



Valley Views

Volume 40, Issue 4

February/March 2022

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director



I hope everyone is enjoying winter now that it's finally arrived! I'll confess I love the season. The quiet of the snow, the "tinkling" of water through icicles, animal tracks, feeders filled with birds, the winter sunsets...

But the season also makes me very grateful for my warm house, my wood stove, hot chocolate, and other comforts.

And as I reflect in that warmth, I want to share the many things for which I'm grateful as we launch into the new year, in spite of the uncertainties that lie ahead.

I'm thankful that vaccines are available for ages 5 and up. I'm grateful that home test kits and K95 masks are about to become widely available. My family just had COVID come through the household and it could have been so much worse, but thankfully we'd all been vaccinated and we had a home test handy so we knew to stay home and alert others with whom we'd been in contact. I am grateful that tests and masks will soon be widely available for everyone to keep people as safe as possible and we can serve the community widely and in person once again.

I'm grateful that we have wonderful leadership at the Board level. In October the PVAS Board of Directors met to update the organization's 5-year plan. The committee work that went into the preparation of the retreat was admirable and the conversations that resulted were positive, respectful, and pointed toward the future. I so appreciate the leadership this group provides, and the unwavering support they show the staff. They've committed to contributing to health insurance for the first time in the organization's history, which will lead to staff retention and recruitment as we move forward.

And speaking of staff, I am grateful for them as well. They, too, are positive, respectful, and forward thinking. We had a staff retreat to brainstorm ways to support and move forward on the goals set forth by the Board at their retreat. This group never ceases to impress me with their thoughtfulness, creativity, respect, their support of one another, and their commitment to PVAS and its mission. They are creative problem solvers, team players, and makers of lemonade. Their work ethic is unparalleled. They are so willing to help me and one another, it's truly inspiring. I wish every team leader could be so lucky.

I am grateful to our volunteers! In just the last several months,

we've had volunteers build a beaver deceiver to prevent the flooding of Lloyd Road at Cool Spring. We've had volunteers build a boardwalk at Cool Spring to reduce the erosion and impact on the Bullsken and the Marsh. We've had volunteers at Broomgrass preparing and marking the trails in preparation for this spring's "This Race is for the Birds!" We've had walk leaders, public lecturers, weed warriors, community scientists doing bird counts, bird feeder cleaners and fillers, youth program instructors, committee members, Master Naturalists, fence installers to protect some trees from the beaver, turtle tank builders, litter gatherers... The list goes on and on. And this is our supposed SLOW season.

And finally, last but CERTAINLY not least, are our members, donors and supporters. I am grateful to this group for trusting us to be good stewards of their contributions, to do the behind-the-scenes work required to deliver quality programs and maintain quality habitat and trails at our preserves. The generosity of this group is the foundation upon which we depend for the day-to-day tasks that keep the PVAS ecosystem up and running smoothly.

Each of the groups above fill a niche for PVAS, and each supports the PVAS ecosystem. We are dependent on each and every part equally, and I am grateful to the role each plays in the PVAS world.

Best wishes for the wondrous winter season,

Annual Appeal Status

THANK YOU to the donors to our annual appeal thus far! With your help we've received 66% of our \$60,000 goal.

The appeal runs through the end of February, so it's not too late to give and help us meet that goal. You may donate on our secure website at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/annual-appeal/>, or mail a check to PVAS, PO Box 578, Shepherdstown WV 25443. PVAS can also accept IRS distribution checks, gifts of stock or other means.

As always, if you have questions, Kristin Alexander is always happy to help find the answers. She can be reached on her cell at 304-676-3397 or by email at Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org.

Thank you so much for your generous support. You'll see the many projects and programs your contributions support as you read this newsletter!

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

Osprey – The Fishing Hawk

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

One of the earliest migratory raptors to return to our area is the Osprey. This notable relative of hawks is highly specialized for catching fish. Their unique feet are perfectly shaped to snag prey swimming just below the water's surface. The toes, two-forward and two-backward (zygodactyl), are equipped with long, sharply curved talons, as well as spiny protrusions that help the Osprey capture and retain a squirmy, slimy fish. They will circle above the water, watching with amazingly sharp and detailed vision, for an unsuspecting target. They dive head-down at first, then swing their feet forward at the last minute, talons spread wide. Typically, only the feet and legs enter the water during a hunting dive. The hawk pauses, resting on the surface, then, with wings held high, begins labored flapping to emerge out of the water. Occasionally, an Osprey may snag a fish that is just too large for it to fly off with. The bird will flap and splash and use all its might in an attempt to carry its prey away but will eventually release it rather than drown. To reduce drag while in flight, the Osprey will carry its prey head forward. It is often fun to watch them shuffle the fish around in their feet as they are still only feet above the water's surface.



Osprey © Joshua J Cotton

This majestic fish hawk was once nearly wiped out from the over-use of pesticides. During the mid-20th century, the use of DDT almost killed off many top predators (hawks, falcons, and eagles). It was found that the metabolic breakdown products of ingested DDT caused significant thinning of the eggshells to such an extent that the brooding female would crush the eggs under her. This led to a dramatic, rapid population decline. The banning of DDT in the United States was a great victory for conservationists. It wasn't long before the numbers of all of the affected species were seen to be rebounding. Many people volunteered to help raise young raptors in hacking projects at wild locations to establish breeding populations in areas that historically supported these species. Many people erected nesting platforms over shallow water, and the birds took to them quickly. All of these efforts paid off, and we now have a growing, healthy population of Osprey and other raptors to watch and enjoy.

Osprey can live up to 20 years. They construct large nests of sticks in dead trees, on nesting platforms, and sometimes on power-line poles over or near bodies of water. They typically look for areas where there are few predators and abundant prey. The male may start building the nest before the female returns to the site. Once she's there, the male will bring sticks to the nest for the female to arrange. Once the nest is built, it is lined with finer materials such as grasses, moss, and other plant materials to cushion the eggs and add some insulation. The female will lay 1-4 eggs that are creamy white, wrapped in blotches of brown mostly concentrated at the large end. Both parents (mostly the female) will incubate these eggs for about 39 days. The male spends a lot of time hunting to provide food for himself and the sitting female. Once the eggs hatch, the female does most of the brooding for the approximately 28 days that the young are in the nest. The young are able to fly at about 50 days of age. Both parents feed and care for the young. The young Osprey start learning to capture fish shortly after fledging. However, it takes lots of practice - these new fish hawks becoming experts at about 150 days old.

Osprey used to nest every year at Sleepy Creek WMA lake. However, once a pair of Bald Eagles took up residence, the Osprey were chased off after a couple of seasons. Osprey still breed in our area but are harder to find due to the growing population of Bald Eagles nesting here. Any trip to the coast will provide numerous excellent opportunities to study these fascinating fishing hawks.

PVAS Events

Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

While our weather in February and March can have a mind of its own, it will often gift us with a glimmer of warmth and sunshine and offer a peek into our warm spring days ahead. Our light is stretching a little bit longer each day and some of our favorite early spring wildflowers are poking their heads out in anticipation of what is to come.

With our health and safety still a major concern, we continue to be flexible and look for ways to stay engaged outside and virtually. We have the Education Center at the Hospice of the Panhandle reserved and ready for once it is safe to meet again in person for our Monthly Programs. Until that time, we will continue 'gathering' virtually on the second Wednesday of each month. On Wednesday, February 9th, we are excited to welcome back Alison Zak, who served as an AmeriCorps with PVAS in 2016-2017. Alison will present '*Co-existing with Beavers: A Dam Worthy Challenge*'. Last year, Alison founded the Human-Beaver Coexistence Fund (HBCF) to educate the public about the benefits of coexisting with beavers and to provide resources and financial support to address human-beaver conflict using nonlethal management strategies. We feel this will be an excellent time to learn from Alison as PVAS is working towards understanding how best to coexist with our new, local resident beavers at Cool Spring Preserve and Stauffer's Marsh. The Monthly Program for March is still in the works so please make sure to stay tuned!

The monthly Wellness Walks at the preserves are continuing in 2022. Everyone is welcome to join these walks. During the walks, the group meanders along the trails, pointing out various trees and animal tracks and enjoying being out in nature together. We will visit Stauffer's Marsh on Tuesday, February 15th and Eidolon Nature Preserve on Tuesday, March 15th. We are saving Yankauer Preserve for our April walk in anticipation of the Yankauer's gorgeous wildflower display!

If you are like many of us, you spend February daydreaming of spring walks searching for hidden wildflowers, fungi, and other exciting signs of spring. We hope you will join us as PVAS will again be hosting Wildflower Walks at Ferry Hill and Yankauer this April. Make sure to check the calendar, at potomacaudubon.org, for dates and

locations. In addition, after a mid-winter pause, Joy Bridy will be returning to her outdoor, in-person Nature Journaling Gatherings at the preserves this spring. She is looking forward to sharing ideas and exploring all that our nature preserves have to offer with the journaling group. No experience is necessary, and everyone with an interest is welcome to join.

Birding 101 returns in April 2022! We are cautiously hopeful that we can offer indoor classroom sessions in April. The plan at this time is to teach the indoor sessions every Thursday evening, and the outdoor field trips every Saturday in April. The indoor sessions will be held in the large Education Center at Hospice and therefore provide enough space for everyone to safely distance themselves while learning. If you are interested in joining Birding 101 this year, please register and we will continue to monitor the situation and stay in touch with the registrants.



"This Race is for the Birds!" is set for Saturday, April 9th on the trails of Broomgrass! We are offering both in-person and virtual options again this year. The in-person event will be handled much the same as in years past, beginning at 9am and will feature a professional timer for the 5K and 10K trail run/walk. Participants can also choose a virtual option and run, walk, bike, etc., anywhere of their choosing, any time

between Saturday, April 2nd – 9th. The virtual participants will email their results and/or photos of their event to: Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org



titled 'My Results'. The virtual participants will be entered in a general drawing for awards. Please visit raceforthebirds.org for details and registration or email Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org with any questions you may have. We are always looking for volunteers to help prepare the trails for the race and on race day as well. Please let us know if you are interested in volunteering. Whether as a participant or volunteer, we hope to see you there!

For the most up-to-date information, please visit potomacaudubon.org, as we are continually adding and updating events.



PVAS Events

"This Race is for the Birds!"

Saturday, April 9th, 2022

At Broomgrass, an In-Person,
professionally timed 5K or 10K
trail run/walk

Or participate virtually from the location of
your choosing anytime between
Saturday, April 2 – 9

Visit <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/> for details
and registration or to volunteer or email
race4birds@potomacaudubon.org
with any questions you may have.



Please consider being a sponsor for our 22nd annual "This Race is for the Birds!"

Support outdoor preservation and
education by becoming a sponsor at the
2022 "This Race is for the Birds!" event!

*Your generous support helps fund PVAS's
programs and nature preserves, while giving
your business the ability to advertise to our
extensive community.*

Sponsor packet and details available <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/>, or please email
race4birds@potomacaudubon.org with questions.



Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met Joette Borzik?

Joette Borzik has been involved with PVAS since 2006. She has been actively engaged and supporting PVAS efforts by leading bird walks, participating in bird counts, leading Monarch tagging events, supporting monarch and wildlife habitat restoration efforts at Briggs Animal Shelter and other locations, and, most recently, co-chairing The Monarch Alliance.

Joette created her own incredible backyard habitat oasis for wildlife, complete with screech owl nesting box, pond, native plantings, and natural landscaping in general. She implemented a bluebird box program for her community and worked with Jefferson County Parks and Rec to encourage no-mow areas around their parks. We were sad to learn of Joette's move to Virginia, but we thank her for her AMAZING contributions to PVAS and her habitat conservation efforts in the community. We wish her well in her new "habitat" and know she'll look out for wildlife similarly in her new backyard.



PVAS Events

Lex Miller, in Memoriam

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

We are sad to share that Lex Miller, a past board member, passed away in November. Lex was our Treasurer from July '08-June '15.

Lex was extraordinarily dedicated to PVAS and the community. Not only was he our Treasurer through a huge growth spurt for PVAS and many changes (including my maternity leave and then my attempt at balancing being a new mom and my work with PVAS), but he also volunteered for the Shepherdstown Film Society, he helped people with taxes through AARP, he picked up library books from the Shepherdstown library and delivered them to the Shepherdstown Day Care to help his wife, Pam. He was helpful in every way possible to everyone possible.

He practiced conservation quietly by digging a hole in his backyard for a rain garden, installing solar panels earlier than most, riding his bicycle whenever he could, including riding to Yankauer to deliver paychecks to summer camp staff. He was thoughtful, honest, kind and smart. He gave me solid counsel on many occasions, for which I'll always be grateful. To learn more about Lex and his amazing contributions, his obituary can be found here: <https://www.endersandshirley.com/obituary/alexander-miller>.

He will be greatly missed, and we are so grateful for his many contributions.



With Apologies...

After the publication of the Annual Report, we discovered that a number of memorial and honorary donations were excluded due to data entry inconsistencies. We have now changed the way we capture these donations to prevent this happening in the future. We sincerely apologize for the omissions and will list them here as well as in next year's annual report:

Honorary Donations:

- Dr. and Mrs. Bonifant in honor of the Brookresons, Meadows, and Vanderhooks.
- Patrick Brennan in honor of Mrs. Smith's students from Rodgers Forge Elementary who often look back fondly on our time spent with Ms. Smith and she's the reason we ALL LOVE BIRDS!
- Laura Carter in honor of Anya, Ethan, and Alexa
- Stan and Sarah Corwin-Roach in honor of Jean Neely
- Jim Cummins in honor of Jean Neely
- Mary Duke in honor of Ellen Murphy's butterflies
- Don and Kathryn Henry in honor of Kristin for 20 wonderful years!
- Sue Kemnitzer in honor of all the good work of PVAS, and especially to Kristin for 20 years! Best wishes for 2021.
- Paul Koehler in honor of Edie Koehler
- Jean Neely in honor of Bob Dean's 35 years as Compiler for CBC
- Bruce and Carolyn Thomas in honor of Amy Moore

- Beverly Van Metre in honor of Bob Dean
- Mary Youngblood in honor of Marion Anderson



In memory of:

- Geoffrey H. & Suzanne W. Brown in memory of Thatcher M. Brown III
- Marilee Cunningham in memory of Sue O'Donnell
- Edward Enamait in memory of CPT Ray Toms, MD DNR
- John Frye in memory of Janice M. Frye
- Sylvia Haislet in memory of Buddy Zembower
- Kitty Kelly in memory of Ed Kelly
- Susan S. J. Mayer in memory of Caroline Orr James
- Joanna and John Skinner in memory of Judson Lannis Ponder
- Roger Tingley in memory of Bonita Tingley
- Jack Young in memory of Martha E. Young
- Ed Zahniser in memory of Alice Zahniser

Birding

Christmas Bird Count Report

By Bob Dean

The 122nd running of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) program was recently completed and the two Eastern Panhandle counts fared rather well. It was the 70th consecutive Charles Town count and the 69th Inwood count. Both counts were started by the late Clark Miller of Inwood, who was one of the most energetic and accomplished birders that your reporter has ever known. He found such local oddities as Bachman's Sparrow, Chuck-will's-widow, and King Rail in the 1950s and '60s. While we haven't found anything nearly as atypical for several years, each CBC count still brings great excitement.

The Charles Town count was blessed with 29 participants, of which five were brand new to CBC, who identified a total of 75 species on December 19, 2021. The various parties spent a cumulative 66.75 hours in the field and



traveled 288 miles. Record high numbers were tallied for Tundra Swan (3), Mallard (535), Virginia Rail (7), Merlin (tied the high with 1), Peregrine Falcon (tied the high with 2), and Eastern Phoebe (8). A total of 15,303 birds were identified.

The Inwood count

was held on January 2, 2022 with 17 participants recording 72 species while accumulating 64.75 party hours and 392.5 party miles. We were pleased to have 3 new birders from out of the

area whose team recorded 53 species, including five that only their group had recorded. Their Short-eared Owl was the best bird of the count. Tundra Swan and Redhead were reported as count-week species, but not seen during the count. Record highs were recorded for Eastern Screech Owl (22), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (29), Merlin (1 tied the record high), Hermit Thrush (36), Field Sparrow (31), and Rusty Blackbird (200). The total number of birds reported during the count was 9,860.



It would be wonderful to confront the problem of "too many volunteers," so if you're reading this and haven't yet done so, please consider helping with the next installment of the Charles Town or Inwood CBC. You can opt for counting the birds that visit your feeders, survey your neighborhood, or join a team in the field. Information will be posted on the website of our faithful sponsor, the Potomac Valley Audubon Society, at potomacaudubon.org. Please check in and register this November or early in December.

**Have bird seed stored
at Sunny Meadows?**

DON'T FORGET

***Stored seed must be picked up
by February 26th.***

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count, happening Feb 18-21, 2022!

What it is: A global count day to collectively take a snapshot of bird life.

Participation is easy and fun. For more information and the opportunity to register for a free instructional webinar to hone your skills on February 16, go to: <https://www.birdcount.org>

Download posters to hang that will increase interest and participation:

<https://www.birdcount.org/posters/>

Spend time at "The Roost" where you will find online content about birds and birdwatching:

<https://www.birdscanada.org/the-roost/>

Family and Youth Programs

The Watershed Education Program Expands its Outreach

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

We anticipate this spring season to be very busy with the Watershed Education Program and community outreach. We are thrilled to announce that our Spring Watershed Education Program is being scheduled for in-person instruction and field trips. This spring, we are working with dozens of fourth grade classrooms throughout Berkeley and Morgan counties. Our instructors are very excited to work face-to-face with students once again. When weather allows, we are hoping to bring our watershed lessons outdoors to decrease Covid exposure risk and get kids outside in nature (as is always our goal).

While we bring watershed curriculum and instruction to Berkeley County Schools, we are also continuing Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) with Jefferson County fourth grade students. Currently, students in twenty-one fourth grade classes are brainstorming and planning a watershed action project which will address a community need. This project will build on their experience learning about their local watershed. Project-based learning is an amazing framework for student engagement and empowerment. As action projects are planned and initiated, we will be excited to share updates with our community. Be on the lookout for future articles and social media posts featuring student action projects!



These action projects and hands-on experiences are made possible through the Outdoor Learning Network Initiative (OLNI) which is funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust. PVAS is a backbone partner of OLNI and supports their efforts to make watershed education and MWEEs systemic throughout the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia (Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan Counties). Together, we have a goal of creating a collaborative plan to reach students across elementary, middle and high school grade levels with meaningful watershed educational experiences.

Recently, OLNI was able to take an important step in furthering this goal of having a systemic approach to watershed education across the region. OLNI, in collaboration with Cacapon Institute, hired a part-time MWEE Coordinator for the Panhandle. The MWEE Coordinator will lead in the writing of MWEE plans and goals for the three-county network. In the near future, having this coordinated plan will be instrumental in helping the region secure funding for continued watershed education and student action projects. The individual chosen for this important role in our mission is Carolyn Thomas.

On a personal note, I am thrilled that Carolyn was selected to fill this position, as I believe she is the perfect person for this role. Carolyn has been committed to youth environmental education for a long time, throughout her career as an educator. She first introduced me to watershed education over a decade ago when she was my middle school science teacher and club leader, educating, mentoring and enhancing with exciting field trips and hands-on learning. I remember going on Environment Club trips with her where I tested water quality and collected macroinvertebrates for the first time. Working with her to bring

these same experiences to hundreds of students in the local community will truly feel full-circle for the both of us, I am sure.

We are so excited to collaborate with partners in environmental education as well as many, many teachers and students in the new year. It is such a privilege to have the opportunity to network with so many passionate people to create positive change in the community. If you would like to learn more about how you can also be a part of this collaborative effort by volunteering with upcoming Watershed Program field trips, please contact me at Laurel@potomacaudubon.org

We will need all of the help that our PVAS community can provide for a very busy field trip season.

Family and Youth Programs

Invasive Investigations with Outdoor School

By Gus Rasich, AmeriCorps Environmental Educator

Behind every one of PVAS' youth programs, is the motivation of an overall objective to foster emotional connections between kids and their local ecosystems. Sure, a major part of our lessons and workshops involves exposing students to technical knowledge and scientific concepts, but we also view the personal investment students develop through time in nature as invaluable.

In the past few months, we have been noticing an encouraging trend emerging among our Outdoor School participants. Back in October, one simple lesson about invasive plants seemingly sparked a passion for native habitat preservation in many of our Outdoor School students.

It started with an activity concerning invasive plants during our tree-themed month of October. We presented students with a thrilling backstory: they were Invasive Species Special Agents, on the hunt for nefarious invasive plants. Each invasive target had a codename and a case file of its criminal past. First was Stacy, the Japanese Stiltgrass, guilty of displacing native plants. Then Alex, the Autumn Olive, convicted of spreading its reach at a threatening speed. Finally, there was Jasper the Japanese Honeysuckle, known to strangle other plants, and a particularly high-stakes target.



We saw students become captivated as we framed our challenge for them. The storytelling approach to teaching proved to be very effective for student engagement. It was truly impressive to see students work as a team to hunt through the preserve for signs of these invasives. One of the young special agents would spot the characteristic vines of Japanese Honeysuckle and call their friends over to help free a strangled tree from Jasper. Stacy the Stiltgrass was another target, and students rapidly cleared patches of her overgrowth, all the while making comedic jabs at the personified plant. I followed our gaggle of passionate weed warriors with the pile of stiltgrass they'd collected. I could barely see over the heap by the end of our work.

This was 3 months ago. Now, on our hikes, we still hear kids admonishing Stacy, and Jasper, and especially Tony (the Tree of Heaven, who can't be cut down, so students have resorted to sternly lecturing instead). We're so happy to see that they have not only retained this knowledge of invasives, but see themselves as defenders of the native habitat around them. Clearly, an emotional connection has been formed, and we hope to keep using similar strategies to empower kids to see themselves as both a part of nature and as individuals with the power to help protect it.



Help Support Our AmeriCorps

As our youth programs continue to grow, we are looking to bring on more AmeriCorps environmental educators this Spring and Fall than we have ever had before. However, one of the biggest challenges we face in the recruitment process is helping our candidates find affordable housing in the area. Many amazing candidates have turned down the positions because they simply can't afford to live in our community with the stipend AmeriCorps gives them.

In reality, most housing options in the Panhandle cost more than half of an AmeriCorps monthly income. We are looking for anyone in the community who has any kind of housing available who would be able to offer rent at a reduced cost or even for free. Our housing needs could be met by a spare room in someone's house, a basement apartment, or a guest house. If you can support our efforts in any way, please contact Amy Moore Thomas at amy@potomacaudubon.org.

PVAS Needs Your Bottle Caps!

This summer, Earth Art campers will be creating a recycled bottle cap mural - which means we'll need a hefty supply of recycled bottle caps.

If you'd like to help us out, collect plastic bottle caps (of any size or color) at home, and drop them off at the Cool Spring Preserve nature center.

A designated drop-off bin will be placed on the nature center front porch.

Contact Gus Rasich at
gus@potomacaudubon.org
with any questions.

Camp Programs

It's Time to Register for Camp!

By Amy Moore Thomas, Lead Teacher and Naturalist/ Summer Camp Director

We are thrilled to announce that summer camp registration opens on Wednesday, February 16. The PVAS Education team has some fantastic summer camp plans in the works.

Last year, camp spots filled up faster than ever, and so this year we have increased our camp capacity to 30 spots a week at both our Cool Spring and Yankauer Camp locations.

We've been hard at work creating new and exciting camp themes for the upcoming summer.

Along with our popular elementary school aged *"Camp Survivor"* theme, we are offering a middle school *"Ultimate Survivor Camp."* The focus of this advanced camp is to use mainly "made from nature" resources to survive. Campers will weave baskets, whittle spoons and even make their own bamboo cups.



For our middle and high school camp, *"Tools of the Trade"* we are bringing in a guest forester, freshwater biologist and ornithologist to give campers a glimpse of the different careers available in the environmental field.



A new camp for elementary aged kids is *"Blast to the Past"* where campers will be making yarn, candles, paper and jam to experience what life was like in the 1700s.

Hiring Summer Camp Staff

Do you know anyone loves working with kids and being outside?

PVAS is seeking AmeriCorps Service Members to serve as Summer Camp Counselors.

This fun and energizing ten-week position will be from May 31 - Aug 5.

For more information, visit:

www.potomacaudubon.org/about/positions-with-pvas/.



Our *"Dirt Don't Hurt"* camp is all about getting messy and learning about life under our feet, and our *"Wild about Water"* camp is for campers who want to explore the different aquatic habitats at Cool Spring Preserve. We are also offering *"Earth Art Camp"* for those who like to make, build and create; and *"Nature Sleuths Camp"* for those up to the challenge of solving a nature mystery. Our *"Sensational Senses"* camp is for younger campers entering kindergarten and first grade.

We want all children to have a chance to have a PVAS Discovery Camp experience no matter their financial circumstances. Thus, we have scholarships available for families with financial need. Our scholarship application can be found on our camp website.

This fun-packed camp season will be here before you know it, and our staff can't wait to help create a memorable nature experience for our campers! We hope to see your child there!

Conservation

Top 5 Species that Benefit from Beavers

By Jade Harris, AmeriCorps Environmental Educator

Since last May, Cool Spring Preserve has been home to at least one (and recently a second) North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*). Known as ecosystem engineers, beavers modify and change their environment to suit their needs. This change in the environment creates new habitats for a variety of different species. Here are the top 5 animals benefiting from the beavers at Cool Spring:

1. Muskrats: A two-to-three-pound semi-aquatic rodent, muskrats are common animals found around beavers. Muskrats spend a large portion of their lives in the water, eating vegetation. The deeper, stable pools of water created by the beaver dams allow muskrats to access more habitats and food while staying safe from predators. The muskrat also benefits from the beaver's lodge. During the winter, muskrats may squat in beavers' lodges to stay warm and avoid predators.

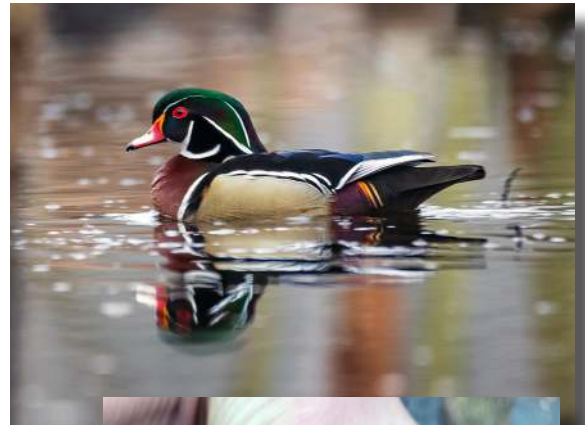


2. Great Blue Herons: Large wading birds, Great Blue Herons have been able to be spotted at Cool Spring in the past. However, since the beavers' arrival, the number of Great Blue Herons has increased. Great Blue Herons hunt in shallow waters eating prey such as fish, crawfish and other small animals. The beaver dams have increased the size of the available wetland habitat at Cool Spring increasing the availability of prey available to Great Blue Herons. As you walk the Linda's Loop trail, keep your eyes peeled for the chance to see one.



benefiting from the beavers. Wood ducks prefer habitats that are composed of a variety of different environments such as ponds, streams, and wetlands. The presence of the beavers has increased the amount of these various habitats across the preserve, increasing our waterfowl populations.

3. Wood Ducks: Beavers are experts at creating high-quality waterfowl habitats. Wood ducks are one species that are



4. Minks: A small predator similar in size and shape to a weasel, mink are a common species that benefits from beavers. Mink thrive in beaver-modified habitats because of the natural increase in their favorite food sources: fish, crustaceans, and amphibians.



5. Amphibians and Fish: The pools and wetlands that beavers create are valuable habitat for a plethora of amphibians and fish. The deeper pools provide increased food opportunities as well as protection from predators. The wetlands are useful nurseries for many amphibians and fish, both providing protection from predators and abundant food.



Conservation

A Monarch Minute: 2021 Population Growth of Western Monarch Butterflies

By Tess Dew, Monarch Alliance

Western monarchs have made an astounding population comeback in their California overwintering sites, with the count surging from 2,000 to 200,000 in a single year. While this is not yet enough to signify a recovery of the population, it is an encouraging sign that there may be time to save this iconic butterfly from local extinction.

The western and eastern monarchs are genetically indistinguishable. The difference between the two groups exists in their migration patterns. Monarchs living and migrating east of the Rockies will overwinter in Mexico, while most of those on the western side of the Rockies will overwinter along California's West Coast.



In the 1990's, more than one million western monarchs made a spectacular annual migration to overwinter in forested groves along the California coast. In recent years, the number dwindled until fewer than 2,000 overwintering western monarchs were counted in 2020.

There's no definitive answer as to why there was such a large increase this year, but scientists are conjecturing that it's due to environmental factors during the fall migration, such as weather and better conditions at the breeding grounds. There also could have been an influx of monarchs from the eastern U.S., which is another possible scenario.

David James, an entomologist at Washington State University, who studies the California population, sees a hopeful future of mixed monarch populations. As the climate continues to warm, some monarchs will migrate, and others will stay put. "The proportion and population sizes of these will shift annually according to temperatures, particularly during September and October," he said.

According to Sandy Sagalkin, founder of The Monarch Alliance, "The western story shows how, biologically, an insect population can rebound. For example, one female lays 400 eggs. At the extreme, they all hatch, and half are females, each laying 400 eggs. Take this out to 4-5 generations during a given year and I'm sure you can get to a million for each individual starting out. The big problem is climate, habitat and pesticide use along the route during the migration. When there is a perfect storm, it can knock a population down or lift it up, all depending on the seasonal variables."

Keep up with monarch news on The Monarch Alliance Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/theMonarchAlliance>

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

PVMN Holds Second Open House

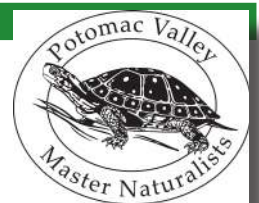
By Rich Brager, PVMN Co-Chair

Each year, PVMN holds two open houses to attract and inform new potential members to the myriad of benefits of becoming a certified WV Master Naturalist. Our first open house was in December, held at Cacapon State Park, and aimed at our Morgan County residents. I reported on this successful event in the last issue of Valley Views.

We have now had our second open house in January, targeting our Jefferson and Berkeley County residents. It was held at the Hospice of the Panhandle Center, and I am very pleased to report that this open house was equally as successful as the previous one. Although we may have had fewer candidates in attendance than in non-Covid years, we still managed to attract eight very enthusiastic (and masked) candidates. One candidate trekked in clear from Paw Paw!

Assisting me at the open house, were three Coordinating Committee members, Diane Fletcher, Barbara Spicher and Phil Folk. We also had Master Naturalist Peter Mulford, and PVAS President Jim Cummins. All PVAS and PVMN members imbued

palpable enthusiasm in our visitors. Many questions were asked, and many questions were answered. We had allotted one hour for our meeting, but we continued for nearly an hour and a half!



PVMN accepts a maximum of 20 new students each year. Based on the number of applications already received, and the enthusiasm of the open house attendees, I'm very confident that we will be at capacity once again.

In other PVMN news, by the time you read this, we will have held our second consecutive virtual Annual Meeting, and will have elected a record number (12) of new Coordinating Committee members. These folks will fill a number of positions being vacated by existing members, as well as a number of new positions created to better serve our membership.

We are also planning (and hoping) for our first face-to-face gathering in 2 years, in the spring. If Covid has sufficiently subsided, we are planning on an enjoyable picnic on April 30th to celebrate our 15th anniversary - albeit one year late. Details will follow.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager

It's a new year and we have new amenities at Cool Spring Preserve for you to check out!

First, I am excited to announce that after three years of numerous planning, permitting and COVID-related delays, the trail boardwalk has been completed! The boardwalk is approximately 100 feet in length and covers a section of Linda's Loop between Old Orchard Trail and the Outdoor Classroom. This is a beautiful section of trail along the Bullskin that provides sweeping views of both the marsh and pollinator meadow. It has been closed numerous times over the years, due to seasonal flooding. The boardwalk prevents visitors from having to walk through the periodically wet area, which causes damage to the vegetation and potential runoff of sediments into the stream, not to mention muddy feet.

Funding for this project was provided by the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation and the Two Rivers Giving Circle. The specialized engineering plans to build a permanent structure within the flood zone were created by Thurman Whisner, PE, of Hedgesville, and the construction was performed by dedicated volunteers, Peter Palmer, Gary Sylvester, and Dave Curfman. Our Outdoor School students got to perform the grand opening of the boardwalk and be the first ones to cross it to reach the Outdoor Classroom.



Second, thanks to our wonderful donors and faithful supporters of our Outdoor School program, we were able to have a patio installed behind the Nature Center. The half-deck was replaced by a concrete patio extending the full length of the back of the building. This gives us ample space to continue hosting our outdoor programs year-round without turning the backyard into a muddy mess.

The work was performed by an outstanding crew from Blackwater Designer Concrete. They

even let Amy know the perfect time to imprint animal tracks on our new patio! In the future, we hope to add a timber-framed living roof over the patio to make an eco-friendly, all-weather outdoor space.



We are so excited for you to see both of these new amenities, and we are thankful to have such great supporters that have allowed us to continue to grow even as we enter year three of the pandemic.

While most of our efforts have been focused on Cool Spring lately, the other three preserves have not been forgotten! Yankauer, Stauffer's Marsh, and Eido-

lon are all beautiful places to visit all winter long. Be on the lookout for upcoming volunteer opportunities. Although it still feels like winter right now, spring is not far off and there will be much to do. I look forward to seeing you in the preserves!

Advocacy

Advocacy Committee Report

Here at Potomac Valley Audubon, advocacy is an important tool to further our mission to “preserve, restore and enjoy the natural world through education and action.” PVAS’s advocacy policy states that “our advocacy activities will generally be most effective, and most likely to reflect the views of the majority of our membership, when they are locally focused. Our organization is well known within our service area and as a result, local government leaders are likely to take our input seriously.” PVAS’s full Advocacy Policy is available on our website:

https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.potomacaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PVAS_Advocacy_Policy.pdf.

At the recent PVAS Board retreat, the following five-year goals were adopted for the Advocacy Advisory Group:

1. PVAS will incorporate audience/program-appropriate advocacy actions across all programs.
2. PVAS will increase its advocacy role in our community.
3. PVAS will take the lead in partnering with other local environmental groups to form a powerful green coalition for Jefferson, Berkeley and Morgan counties.

In addition, Advocacy actions will incorporate local issues of environmental justice, and will expand outreach into previously underserved neighborhoods.

As a first step to reaching its goals, the Advocacy Committee is currently working to get an email newsletter up and running to educate members on daily actions to take. These will include state and local political actions, but also small actions that can be taken in daily life.

For example, the committee will share the West Virginia Environmental Council’s efforts to follow environmental issues on the state level. Their “lobby team will be in-person this year at the Capitol working hard to represent our members, people who want clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, and will be dedicated to educating legislators on our legislative priorities. Priorities include: (1) Climate Change, (2) Clean water including a strong water quality standards rule, (3) Clean Elections and protecting our voting rights, (4) Public Lands threatened with Off-Road vehicle use, (5) Coal Community Just Transition for West Virginia communities, (6) Adequate funding for inspectors for the Office of Oil and Gas of the DEP.”

If you’d like to be kept “in the know” about these types of efforts along with suggestions for what you can do to take action personally, please email Ginger Hankins at vicepresident@potomacaudubon.org. We’d love to hear from you. Even better? We’d love for you to join us on the Advocacy Committee!



GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP!

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

- 10% member discount on program fees, facility rentals, and birthday parties.
- A subscription to our bi-monthly newsletter, *Valley Views*, and twice monthly e-newsletter, *Heads Up, PVAS!*
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers/museums.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Gift Membership Form

To purchase a gift membership, send in the form below with an enclosed check. Dues are \$50/household, \$35/teacher (covering membership for everyone in your household for one year, or \$20/full-time adult student (benefits apply to member only)). Make the check out to “PVAS.” For more details on membership, go to: www.potomacaudubon.org/support/become-a-member/.

Your Name: _____

Recipient’s Name: _____

Recipient’s Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Recipient’s E-mail: _____

Recipient’s Phone (optional): _____

Please note if you’d like us to mail your gift membership directly to the recipient of your choice, or to you. If you’d like us to mail it directly to the recipient, also note when you would like it to be mailed.

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

National Audubon has a membership program that is separate from PVAS. 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 an affiliate of PVAS, but not a full PVAS member. Affiliates will have access to our communications, and invitations to our events. However, all National Audubon dues go to the National Audubon Society and are not shared with PVAS. We heartily invite you to become a dues-paying member of both organizations.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443
Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 30
Shepherdstown, WV

<http://www.potomacaudubon.org>

DATED MATERIALS

A proud partner of
the United Way
of the
Eastern Panhandle.



MAIL TO:

February/March 2022

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 40, Issue 4

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. 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.

All Officers, Board Members, and Staff can be contacted at 681-252-1387.

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

President:	.....Jim Cummins (2023)
Past President:	.....Suzanne Offut (2023)
Vice President:	.....Ginger Hankins (2023)
Secretary:	.....Carolyn Thomas (2022)
Treasurer:	.....Stephen Paradis (2021)
Board Members-at-Large:	.....Patty Bain Bachner (2022)
	.....Susan Brookreson (2022)
	.....Dana Fogle (2023)
	.....Melissa Gonzalez (2023)
	.....Ginger Hankins (2022)
	.....Wil Hershberger (2022)
	.....Georgia Jeppesen (2022)
	.....Pete Mulford (2023)
	.....Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2023)
	.....Herb Peddicord (2022)
	.....Mary Lynn Robinson (2023)
	.....Keith Unger (2023)
	.....Jean Neely

Emerita Board Member:

Special Contacts:

Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397)Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
Land/Conservation Mgr: KC Walters (304-283-7319)Katelyn@potomacaudubon.org
Lead Teacher/Naturalist: Amy Moore (240-818-4714)Amy@PotomacAudubon.org
Adult Prog. Coord: Krista Hawley (703-303-1026)AdultPrograms@PotomacAudubon.org
Communications/Marketing Manager: Chanda Drew (681-252-1387)Admin@PotomacAudubon.org
Watershed Ed Coord: Laurel Schwartz (681-252-1387)Laurel@PotomacAudubon.org
Web Master: Kathy Biltonkathy@fred.net
PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-754-3753)dianamullis7@gmail.com
Valley Views editor/publisher:
Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639)newsletter@potomacaudubon.org

PVAS BOARD

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