter and Vicki Smith recently had a major car problem, rendering their car virtually "totaled." Fortunately for PVAS, they generously thought of us as the recipient of their "deceased vehicle" and we were able to sell it at auction for $2,200!

Vehicle donations are relatively hassle free, and can benefit PVAS financially. We normally work with Winchester Auto Auction on the WV/VA line on Rte. 11. If the vehicle is unable to be driven, they'll come pick it up at no cost to you, they'll take it to the auction site, and PVAS gets the proceeds! There is a nominal transaction fee deducted from the sale of the vehicle, but you, the donor, can deduct the full auctioned value on your taxes.

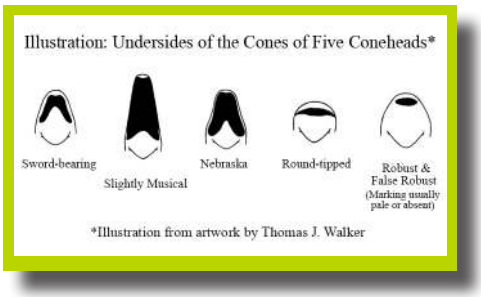
A huge thank you to Peter and Vicki for thinking of us! If you'd like to learn more or ask any questions, feel free to contact Kristin at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org.

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

Coneheads of Summer

By Wil Hershberger

From August through the last warm days of fall, conehead katydids dominate the nighttime symphony. These coneheads exhibit an amazing array of sizes and songs and are found from forests to roadsides and hayfields to pastures. They sing at night to avoid being eaten by the ever-hungry, ever-present birds. No doubt you have driven a backcountry road on a hot August night with your window down and heard a loud buzzing from a fence row as you sped past – Doppler effect and all. That was your introduction to the coneheads.



As you might have guessed, coneheads have oddly shaped heads. These are the original coneheads, not the 1970's Saturday Night Live versions, that took their shtick right from nature. At the top of these insects' heads, between the eyes and antennae, the forehead is molded into a cone that varies in shape, size, and coloration with each species. This fastigium seems to serve no survival-oriented purpose. Perhaps it is merely an ornamentation for attracting a mate – but then why do both males and females possess the cone? Interestingly, most of these conehead species will fall to the ground and scurry away through the tangle of vegetation above the soil level when fleeing a predator. Perhaps it helps them to shoulder their way to safety.





Top: Nebraska Conehead; bottom: Round-tipped Conehead; Photos © Wil Hershberger

In our area there are six species of coneheads that are easy to find. The most abundant and most easily identified is the Nebraska Conehead (*Neoconocephalus nebrascensis*) that can be found along any weedy roadside. The song is a loud buzz lasting a second and half with a silent pause lasting about a second. They are literally everywhere in our area. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/nebraska-conehead

The next most obvious is the Robust Conehead (*N. robustus*) that is mostly found in overgrown fencerows around pastures or in weedy fields. The song is a continuous, high-pitched buzz that is amazingly loud and will cause some pain in your ears if you stand too close. It's kind of like standing in the middle of a chorus of Spring Peepers (frogs) – they just overload your hearing. It is of note that the Robust Conehead can often be heard singing from the tops of trees. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/robust-conehead

A look-a-like and sound-a-like species, the False Robust Conehead (*N. bivocatus*) is slightly smaller than the Robust and its continuous buzzy song sounds lower in pitch to our ears. They are found in the same habitats as Robust Coneheads inhabit but are never found in trees. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/false-robust-conehead

The fourth most common species is the Round-tipped Conehead (*N. restusus*), and is found along roadsides and in grassy and weedy fields and the edges of lawns. They seem to prefer areas where the grass isn't very tall. Their song is a continuous buzz that reminds some people of an electrical short. They can be found in green and brown forms in almost equal proportions. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/round-tipped-conehead

Fifth is the Sword-bearing Conehead (*N. ensiger*). This species is found in the wetter areas of weedy and grassy fields and the edges of wetlands. The song is a rapid succession of short buzzes given at about 3-10 buzzes per second, depending on temperature. Several neighboring males will often sing in unison. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/sword-bearing-conehead

Our sixth species is the oddly named Slightly Musical Conehead (*N. exiliscanornus*). It is mostly found in wetlands, but can also be found in cornfields. Of all of the coneheads in our area, this species has the longest and wildest looking cone. The song of Slightly Musical Coneheads is a series of loud buzzes given at a slower pace than those of the Sword-bearing Conehead. Buzzes are given at about 3 per second and the effect is, perhaps, more pleasing and musical to our ears than most of the other species. http://songsofinsects.com/katydids/slightly-musical-conehead

I hope you will get a chance to explore the back roads and fields so that you too can have an encounter with one of these original coneheads. Handle them with care, they are omnivores and their mouthparts can pinch. Therefore, appreciate them from a comfortable distance listening to their awesomely loud and varied songs – remember that the females find these arias irresistible.

PVAS Events

Welcome, Alison!



PVAS is excited to introduce Alison Zak, our AmeriCorps Watershed Instructor for the 2016-2017 school year. All the way from Colorado, Alison and her dog Meeko have travelled a great distance to join the PVAS and lead environmental education lessons.

Alison has a deep appreciation of the natural world, and is also an accomplished teacher, scientist and writer. She recently received her master's degree in Anthropology from San Diego State University where she studied human-wildlife interaction in S. Sulawesi, Indonesia. Alison has wholehearted affection for black vultures, primatology, and Thai food, and she also can frequently be found making animal-themed crafts.

We are thrilled to have Alison join our team!

Watershed Education Classes Begin Again

The PVAS Watershed Education program is now in full swing in 4th grade classrooms in Jefferson and Berkeley counties. Instructors Bridget Tinsley (Land and Watershed Program Manager) and Alison Zak (new AmeriCorps volunteer) are excited to work with elementary and intermediate schools in the area including Orchard View, Tomahawk, St. Joseph, North Jefferson, T. A. Lowery, and Ranson Elementary.

Half- and full-year programs are available and each conclude with an interactive field trip experience. The curriculum introduces watershed science through interactive lessons that reinforce the existing 4th grade science curriculum and address content standard objectives issued by the WV Department of Education.

The first lesson, currently underway, emphasizes the unique properties of water such as its density in different states and the concept of surface tension. Students engage in hands-on experiments during which they form and test hypotheses and modify methods to observe varying results. Did you know surface tension allows more than 50 drops of water to fit on the surface of a penny?

Future topics of study include the water cycle, erosion, macroinvertebrates, food webs, and more. By the end of the program students should be more aware of their impact on their own watershed and more inspired to protect it! Only a few weeks into teaching the PVAS Watershed Education classes, Ms. Zak is already accustomed to hearing the kids cheer when their teacher says, "Time for watershed class!"



October 12 Program Will Look at Pollinators and Pollination

Our monthly program for October will feature a presentation entitled "Pollinators: The Simple Truth, We Can't Live Without Them." The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, October 12 at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville. Admission will be free and everyone is welcome to attend.

The speaker will be Larry Stritch, a recently retired U.S. Forest Service Botanist. He will provide an overview of the process of pollination and the role of pollinators, discuss the current status of different pollinators, and provide an introduction to developing pollinator gardens. Mr. Stritch is an expert in native plant identification, propagation, and gardening with native plants.

He is also an expert in pollination ecology and recently served as staff to President Obama's Pollinator Health Task Force where he helped author a National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators and Pollinator Friendly Best Management Practices for Federal Lands. In addition, he has served on the Federal Interagency Monarch High Level Working Group.

The Hospice facility's address is 330 Hospice Lane, Kearneysville. The Audubon events will be held in the main meeting room of the facility's Main Office building. There is plenty of parking at the facility.

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

PVAS Events

A Mighty Day of Caring Turnout

"Good actions give strength to ourselves and inspire good actions in others" –Plato



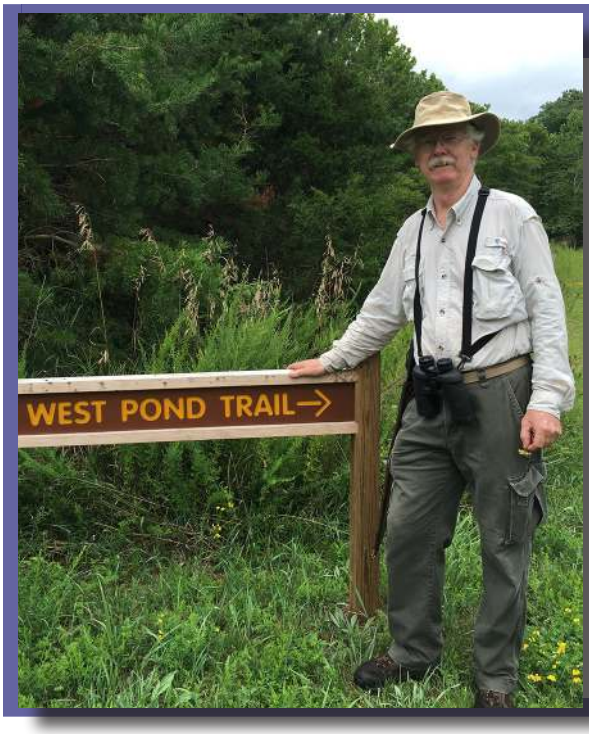


Armed with shovels, rakes and gardening gloves, our Day of Caring volunteers were a force to be reckoned with! The action happened on September 12 during the 22th annual United Way Day of Caring event.

More than 40 mighty volunteers arrived at Yankauer and Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserves to tackle the harrowing jobs of weeding, trail maintenance, invasive species control and tending to the pollinator gardens. Many participants were return volunteers; some came in groups, including the Charles River Laboratories associates, Berkeley-Jefferson Extension Master Gardener Association, Potomac Valley Master Naturalists, and PVAS members!

PVAS appreciates the time and commitment the Day of Caring volunteers demonstrated. Your actions give us strength and inspiration!





Volunteer Spotlight

Have you met Steve Hartmann?

If not, we know you should because Steve is the volunteer land manager at Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve.

Since 2011 Steve has worked to maintain and improve Stauffer's Marsh for public enjoyment. Additionally, Steve is an accomplished naturalist and frequently leads guided bird and nature walks at Stauffer's Marsh. In addition to having witnessed several rare bird species and endangered wood turtles nesting, Steve also enjoys the uncommon tree and plant species found at Stauffer's Marsh.

PVAS appreciates Steve's hard work and commitment to Stauffer's Marsh. If you want to meet Steve and experience the splendor of Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve, consider participating in the next guided naturalist walk: October 16, 2016 at 8-10am.

We know all of our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone who others should meet, please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

PVAS Events

Here's Something Different: An Urban Farm Tour



PVAS is sponsoring a tour of Martinsburg's first urban farm on Saturday, October 1. The tour will begin at 9:00 a.m. and last about an hour. It will be led by Matt Denton, the farm's owner. The event is free, and anyone with an interest is welcome. Pre-registration is encouraged; register on the PVAS website.

The farm, called Herban Sprout, is located at 732 New York Avenue, at the corner of Buxton Street. Opened last spring, it concentrates on growing herbs, greens, and microgreens. Everything it produces is grown organically. Its primary customers are local restaurants, including the Historic McFarland House, Good Natured, and Mugs and Muffins Coffee Shop in Martinsburg, and the Blue Moon and Mellow Moods in Shepherdstown.

The centerpiece of the operation is an 18x18-foot greenhouse that has solar power and is completely off the grid. For more information about Herban Sprout, visit its Facebook page. For more information about the tour, contact Krista Hawley at PVAS at 703-303-1026 or adultprograms@audubon.org.

New WV License Plates Helping Wildlife

By Jean Neely

Last year we told you about the original 'non-game' license plates, and urged you to buy them—the rose-breasted grosbeak, the white-tailed deer or the black bear. Now we have more news on this front. Because the original grosbeak plate was low in inventory, and because the ones already in use were fading to pale pink, the WV Division of Natural Resources (DNR) determined to issue a new design. Ultimately, two designs were chosen - the popular eastern bluebird, and the native brook trout - and made available for sale in July.

The DNR has a Natural Heritage and a Wildlife Diversity program, each of which benefits from the revenue generated by the sale of these specialty license plates. It is estimated that about $350,000 income is derived each year. Much of the credit for this new venture goes to Scott Warner, the new DNR Wildlife Diversity chief. He wisely formed an ad hoc committee to examine license plate design options and propose a plan. One of the committee members was Sheila McEntee of Charleston. Sheila originally lobbied the legislature for the authorization of the first wildlife plate in the early 1990's. Before that massive effort, (the state constitution had to be changed!), all revenue from license plates supported the highways.

You can have one of these handsome plates by visiting the local offices of the WV DMV in either Martinsburg or Kearneysville. You can also order directly from WV DMV for delivery by mail. And, of course, the new PVAS plate is still available for use on your car's front bumper if you are a WV resident. Order yours by contacting Kristin Alexander at kristin@potomacaudubon.org.





Family and Youth Programs

Sustainable Energy Program Introduced



Since the beginning of school, PVAS has been working with fifth grade students in 11 classes at Eagle Intermediate School in Martinsburg as they learn about energy and sustainable energy sources. The first session introduced the idea of solar power as an alternative to fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Students experimented with a solar panel as a source for powering a light, small fans, and even a tablet and cellphone. Using small solar cars, they were able to experiment with the best angle for capturing solar rays and then challenged each other to solar car races. They even discovered that solar panels absorb sunlight and provide energy when it is cloudy or overcast.

During the next session, the students explored wind as a sustainable power source and built a small working windmill. They experimented to determine if wind could lift small objects like paper clips. After that, student teams were challenged to build a wind-powered car using only items like drinking straws, four Life-Savers, paper clips, a piece of paper, a small cup, and a small amount of tape. The designs were up to the students and after a bit of trial and error, most teams were able to figure out a workable model. The students did discover that wind energy, unlike solar, works only when the wind is blowing!



The final two sessions will help students compare the amount of energy in light bulbs (incandescent, LED, and CFL), and the possibilities or limitations of human energy (using a hand-crank generator and discovering the amount of energy it takes to light them). In October, the program will be repeated with fifth graders at Ranson Elementary, St. Joseph's School, and Pleasant View Elementary. The pilot program is being funded by a grant from the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation, and will be completed by the end of October. Once the pilot program is complete, and the lesson plans are tweaked for content and best practices, the program (all sessions or only one) will be available to any fifth grade classroom in the Eastern Panhandle.

Wee Naturalists Explore *Leaf Man*!

In October, when the leaves are changing color, our Wee Naturalists will be using the book "Leaf Man" to explore fall. The book, by Lois Ehlert, emphasizes looking at leaves a different way -- so we will be too! Whether it is collecting different colors and shapes, comparing sizes, or even sniffing them for spicy smells, the children will be having fun and learning, too! The October session is held at the Yankauer Nature Preserve, on October 17, from 9:30-11:00 a.m. Cost is only $5 per child/adult team. Jessica Wiant, a preschool mom who is also experienced with the program, will be leading the session.

Pre-registration is required, but easy on-line registration is available on the PVAS website. For more information, contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org). The Wee Naturalist program is designed to help children, ages 3-5, and a caring adult, to explore nature together safely under the guidance of an experienced PVAS instructor. The program was established in 2009 with support from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's Two Rivers Giving Circle. Continued support has also come from the Nora Roberts Foundation.

Thanks to our Birdseed Customers for Camp Scholarships in Summer 2016!

As you consider your 2016 birdseed order this month, the PVAS Camp Scholarship Committee is thrilled to remind you that last year's generous customers sponsored some deserving and fortunate youngsters to attend environmental camps in summer 2016.

For the first time we were happy to send six campers to the state Junior Conservation Camp at Cedar Lakes in Ripley, WV. The six are: Ethan Carlisle, 13, of Harpers Ferry, Eamonn MacKinnon, 12, of Martinsburg, Emma McGee, 12, of Ranson, Cyrus Murray, 14, and Heaven Murray, 12, of Inwood, and Dylan Wagner, 12, of Harpers Ferry. Max Ober, now a junior at Jefferson High School, participated – with our help – in the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) at NCTC. Birdseed proceeds also helped support about ten children at PVAS' own Audubon Discovery Camp.

In addition, we used designated funds to sponsor Ashley DeYoung, 12, Tyler DeYoung, 10, and their mother Ann DeYoung of Hedgesville, to attend the Family Camp at Audubon's beautiful Hog Island Camp on the coast of Maine.

Many thanks to our loyal birdseed customers and to other generous donors! You make it possible for young people in our membership area to experience the life-changing fun and adventure of camp, while learning to be conservation leaders of the future.

Birding News and Events

Area Hawk Watches Continue Through October



PVAS and the Washington County (MD) Bird Club will co-sponsor hawk watches every Wednesday during October at Maryland's Washington Monument State Park. The dates will be October 5, 12, 19 and 26. Every watch will begin at 9:30 a.m. and last until around noon.

The park is located on South Mountain, off Alternate U.S. Route 40, just east of Boonsboro, MD. The annual fall hawk migration occurs during October, and Washington Monument Park offers an excellent vantage point to view these magnificent birds as they wend their way south for the winter.

All the hawk watches are free and open to anyone with an interest. Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult. However, space at the best viewpoints is limited, and pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website.

Participants should plan to meet watch leader Sandy Sagalkin in the upper parking lot of the Park by 9:30 a.m.

They should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring drinking water and insect repellent. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

Hawk-watching is very weather sensitive because these birds do not fly in rain or snow. If it is certain that weather will force cancellation of any particular watch, those who have pre-registered will be notified by email no later than 6:00 p.m. the evening before.

For more information, contact Sandy at 240-291-6465 or sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com.

PVAS Sponsoring October 9 C&O Canal Bird Walk

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk along the C&O Canal towpath in the Williamsport MD area on Sunday, October 9. The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. at the Canal Visitor Center at Cushwa Basin, and it will last about three hours. It will be led by local birding expert Sandy Sagalkin. The Canal towpath offers good birding opportunities, as it is a major stop for migrating birds.

The walk is free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of their birding skills. It will involve easy walking over level ground; children and families are welcome. Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. Registration is available on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring insect repellant and drinking water. Binoculars will be provided if needed.

Directions to the Williamsport Canal Visitor Center can be found on the Canal website at www.nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/williamsportvisitorcenter.htm.

The walk may be canceled or postponed if weather conditions are poor. For more information, go to the PVAS website or contact Sandy at sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com or 240-291-6465.



Stauffer's Marsh Nature Walk Set for October 16

PVAS will sponsor a guided nature walk at its Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County on Sunday, October 16. The walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. and last until about 10:00 a.m. It is free and open to anyone with an interest. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the Society's website.

Naturalist Steve Hartman will lead the walk. He will focus on the marsh's flora and fauna. The marsh is a prime stopover place for migrating birds, so this walk should be a good opportunity to various kinds of fall migrants.

The Preserve is only 46 acres in size, so the distances to be walked are not great. However, the terrain includes wet meadows and marshlands, as well as dry areas, so waterproof footwear is essential. Participants should also plan to dress for the prevailing weather conditions. Ticks can be an issue at the preserve, so insect repellent is recommended. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

The Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve is located in Back Creek Valley in Berkeley County, one-half mile south of Shanghai, on the east side of Back Creek Valley Road (County Route 7). Participants should park and meet at the parking area at the north end of the marsh.

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

Birding News and Events

Join October 15 Bird Walk at Hagerstown Kiwanis Park

PVAS, the City of Hagerstown, and the Washington County Bird Club will sponsor a bird walk at Hagerstown's new Kiwanis Park on Saturday, October 15. The walk, led by local birding expert Sandy Sagalkin, will start at 8:00 a.m., and last about one and a half hours.

The event is free and open to everyone, regardless of their birding experience or skills, but pre-registration will be required. Register and get full information on the City of Hagerstown's website at www.hagerstownmd.org/birdwalks.

Kiwanis Park is located at 371 Dynasty Drive in Hagerstown, behind the medical professional buildings on Opal Court, off Eastern Boulevard. For more information, contact Sandy at sandy.sagalkin@gmail.com or 240-291-6465.



Join Pre-Halloween "Owl Prowl"

PVAS is sponsoring a pre-Halloween "owl prowl" walk at the historic Claymont property near Charles Town the evening of Friday, October 28. Enjoy the brisk fall weather while looking for owls, bats and other creatures of the night with local birding expert and master naturalist Joette Borzik. The walk will begin at 6:00 p.m. It will cover about three miles and last about three hours, but participants may opt out at any point along the way.

The event is free and open to anyone with an interest. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Register on the PVAS website at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Participants should plan to meet on the driveway to the Mansion, and park at the gate. The entrance is located at 667 Huyett Road; it is marked by a sign that reads "Claymont Mansion." The walk will be conducted even if it is raining. Participants should wear sturdy shoes, dress appropriately for the prevailing weather, and bring drinking water, insect repellent, one flashlight per person, and binoculars. A few pairs of binoculars will be available for those who don't have their own.

The Claymont property, which totals about 300 acres, is home to the historic Claymont Mansion. The mansion was built in 1820 by George Washington's grand-nephew Bushrod Washington. It is the largest of the Washington family homes in Jefferson County and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is owned and managed by the Claymont Society for Continuous Education and is used to host seminars and retreats for the public.

For more information, contact Joette at 240-440-4221 or pep4223@comcast.net.

35th Annual Birdseed Sale!

Once again we are offering the freshest possible seed (this year's crop) at reasonable prices, free storage at Gower's, and no state tax on your purchases.
Proceeds from this sale are used to support the educational programs of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society.

This year, for the first time, we have two ways of ordering birdseed:
1. Order online at www.potomacaudubon.org/Store.
(Requires a credit card.)

2. Use the order form included in this newsletter, or download a copy at www.potomacaudubon.org.

Items can be picked up at Gower's Feed in Williamsport or Hunter's Hardware in Berkeley Springs on November 5 from 10AM to 12Noon. Storage is also available November 7 through April 1 at Gower's Feed stores in Ranson and Williamsport.
Orders must be received by October 15.

Questions? Contact Diana Mullis at dianamullis@aol.com or 304-754-3753.

Conservation

Your Chance to Visit Mexico's Monarch Butterfly Sanctuaries, February 18-25, 2017, is Here!

Submitted by Joette Borzik, Trip Co-leader



For years, I had the Reserva de la Biosfera Santuario Mariposa Monarca, or Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, on my must-see "bucket list," and when the monarch butterfly population reached an all-time low in 2013, I was worried I would never see the special place to which these beautiful butterflies migrate in the fall. So this past winter, I made a visit to the sanctuaries a priority -- and was I glad I did.

The Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve is a World Heritage Site containing most of the over-wintering locations of the eastern population of the monarch butterfly. The reserve is located in the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt pine-oak forests ecoregion on the border of Michoacán and State of Mexico, 62 miles northwest of Mexico City. Millions of butterflies arrive in the reserve annually. Butterflies only inhabit a fraction of the 56,000 hectares of the reserve from October to March. The biosphere's mission is to protect the butterfly species and its habitat.

The butterflies congregate, clustering onto pine and oyamel trees. When you see them for the first time, the trees appear orange and branches sag from the weight. In the spring, the butterflies migrate across America, sometimes ending up in Eastern Canada. Over the time it takes them to make this journey, four generations of monarch butterflies are born and die.

I'll never forget what it was like to visit the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve for the first time. It was so magical, and I felt like a kid again. It's hard for me to describe, but I also felt this uplifting and spiritual sense of place being in the presence of these beautiful winged creatures. When the sun heated things up, the monarchs started to fly around everywhere. You could reach out and practically touch them. Adults were as much in awe as the children were.

I was riding on a horse being led by a young Mexican cowboy who journeys up and down the mountain numerous times a day, helping tourists see the butterflies. The horse ride uphill (and then downhill) was the best $10 I'd ever spent. This cowboy is trying to earn a living for his family, and I felt good supporting ecotourism. What a wonderful experience it was!

Many of the visitors to the sanctuaries are of Mexican heritage. They take pride in "their" butterflies, and some of the elders believe that when the monarchs return to the sanctuaries in the fall, the butterflies are the spirits of their deceased ancestors returning from the dead. El Dia de los Muertos, or The Day of the Dead, is a multi-day Mexican holiday celebrated throughout Mexico, that focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember those who have died, and to help support their spiritual journey. Watching the joy other sanctuary visitors have when they see the monarchs is just as much fun as experiencing it yourself.

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is sponsoring a trip from February 18-25, 2017 to visit this area. I will be co-leading the Monarch Butterfly Migration Learning Adventure Tour with Raymundo Solorio Vargas, who is proud to show us his home town and surrounding area. Raymundo is a tour guide and normally visits the monarch sanctuaries 2-3 times per week during the winter. We will also experience and learn much about the natural history and folk art of Michoacan, Mexico. If you participate in the tour, you will also be helping PVAS, as the tour is a fundraiser.

Additional information about this enthralling tour can be found at http://potomacaudubon.org/Eco-Tours-and-Extended-Trips.

Conservation

14th American Conservation Film Festival Announces 2016 Schedule

35 Exceptional Films on Birds, Oceans, Seeds, Culture, and Conservation Heroes



The 14th annual American Conservation Film Festival opens Friday, October 21st with a festive reception and two blocks of three films each, and culminates with its Encore Award Winners weekend October 28-30. The Festival brings together the finest conservation films and filmmakers from around the world and features discussions with scientists and educators, professional workshops, family programming, and social events -- all with the mission of engaging, informing, and inspiring its audience through the power of film.

This year's Festival will present films with a wide range of environmental and conservation themes. The Green Fire Award winning film, *E.O. Wilson: Of Ants and Men*, tells the story of this remarkable thinker and biologist, called "a Darwin for the modern day." Filmmaker Graham Townsley will be in attendance to accept his award and speak about the film.

Catching the Sun (Green Spark Award winner for Sustainability) follows the global race between the U.S. and China to lead the world to a cleaner energy future.

The Foreign Film Award goes to *Thirty Million*, a film about the impending displacement of tens of millions of people in Bangladesh as they face rising sea levels due to climate change.

For the younger set, ACFF presents an exciting and delightful film called *Life Story – First Steps* about the challenges baby animals face in the first few days of life. This feature length film will be followed by an educational program from the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center featuring live wildlife animal ambassadors.

At four venues in and around Shepherdstown, ACFF invites its audience to explore the world through the stories, images, and people that create this offering of compelling films. Several filmmakers and subject matter experts will be present during the festival and participating in discussions following the screening of their films. Films are arranged in thoughtfully considered "blocks" to allow for maximum screening options and a diverse array of topics and film lengths.

ACFF engages its audience in issue-relevant films, some uplifting and some enraging, and encourages festival participants to deepen their understanding of these issues and take action. The "Action Opps" page of the ACFF website will offer resources that support audience members in turning inspiration into action. The Conservation Filmmaker Workshop is offered October 22 and 23 at the National Conservation Training Center to aspiring and professional filmmakers who wish to hone their craft, exchange ideas in a creative and collaborative environment, and expand their professional network with colleagues and industry leaders working in a similar genre of film production.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Did You Know...?

There's still plenty of time to recertify as a Master Naturalist!

You have until December 31 to complete your 8 hours of training and 16 hours of volunteer service. There are many opportunities to collect education hours if you still need them, from natural history offerings outside of the Master Naturalist program: PVAS monthly meetings and Natural History events (e.g. the recently held Monarch butterfly tagging); classes taken outside of PVMN; college classes; lectures offered at NCTC, and some webinaires. Consult the PVAS Events Calendar as a start.

If you'd like your recertification to be acknowledged at the October 29 annual meeting, you should submit your hours by October 1.

Recertification forms (and other information on the Master Naturalist program) are available on the PVAS website at http://potomacaudubon.org/masternat and should be submitted to the Data Coordinator, Larry Smith, at msmith19@frontiernet.net.

Do not delay! Register today!

You have until October 3rd to sign up to attend the **Master Naturalist 10th Anniversary 'Birthday Bash'** Celebration on Saturday, October 8, 2016, from 5:30 - 10:00 PM, at the National Conservation Training Center.

Master Naturalists and PVAS members, and their significant others, are invited to join us for dinner with a cash bar, nature themed music, poetry, guest speakers, and exhibits showcasing the nature photography and art created by PVAS and PVMN members.

Registration is required and will close on Monday, October 3th.

If you have questions, please contact Larry Smith at msmith19@frontiernet.net.

Thank-you to volunteers for the Back Roads Century!



Dear Friends

I just want to thank you so very much for spending part (or ALL) of your Sunday volunteering at the Yankauer Rest Stop for the PPTC Back Roads Century. I know it was humid and busy, with non-stop riders, yet all of you were tirelessly cheerful and encouraging, and generously served the riders yummy food! I would like to highlight that you were the ONLY stop that served all the riders, and the ONLY stop with CHOCOLATE! That was important!

I offer my thanks as both a supporter of PVAS, and as a cyclist. Because of you, I had the opportunity to enjoy the ride, as well as your food and hospitality! (If we hadn't reached 18 volunteers, I was going to help at this rest stop, rather than ride.)

So, a HUGE thank you, especially to Nan, for organizing the Yankauer stop on very short notice, for recruiting volunteers, and for tirelessly giving all the cyclists directions to food, water, and rest rooms for at least 6 hours straight!! Thanks also to tireless workers Margie and Emily (who probably never want to make another PB&J sandwich) and to Captain Lou (who undoubtedly never wants to fill another water bottle)... and everyone else who participated.

And I wanted to share with you that all of the leftover food went to the Mountaineer Pantry. They even posted a photo and blurb on the ride on the SVC FaceBook page below: https://www.facebook.com/ShepherdstownVC/

Thank you all, again,
Sandy Brown



JOIN PVAS TODAY!

ALL of your dues will stay here to support local PVAS efforts and help us grow! And here's what you'll get:

- Member discount to many PVAS programs and events.
- A subscription to *Valley Views*, the PVAS newsletter.
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers and/or their programs across the country.
- E-mail alerts about events and programs (upon request).
- An invitation to a PVAS Members annual gathering.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Details available at potomacaudubon.org/member

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

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: _____

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

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

If you'd rather join the National Audubon Society:

Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society's Audubon magazine. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org and click on "join." If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become a member of PVAS and have access to our events, an e-mail copy of newsletter and e-mail alerts. However almost all of your dues payments will go to the National Audubon Society; only a small percentage will go to PVAS.

Combined Federal Campaign Begins!

Do you work for a federal agency?

You can choose PVAS to be a recipient of your workplace giving through the CFC ! Just enter #29061 and PVAS will receive your gift.

Thanks in advance for considering us!

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

PVAS BOARD

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

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

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