Welcome to the Eidolon Nature Preserve!

This 354-acre nature preserve, operated by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in West Virginia, has been set aside as a special place for those who appreciate the natural world and seek to learn from it.

The Eidolon Story

An old ridgetop property that was originally part of an 18th century Fairfax grant, this land belonged to the Zapoleon family for nearly 60 years. They named the property "Eidolon," which translated from Greek means "image of the ideal" and used it as a weekend and summer retreat.

During her time on the mountain, Mrs. Zapoleon recorded handwritten card files on the flora and fauna of Eidolon. These card files have since been transcribed to a digital database. Mrs. Zapoleon also published a book on Eidolon titled Everyone Needs a Mountain.

It was the vision of the Zapoleon's that Eidolon be preserved as they had always known: a place for the enjoyment and study of nature and for quiet contemplation. Therefore, Eidolon was willed to The Nature Conservancy who took title of it in 2006. That same year, TNC enlisted PVAS to be the local stewards of the property.

TNC and PVAS continue to work together to fulfill the Zapoleon's vision for Eidolon. We invite visitors from near and far to explore this enchanting place.

Wander the Trails

Over 4 miles of marked trails will carry you through Eidolon, and there is much to see. The elevation at the preserve’s highest point is about 1,650 feet where you will find sweeping views of neighboring mountain ranges and the Potomac River.

Like much of the land in this area, Eidolon has been used heavily over the centuries. You will come upon stone piles where fields were cleared long ago for planting crops, the remains of quarries that provided stone for the C&O Canal in the 1840s, and a track of an old coach road whose usage dates back to the 1780s.

The preserve is now mostly forest, with oaks and maples predominating, and it provides habitat that supports a wide variety of plant and animal species such as the threatened cerulean warbler.

Taking the Ardalia Trail and Zapoleon Loop will take you from the bottom to the top of the mountain and give you the greatest glimpse of Eidolon's history and beauty. We hope you will take the time to fully explore all the wonders of this special place.

Location & Directions

Eidolon is located at 2146 Orleans Rd. Great Cacapon, WV, approximately 10 miles west of Berkeley Springs.

Directions from Berkeley Springs: From the intersection of Routes 522 and 9 downtown, take Route 9 west over Cacapon Mountain and through the village of Great Cacapon until you reach Detour Road (a total of 7.6 miles). Go right on Detour Road for 0.9 mile to Orleans Road. Go right on Orleans Road and follow it up Sideling Hill for 2.1 miles; the entrance to Eidolon will be on your right—a light-green metal gate flanked by two square stone pillars.

Those who visit are asked to park outside the gated entrance and proceed into the preserve on foot.

More about PVAS

PVAS is dedicated to preserving, restoring and enjoying the natural world through education and action. To learn more about our programs, activities and membership, go to www.PotomacAudubon.org.

Please Help Us Keep the Preserve Clean and Safe!

- Please carry out any trash and leave the preserve as you found it.
- Motorized vehicles and horses are not permitted on the preserve property.
- Please leave dogs at home to help protect sensitive habitats and for the safety and comfort of other visitors.
- Camping and campfires are not permitted.
- Please refrain from smoking.
- Possession or use of alcohol is not permitted.
- Collection of plants and animals is not permitted.
- Deer hunting is permitted in season, and specific notices regarding hunting rules will be posted.