Celebrating 25 Years

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

VALLEY VIEWS

Volume 26, Issue 1 September 2007

Audubon Discovery Camp

What happens when you put 200 excited campers, four crazy staff, and lots of bugs together in one place? Audubon Discovery Camp! This year was the 5th year for this program, which was held at Yankauer Nature Preserve. Camp themes included "It's Great To Be Gross," "The First Campers," "The Amazing Race," "Earth Artists," "Watchers In The Woods," and "Camp Survivor." Campers spent each day hiking in the woods, playing games, learning about the environment, keeping nature journals, and creating outstanding nature crafts.

Special guests during the summer included Scales and Tails from Cunningham Falls State Park and Nellie Adkins, who shared her Native American heritage. One of the highlights came during the last week of camp during "Camp Survivor" when campers were given three challenges: eating sour cream and onion crickets (real ones!), a scavenger hunt, and a tug-of-war challenge.

During "The Amazing Race" and "Camp Survivor," US Fish and Wildlife employees from the National Conservation Training Center visited camp to teach a class on using GPS units. Each camper had the use of a Garmin 76CSx handheld GPS rover and learned the basics of navigating with the use of satellites. Their efforts were rewarded by finding geocaches that were placed on the Yankauer property specifically for the sessions. The geocaches contained key chains, pins, and other small prizes.



For the first time, a preschool camp was offered for 4 and 5 year olds during early June. This half day session allowed campers and a parent to enjoy discovering and exploring the natural world together. Suzi Taylor directed this camp in fulfillment of her Potomac Valley Master Naturalist volunteer hours.

This year, camp sessions were filled by mid-April with substantial waiting lists, so the decision was made to hire an additional staff member and increase the number of campers served each week. This worked well to serve many of those on the waiting list. Many thanks to the individuals, families, and organizations that provided scholarships for campers and additional funding so the extra staff could be hired.

Digital Nature Photography Camp

For the second year, 14 teenagers were given the opportunity to learn the basics of digital photography through a cooperative effort between PVAS, NCTC, and Nikon USA. Each camper was given the use of a Nikon D40 digital SLR camera with an 18-55mm lens and provided with ample opportunities for practice!


2007 Nature Photography Day Camp

After learning the basics of aperture, shutter speed, and composition, students began shooting nature! Shooting sites included the NCTC Day Care Garden, which was a prime location for macro (close-up) shots of flowers and insects, the Potomac River, Antietam Battlefield for landscape composition, and Sharpsburg Park. After each site visit, photos were downloaded to NCTC computers and the images were manipulated (cropped, sharpened, etc.) for optimum presentation.

High points of the week included the chance to photograph a red tailed hawk, a screech owl, and an American (Alaskan) bald eagle – up close and personal – at NCTC, courtesy of Cunningham Falls State Park. A trip to Patuxent Research National Wildlife Refuge in Laurel, MD, provided opportunities for students to photograph diving ducks and screech owls and learn about the research underway at the refuge. Another trip to the National Zoo's Conservation Research Center in Front Royal, VA, offered opportunities to photograph a black footed ferret, Asian white-naped cranes, red pandas, Mongolian ponies (Tahki), and a very shy clouded leopard as well as learn more about the research projects using these animals.

Each student was given the opportunity to choose two favorite photographs and then was videotaped while talking about their photos. This 30 minute videotape, produced by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at NCTC, will detail how National Wildlife Refuges and other environmental education programs can use a photo camp to encourage children to interact with nature. It will be available later this year. A photo display of student work will be displayed at the Potomac Arts Festival, Patuxent NWR, and the National Zoo's CRC.

Special thanks go to WHAG-TV25 in Hagerstown and WV Public Radio who provided excellent coverage of the program, Matt Poole who coordinated and instructed the program, Bill Wallen representing Nikon USA, and Nikon USA for providing the photographic equipment and program funding.

PVAS Celebrates 25 Years

More than 50 PVAS members and friends joined in celebrating the organization's very active 25 years over a picnic supper on June 2 at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. Susan Brookreson compiled a timeline of PVAS' "historic highlights" with the research help of Keith Alexander, Wayne Braunstein, and Jean Neely. Members shared stories and memories of funny, favorite, and impressive activities—from hacking ospreys to helping establish the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Bill Belton was recognized for his many years of dedicated service to the organization, the most recent being the establishment of the Eidolon Nature Preserve in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Jean Neely was presented with a gift in recognition of her founding the organization, and Bill Palmisano was given a framed Wil Hershberger photo as a thank you to the USGS Leetown Science Center for use of their meeting space for so many years. Jennifer Caskey was also recognized for her generosity and neighborliness for letting PVAS use Caskey Lane for overflow parking when necessary. A variety of volunteers were recognized for outstanding service in 2007 at the event including Kathy Bilton, Susan Brookreson, Dan Cogswell, Clark Dixon, Jeff Feldman, Diana Gaviria, Linda Grubb, Cheryl Jennings, Nancy Kirschbaum, Matt Poole, Chris Robinson, Michael Schwartz, Aileen Smith, Sharon Stephan, Jane Vanderhook, and Rodney Woods.



September Meeting Focuses on "Green" Home Construction

Our September meeting will focus on "green" home construction. The speaker will be Jeff Feldman, a former environmental educator who has just finished building an innovative green home for himself and his wife—our own Kristin Alexander—in Berkeley County near our Yankauer Nature Preserve. This talk was originally scheduled for last February but had to be postponed because of inclement weather.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 12, and don't forget that it's being held at a new time—7:00 p.m.—and at our new "home"—the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center on Shepherd Grade Road, just north of Shepherdstown.

The meeting will be in the small auditorium (Room 160) of the Center's Instructional West building, which is just behind the entry building that houses the Center's main lobby, registration area, and large auditorium. We will have people in the lobby to direct you to our location.

During his talk, Feldman will discuss green building and the importance of environmental considerations in decision-making about new construction, remodeling, and even simple upgrades of existing homes. He will use his own home project as an example of cutting-edge possibilities and then explore possibilities that are more modest for average homeowners. He will stress practical approaches, and point out not only the environmental benefits of green construction but also the potential cost savings for families and individuals.

This home he and Kristin have built features a passive solar design, straw-bale superinsulation, a composting toilet, a constructed wetland gray-water treatment system, and many other environmentally-considerate design and material elements.

Feldman has a strong background in environmental education. He has a BS in Environmental Interpretation from Penn State and an MS in Experiential Learning from Minnesota State University at Mankato. He served five years as a faculty member at Penn State University, and was Program Director and Community Environmental Advocate for the University's Shaver's Creek Environmental Center.

September Field Trips

September 7 "Insect Walk"

PVAS is sponsoring an evening "insect walk" along the C&O Canal across from Shepherdstown on Friday, September 7. The walk will be led by Wil Hershberger, who is coauthor of "The Songs of Insects," a book and audio CD published last spring by Houghton-Mifflin Company.

Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate. Participants will meet at 6:30 p.m. in the large C&O Canal parking lot on Canal Road three-tenths of a mile south of the Rumsey Bridge. From there, Hershberger will lead the group in an exploration of the surrounding fields and roadsides. Insects likely to be encountered include tree crickets, several species of meadow katydids, and perhaps one or two species of round-winged katydids, northern true katydids, oblong-wing katydids, and perhaps some bush katydids.

Those who wish to participate should bring a flash light and be prepared to walk through high grass and weeds. Tucking pants legs into socks and spraying them with a DEET-based insect repellent is recommended.

For more information contact Nancy Kirschbaum at 304-876-6881 or nancyk500@adelphia.net.

September 23 Dolly Sods Trip

We are also sponsoring a birding trip to the spectacular Dolly Sods Scenic Area in Grant County WV on Sunday, September 23. This trip will be led by birding expert Matt Orsie, and will include a visit to the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory and bird banding station at Dolly Sods.
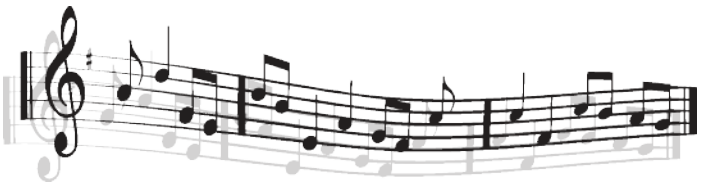
Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate. Participants will rendezvous at 6:00 a.m. at the McDonald's restaurant in Moorefield, WV, which is located at 751 North Main Street (US Route 220) in that town. Moorefield is about 80 miles, or an hour and forty minutes, southwest of Inwood WV via I-81, US Routes 50 and 220. Dolly Sods is about an hour's drive from Moorefield.

Those who would like to drive to Moorefield the night before can stay at the South Branch Inn, a modern 100-bed facility located near the McDonald's at 1500 Route 220 North. The Inn's phone number is 304-538-2033.

The Dolly Sods Area is located on a high plateau atop the Allegheny Front. It consists of subalpine heathlands dominated by shrubs like mountain laurel, azalea, and rhododendron. It offers striking views and provides an excellent vantage point for viewing migrating raptors and songbirds.

The Allegheny Front Migration Observatory and bird banding station, in continuous operation for 50 years, is considered one of the best places in West Virginia to view migrating fall birds. Over the years, more than 200,000 birds representing more than 100 species have been banded here. Many of the birds banded here are seen in West Virginia only during migration. The banding station also provides a good opportunity to see, in hand, many species that nest far to the north including the gray-cheeked thrush, Cape May warbler, bay-breasted warbler, blackpoll warbler, Connecticut warbler and the Wilson's warbler.

Participants in this trip should be sure to bring warm clothing because conditions can be very cool at Dolly Sods in late September. For more information contact Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmith@frontiernet.net.



Music in the Cedars

This year's Music in the Cedars has expanded into September, so come and spend a summer night under the pavilion at Yankauer enjoying evening insects accompanied by a variety of musicians. In August, visitors enjoyed performances by Betty Jo and Scott Rockwell, Daryl Bryarly, and Steve Cifala, On August 28 the Dilettantes will perform. September performers will include Michael DeLalla on guitar on Sept. 4, local composer and musician Cam Millar on either Sept. 11 or 18, and Steve Warner and the Rolling Coyotes on Sept. 25. Audience members are welcome to bring a picnic supper with them to enjoy while listening to these wonderful performers. Benches are available on a first-come first-served basis. Concerts are from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Volunteers Needed for Day of Caring

The 2007 United Way Day of Caring will be Tuesday, September 11. It is your opportunity to join other volunteers from all around the Panhandle at our Yankauer Nature Preserve. Day of Caring projects include mulching trails, weeding, and adding plants to the flowerbeds established last year, clearing trails, and removing invasive plants.

The day will begin with a United Way breakfast at Shepherdstown's Morgan Grove Park at 7:30 a.m. Volunteers should begin reporting to Yankauer at 8:00 a.m. PVAS will provide a very tasty lunch at the preserve, and when the day is over (at about 4:00 p.m.) we will join volunteers from other Day of Caring sites throughout the Panhandle for dinner at the Berkeley County Youth Fair Grounds until 6:00 p.m. The dinner will be provided by Outback Steak House so appetites whetted by a day in the woods should be well-satisfied

If you want to participate in Day of Caring at Yankauer, please contact Alice Barkus at abarkus@hughes.net or 304-876-8520. Be sure to tell her what size t-shirt you wear - its fun to get "suited up" with everyone else - and the t-shirt is your ticket to dinner!

Thank you for coming out - it is always a good time, and we make real progress. Yankauer needs you!

United Way/CFC Fund Drive Coming

United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) will kick off their annual fundraising campaigns on September 20.

CFC is the mechanism for federal employees to contribute to their local United Way. PVAS members who are federal employees can designate PVAS as the recipient of all or part of their CFC contribution by entering PVAS's CFC number (29061) on the CFC form they file with their employing agency. PVAS receives substantial funding from United Way and CFC each year and encourages its members to give to their campaigns.

Their campaigns will last through December 15. If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Alexander at pvasmail@aol.com or 304-229-9771.

Morgan County Raptor Weekend

The Morgan County Ecology Coalition (ECO) will hold its annual Raptor Weekend September 22 and 23. ECO will be offering a variety of ecology-related events between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. All the events will based at or start from the Panorama at the Peak restaurant on Route 9 just west of Berkeley Springs.

Saturday's events include displays and workshops at the Panorama on various subjects. On Sunday, there will be hikes, including a children's hike that will start at the restaurant and go up and down Cacapon Mountain.

PVAS will assist by having an open house at the Eidolon Nature Preserve on Saturday. Docents will be available to help Raptor Weekend participants learn more about the preserve.

Details about the Weekend's offerings will be available soon on ECO's website at www.ecologycoalition.org or you may contact Judy Webb at 304-258-0992.

President's Perch



Hello, everyone:

It's been nearly a year since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Conservation Fund held a "Children and Nature Conference" at the National Conservation Training Center to try to focus greater attention on the need to reconnect today's children with the natural world (October 2006 *Valley Views*).

By now, it can safely be said that the conference has had an effect. Look around, and you'll find there's a lot going on. For example:

- The Sierra Club, the Conservation Fund and others have established a "Children and Nature Network" that's serving as a clearinghouse for information and research about the topic (go to www.cnaturenet.org to view their excellent website and sign up for their email news service).
- Currently, this Network is reporting that over 30 states and cities have either launched or are preparing campaigns to reconnect children with nature.
- The State of Connecticut has established an initiative with the catchy name of "No Child Left Inside" (www.nochildleftinside.org) which in turn has prompted the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and others to launch a national "No Child Left Inside Coalition" (this coalition's website address could use help; it's currently www.cbf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=__act_sub_actioncenter_federal_NCLB). The Coalition is pushing for federal legislation to strengthen and expand environmental education in K-12 classrooms.
- Such legislation, the No Child Left Inside Act, has in fact been introduced this summer in both the house and Senate by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD) and Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), respectively.
- Also this summer, the Conservation Fund has announced the formation of a new National Forum on Children and Nature that will involve leaders from the public and private sectors in an effort to invest "several million dollars" in 20 "nationally significant demonstration projects" that offer the prospect of "on-the-ground tangible results that address the issue of children's isolation from nature" (see www.conservationfund.org/children_nature for details on this).

Meanwhile, PVAS and similar organizations around the country continue to do their part at the local level the old-fashioned way, through their direct involvement with local children and parents.

In our case, we're particularly gratified that we were able to expand our summer camp programs this year to reach more children, and that we hope soon to be able to announce a significant expansion of our school programs as well (more about that later).

--Peter Smith

It's Coming ...

Birdseed Sale time is almost here - Watch your October *Valley Views* for your Birdseed Order Form.

Upcoming Events Calendar

September 4: Music in the Cedars 6:30-7:30 p.m.

September 7: Field Trip 6:30 p.m.

September 11: Day of Caring 9 a.m.-4 p.m. @ Yankauer

September 11: Music in the Cedars 6:30-7:30 p.m.

September 12: PVAS program 7p.m.

September 18: Music in the Cedars 6:30-7:30 p.m.

September 22: Growing Native Seed Collection @ Eidolon 9-11 a m

September 22 & 23: Raptor weekend 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

September 23: Field Trip 6 a.m. - ?

September 25: Music in the Cedars 6:30-7:30 p.m.

NAS Board Member Visits PVAS

PVAS is a chartered chapter of the National Audubon Society (NAS) and falls geographically into the Mid-Atlantic Region of NAS. On August 8, we were pleased to host Caroline C. Coe, NAS Board Member—Mid-Atlantic Region.

In recent years there has been controversy over the support and relationship offered by NAS to the chapters, especially the small chapters from states without an NAS state office. Recognizing the need to restore better relations, Jean Neely called on a longtime friend and recently elected NAS board member, Caroline Coe, to visit PVAS. Caroline accepted and got a first hand look at the progress PVAS has made in implementing its mission with education programs, nature preserves, and active participation.

Caroline met with a delegation of PVAS board members headed by Vice President Nancy Kirschbaum. The PVAS board voiced concerns over a host of issues. In short, the PVAS Board felt that NAS no longer offers the level of support and assistance necessary for chapters to function effectively. Caroline proved to be a great listener and showed sincerity in her desire to improve relations.

Giving NAS its due, Caroline reminded the PVAS board of the differences in scope of a local chapter and the NAS and the importance of having an organization to deal with issues that are beyond the reach of a local organization. She also gave an overview of just how stretched NAS resources are and the actions being taken to meet our collective needs. She made the point that there is a shared burden and the chapters have some responsibility to work with NAS.

It was a very productive visit for all parties as evidenced by the note (below) from Caroline Coe to Jean Neely following her visit:

Thanks

- *for organizing the meeting this past weekend in WV*
- *for the fine hospitality (and to the co-host Emily)*[Jean's kitten]
- *for sharing some history and some stories of Audubon*
- *for clearly stating the sense of a disconnect between PVAS and NAS.*

I appreciate the introduction to some of the dynamic folks in your chapter and to Kristen and to Yankauer Nature Preserve. I will follow up on some of the issues we spoke about at the board meeting.



Morgan County Picnic Draws New Members

Despite threatening skies, about 40 Morgan County residents turned out for a PVAS picnic supper at Cacapon State Park on June 24. Thanks to PVAS' Bill and Cory Belton and Park naturalist Kelly Smith for their help in setting up the event. Ten of those who attended who were not already PVAS members have since joined, and several others volunteered to help at Eidolon in various ways.

Meteor Shower Outing Big Hit

This year, for the first time, PVAS sponsored a "Perseids Party" to publicize the viewing of the Perseid Meteor Showers. About 15 brave souls (and 2 dogs) were willing to get up at 3:30 in the morning on Sunday August 12 and look for the meteors. The party was held at Trinity Center on Shepherdstown Road which featured 80 acres of "dark" as well as coffee for the early risers.

Although party guests could view the show anywhere on the property, most chose to be in earshot of each other and excited cries of "ohh!" were fairly frequent. August 12 was one day before the absolute peak of the meteors, but there were many sightings among the groups. Smaller meteors were common, but there were also larger ones that streaked with a long tail.

Ellen Murphy, PVAS Children's Program Director, hosted the party as part of her Potomac Valley Master Naturalist volunteer hours. PVAS received good publicity including features in The State Journal and the Martinsburg Journal, community notices in newspapers in Hagerstown, Shepherdstown, and Charles Town and a preview story on Frederick's WFMD radio.

If you missed this year's party, plans are already underway to celebrate again next year. The Perseids are an annual event and are most easily viewed in early August.

PVAS Joins "Nutty" Initiative

On September 22, volunteers and staff from Cacapon Institute, the WV Division of Forestry, and Potomac Conservancy invite PVAS volunteers to the Eidolon Nature Preserve from 9 to 11 am to support the Potomac Conservancy's *Growing Native* seed collection efforts.

Growing Native evolved out of a need for native trees to support expanding reforestation and restoration efforts in the Potomac River watershed. Volunteers are encouraged to stay after the collection event for an informative hike at the Eidolon Nature Preserve. Pack a lunch and bring hiking shoes. All other materials will be provided. For more information on *Growing Native*, visit http://www.growingnative.org.

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

We now offer two kinds of memberships:

1. PVAS Local Membership

Here's what you get:

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

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

2. Dual Membership with National Audubon

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

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: (optional): _____

Membership Type (check one):

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

Dual Membership with National Audubon ____

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

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

Clip and mail this form to:
Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

Thank you for your support!

RED DOT ALERT

If a red dot appears on your mailing label, your membership may have expired and this could be your last issue of Valley Views. Take action to renew your Dual membership or Local membership.

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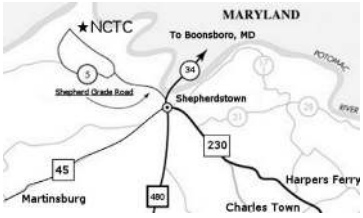
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DATED MATERIALS

A proud partner of the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign.

MAIL TO:

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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April, at the US Fish and Widlife Service National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, 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://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 Wednesday 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

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