



# Valley Views

Volume 39, Issue 6

June/July 2021

## Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director



Spring has never been so welcome! I think all of us are feeling weight lifted from our shoulders as we can get outside more comfortably, and visit with friends and family more safely. Never has the promise of renewal that comes with spring been so precious. And this year we get to witness the miraculous return of the 17-year cicadas, to boot!

As the reopening begins, we're proceeding with caution. We are continuing to offer outdoor, small group, in-person programs with special guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The best way to stay updated on our upcoming activities is by regularly checking the PVAS website calendar and Facebook page. At issue are: the ever-changing guidelines and safety measures; the comfort level of each volunteer fieldtrip/bird walk leader; and the varying policies of each program site. Needless to say, it's complicated, but the safety and comfort of our volunteers and participants is paramount.

On the bright side, we're able to get together for our Annual Membership Picnic this year! Between COVID and winter, we've been holed up, and we miss seeing you. This year we'll be holding the picnic at Yankauer on July 10<sup>th</sup> with safety protocols in place. Details are included in this newsletter. You'll have the opportunity to thank Mina Goodrich and Don Campbell for their service to the Board, and meet the incoming board members whose terms begin July 1. (You'll be receiving an email with an electronic ballot soon if you haven't already!)

We look forward to seeing you then. It seems like it's been a long time, but at least we're not a 17-year cicada! Thinking of them makes our one-year of "holing up" somewhat tolerable. Nothing like nature to put things in perspective.

## Thank You to Board Members!

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Two Board Members are stepping off the board this year, and we want to thank them heartily for their amazing contributions to PVAS over the years.

Those leaving the Board include Don Campbell and Mina Goodrich. Don Campbell has brought a wealth of knowledge to PVAS as we've acquired and considered properties. His experience as Superintendent of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and other Parks have benefited PVAS greatly and we can't thank him enough for his calm, thoughtful considerations as PVAS makes critical decisions. Mina Goodrich, too, has been an amazing board member. Her wealth of experience with fundraising, health care, and financial matters have been enormously helpful, and her incredible financial generosity has helped PVAS become the stable, growing organization it is today.

These individuals have made more contributions than can be counted and have been amazingly supportive during their time on the Board. We thank them and wish them well, and hope they stay active and engaged with PVAS for years to come.

## Election Time is Here!

It's that time of year when we elect new Board members for our organization. We are so grateful to members of the community who agree to serve on the board. They provide wisdom, perspective, and professional guidance as we navigate our growth and unforeseen challenges... like a pandemic, for example! PVAS has been so fortunate over the years to recruit fantastic leaders in the community. This year is no different! As a dues-paying member in good standing, you have the opportunity to vote for these fantastic folks – one vote per household. You'll be receiving an e-mail with a link you can use to vote electronically this year to save time, money and paper. If you require a paper ballot to participate, please contact Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or [Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org) and she'll get one to you.

We are pleased to report that the following Board Members have agreed to serve an additional term: Steve Paradis (Treasurer), and At-large members Melissa Gonzales, Pete Mulford, Patti Mulkeen-Corley, and Rod Snyder. New recruits include Ginger Hankins (Vice-President), and At-large members Dana Fogle, Mary Lynn Robinson, and Keith Unger. Full biographies and background on all of these candidates are available on our website on the "About Us – Board" page or at this link: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/about/board-communications/2021-board-elections/>. And we hope you'll join us at the Annual Picnic on July 10 to recognize Mina Goodrich and Don Campbell for their service as they step off the board, and to welcome in these new and returning folks.

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

## Insidious Illumination

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images and Sounds, LLC

June is the time of the year for lightning bugs and glowworms. The magical lanterns of an astounding 2,000 species bring awe and admiration to millions worldwide. The ephemeral glow of their nuptial dances has been the inspiration for poets and authors for centuries. Many of us fondly remember chasing these imps during summer evenings in our childhood, holding in our hands these miracles of magic light.

However, these fireflies or lightning bugs are not flies or bugs but beetles of the family Lampyridae. These amazing insects are among a host of other creatures that possess the fascinating chemistry of bioluminescence. In this chemical reaction, the molecule luciferin is modified by the enzyme luciferase in the presence of oxygen creating light in the process. The different species of lightning bugs that produce light use different patterns of light to attract a mate. Some flash quickly, some slowly, some flash repeatedly, and some flash in patterns. Both males and the females flash; females rest in the vegetation watching for males of the correct species to wander by; when she sees the correct pattern of lights, she'll respond with her own unique pattern to signal to the male that she's there.

One of the most common lightning bugs in our area is the Big Dipper firefly, *Photinus pyralis*. Males stay close to the ground, turn on their light while moving downward then sharply fly up, creating a J pattern with their light. Perhaps the most spectacular lightning bug in the U.S. is *Photinus carolinus*, the synchronous firefly of the Great Smokies. Males flash at the same time creating one of the most jaw-dropping displays of the natural world. Since the synchrony isn't exact, the pulse of light will travel out into the distance over and over with each flash like a wave.

Interestingly, lightning bugs are avoided as prey by bats, toads, lizards, and birds. They are even toxic to some species by virtue of their hemolymph's chemistry containing bitter, toxic steroids known as lucibufagins. However, as one might expect, these unique signals have been usurped by predators that mimic receptive females. Since lightning bugs are toxic to some and very bitter to most, it is not surprising to find that these predators are species of lightning bugs that mimic the females of other species to lure unsuspecting males to their deaths. Members of the genus *Photuris* remain carnivorous as adults and mimic the flash response of females of members of the genus *Photinus* – it's a cruel world.

The most important fact to note is the finding that lightning bugs will not flash if the ambient light levels are too bright. With the ever-burgeoning encroachment of human settlements into natural areas, light pollution levels are increasing logarithmically. Once dark skies that were filled with millions of stars are now washed out with the glow of dusk to dawn lights, city lights, and highway illumination – without darkness, lightning bugs cannot display, find a mate or reproduce. This insidious illumination of the night continues unchecked even though it would be so easy to ameliorate. There are a few easy steps to ensure the continued future of lightning bugs and other nocturnal insects affected by lights at night. Keep lighting only to areas where it is needed, shade lights to keep light only in the space where it is required, use motion sensor technology to keep lights turned off when not needed. This brightening of the night has resulted in the precipitous decline of many species of lightning bugs as well as other species of insects. With the added assaults of mowing lawns, spraying chemicals, and habitat loss our native insect populations are in trouble. This lack of insects directly affects our native birds – most species that breed in our area feed their young exclusively on insects until they become independent. Without insects, lots of insects, the populations of our birds will continue to decline.



*Photinus pyralis*, light on © Laura Hughes



*Photinus pyralis* perching © Laura Hughes

I hope that you will take a few minutes to re-evaluate the nighttime lighting of your property: Are lights at night really needed and if so where? Can it be on a motion sensor so that the lights are only on when required? Is there a way to minimize or shade existing lights to keep stray light out of natural

areas? These small actions could have enormous consequences for our native wildlife.

## PVAS Events

### Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

I can hear a collective sigh of relief ripple through our community - warmer weather is here which allows for more connecting through outdoor activities and programs and less 'zooming' for our social interactions and educational experiences! As we are still learning how to navigate safely through this global pandemic and all of the unknowns, we are very grateful for outdoor spaces and widespread vaccinations that allow us to cautiously gather again.



We are eager to return to a more 'normal' summer of field trips, educational walks and possibly even a workshop of two. While much of our programming either went virtual or was put on hold for the past

year, we now are working towards finding safe ways for our community to gather, learn, explore and volunteer. If you have ideas, we would love to hear from you!

Our monthly bird walks at the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center and our 'Third Wednesday' Bird Walks at Cool Spring Preserve continue through the summer months. While registration remains mandatory and limited, we are now allowing additional spots on these walks. We are also exploring additional opportunities for bird and nature walks so make sure to check the calendar regularly as we are often updating the events section.

Celebrate the magic of 'firefly season' with an evening firefly walk at Cool Spring Preserve on Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup> with Ariel Firebaugh, Director of Scientific Engagement at Blandy Experimental Farm. Stroll along the trails of the preserve searching for and learning about the all the various fireflies we see in this area.

PVAS President, Jim Cummins (aka a 'walking encyclopedia'), will be leading folks on a guided nature walk on Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup> (location to be determined). His walks are incredibly rich with information and do a beautiful job of intertwining the natural and human history in our region.

After taking a year off, and thanks to an enormous amount of planning by the MN Coordinating Committee, the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program is back in full swing. The year kicked off with virtual programming and is now easing into in-person classes and field work in June. Yankauer Nature Preserve is a fantastic venue for this transition. The Jean Neely Pavilion offers shelter, shade and distanced seating for Power-Point presentations and classwork, and the numerous trails allow for instructors to safely teach their hands-on subjects to the eager students. In addition to coursework resuming, the annual West Virginia State Conference is also scheduled for Friday, August 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at Canaan Valley State Park. More information can be found at the WV Master Naturalist website <http://mnofwv.org/>.

To find out more about these and other programs, email [Hannah@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Hannah@PotomacAudubon.org) to subscribe to our biweekly *Heads-Up, PVAS!* e-newsletter, and check our website ([www.PotomacAudubon.org](http://www.PotomacAudubon.org)) regularly. We are adding programs and events all the time, so the website is the best way to keep up to date.

### Volunteer Spotlight

#### Have you met the Broomgrass Community?

When "This Race is for the Birds!" found itself 'homeless' after our 2017 race, we were not sure how or where we could continue to hold this important and *fun* fundraiser. While word spread that PVAS was in search of a venue, the neighbors at Broomgrass came together and made the generous decision to open their community to the race. Broomgrass is a gorgeous private community in Berkeley County, WV that not only is lush with beautiful vistas, broomgrass fields, and woods speckled with wildflowers; it also is lucky enough to have Back Creek running along the backside of the property. Farmer Tim Yates, owner of Steel House Farm, is one of the residents, and uses this pristine land to raise his grass-fed beef and free-range chickens and eggs.

Due to the fact that "This Race is for the Birds" is a trail run, volunteers begin accessing the community to work on the trails weeks before the actual event. Broomgrass throws open their 'doors' to us, welcoming and often times, helping get things ready for the race. So many of the residents have worked behind the scenes clipping vines, removing stumps, raking (and raking and raking!) leaves, and on race days helping guide runners, greeting participants, checking people in, etc.! We would not have the winding trails through the woods that we do without Ryan McCarthy's creative trailblazing skills, and Farmer Tim has even changed a flat tire on Kristin's truck...all with a smile on his face!

PVAS is forever grateful to all of the folks of the Broomgrass community for their helping hands, welcoming smiles and endless support.



PVAS Events

21<sup>st</sup> Annual “This Race is for the Birds!” - A Virtual and In-Person Event

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

After a long year filled with a lot of unknowns, PVAS *knew* we wanted to offer a fun, safe, outdoor event for our community. Thanks to a bit of creativity and the support of many, we were able to do just that!

PVAS’s 21<sup>st</sup> annual “This Race is for the Birds!” offered something for everyone. Whether joining us virtually or in-person, participants were able to get outside and exercise while helping to support PVAS’s educational programs and the upkeep of our four preserves.

For the first time ever, we offered a virtual race option which allowed people to participate anytime between April 9 – 17 at any location of their choosing. Individuals were invited to run, hike, bike, etc. and send a photo of themselves during or after their activity. Fifty-five individuals registered for the virtual event, and twelve states were represented! Kids who completed their 1-mile fun run received a certificate and popcorn from Mountaineer Popcorn.



Our in-person event was once again held on the gorgeous trails of the Broomgrass Community in Berkeley County, West Virginia. In an effort to keep all participants and volunteers safe, the start times were staggered with 15 people or fewer in each ‘heat.’ Runners and walkers had the option of self-timing or using the “Race for the Birds” Strava Segments to document their time. One hundred twenty-two individuals registered for the in-person event, some coming from as far away as Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

All participants were entered into a drawing to win donated prizes, and our first place Male/Female Winners of the 5K and 10K events received a \$50 Gift Certificate from our partner and local running store Two Rivers Treads. 5K Strava Segment Winners were Ronilee Gomez (F) 28:36, and Adrian Elliott (M) 22:50. The 10K Strava Segment Winners were Mikala Shremshock (F) 53:45, and Nate Smith (M) 46:56. Congrats to all of our winners!

The amount of work that went into pre-race preparations was tremendous, and we could not have done it without the support of numerous volunteers who helped lighten the load by clearing & mowing the trails, marking the course, creating maps, setting up registrations, and delivering supplies, as well as day-of activities such as parking, check-in, course marshals, photography and cleanup crews. They all

deserve a special thanks for their service, as does Nan Johnson, volunteer Race Director, whose ‘behind the scenes’ time, energy, and expertise is without a doubt, irreplaceable.

It is such a treat to connect with the people that participate in our event each year. The community of runners and walkers that join us in-person and virtually each have a story to tell and a personal reason for participating. We were thrilled to welcome a family of three generations of runners (and a fourth generation cheering them on!) to the trails of Broomgrass and we were inspired and awed by Keryl’s story: Keryl is blind and was guided by her granddaughter, Gabriella, as she navigated her virtual 5K course through her neighborhood. This experience has empowered her to continue joining other local races in our community. Leslie Boyd shared her post-race thoughts with us:

*From the well-organized trails to the beautiful scenery, “This Race is for the Birds” was outstanding! I was supposed to run my very first 5K last year, but well, you know what happened... the COVID safety precautions, such as staggered start times and sanitizing areas, were very efficient. The countless volunteers directing and cheering on the participants was so encouraging. The natural setting provided beautiful scenery such as redbud trees and bluebells. I can certainly say that my first 5K experience was wonderful and I can’t wait to “fly” again next year.*

The 2021 “This Race is for the Birds” raised over \$10,000 this year. This event is an important annual fundraiser for Potomac Valley Audubon Society’s programs and preserves and wouldn’t be possible without efforts of our volunteers, the engagement of our participants and the support of our sponsors and our hosts at Broomgrass Community and Steel House Farm.



**Thank You to Our Race Sponsors:**

**and...**

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**Birding**

**2021 Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon Results**

*By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager*

Last year's Birdathon was so much fun and so successful that we brought it back again this year! The Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon included two events: a fundraising Top Birder Competition, and a family-fun, Community Collaborative Count.

For the Top Birder Competition, Bob Dean, Matt Orsie and Wil Hershberger once again went head to head (to head) in a friendly birding competition for the title of PVAS Top Birder 2021. Community members sponsored these birders in order for them to earn 'birding privileges' to use during their counts. Each birder had to raise money in order to use binoculars, have an assistant birder, count birds heard but not seen, use a spotting scope, and count birds at a feeder. All three competitors earned full



birding privileges through sponsorships, and collectively raised nearly \$1,500 for PVAS! The proceeds from the Top Birder Competition go toward growing our Habitat Stewardship Programs.



This year the Top Birder crown goes to Matt Orsie! Along with assistants, Joette Borzik and Bill Telfair, he counted 112 bird species on May 6. Bob Dean also completed his count solo on May 6, beginning at 4:12 a.m. with a screech owl and ending at 9:00 p.m. with a whip-poor-will. Bob finished in third place with a total of 86 species counted. Wil Hershberger, along with his lovely assistant (and spouse) Donna, completed his count on May 8, landing him in second place with 101 species observed.

The goal of the Community Collaborative Count was to collectively count at least 100 bird species in the PVAS, 4-county service area. All birders, of all birding abilities, were encouraged to conduct bird counts anywhere in their community and submit their species lists. In total, we had 5 lists submitted and 109 different species recorded including 17 warblers! This was less than last year but still exceed our goal of 100 species. The most common birds spotted were Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, American Goldfinches, American Robins, and Blue Jays.

Congratulations to Matt Orsie and to all of the PVAS birders! We are so proud to have such a great and supportive birding community!

## Family and Youth Programs

### That's a Wrap for Spring Programs

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher & Naturalist/Audubon Discovery Camp Director

We could not be happier with the success of our youth programs this spring. Despite the challenges that pandemic presented us, we provided nature programming to thousands of children in the Eastern Panhandle since January, alone.

I'll start by sharing the stats for programs at our preserves. For the spring season, 36 children participated in our weekly Outdoor School programs for homeschoolers and received between 18 and 24 hours of instruction each month. A total of 28 students participated in our 3-hour homeschool programs. One of our new homeschool program successes for the year was Nature Photography, where students used our Nikon DSLR cameras to capture nature photos at Cool Spring Preserve. Finally, 12 children and 10 parents participated in our monthly Wee Naturalist Pre-school program at Cool Spring Preserve.



the long run." A teacher from Eagle Intermediate School shared with us that PVAS's watershed program provided a fun and engaging experience outside the classroom, to which many of their students do not often have access.

In addition to our watershed program, we also offered virtual nature programs for grades K – 6. The education team provided programs to 50 classes and 1136 students. One of our most popular programs was "Turtle Time" where the students learned about our education turtles at Cool Spring, and how to protect turtles and



All of our school programs were done virtually this spring. Abby and Emily provided our 4<sup>th</sup> grade watershed program virtually to 6 schools and 1051 students in Berkeley and Morgan counties. These students received nearly 4 hours of instruction time over the course of the 5 virtual programs. We received great praise from the teachers. At the conclusion of the program, Orchard View Intermediate noted the following: "I think this is a very valuable program. The kids learn about their OWN ACTUAL watershed, and so they learn that their actions really do affect their lives in



other reptiles in West Virginia. Other program topics included Insects, Birds, Mammal Skulls, Worms and Decomposers, and a lesson in Flower Dissection.

I am so grateful for the many new connections PVAS has made with teachers with whom we have not previously worked. We can't wait to get back to teaching in-school programs and have classes out in the preserves for field trips when in it safe to do so next school year. It has been clear that outdoor education experiences, whether in person at a preserve, or virtually, have been incredibly valuable to youth in our community during such a challenging year. PVAS is honored that parents and educators continue to look to us to help facilitate environmental education experiences for children.

## Camp Programs

### Meet Our Summer Camp Staff

By Amy Moore, Lead Teacher & Naturalist/Audubon Discovery Camp Director

We are so excited for the start of PVAS's 19<sup>th</sup> year of Audubon Discovery Camps. I got my start at PVAS after my freshman year of college in 2012, working as a camp counselor. I can't believe this will be my 9<sup>th</sup> year (I missed 2016) being a part of PVAS summer camps. My experience as a camp counselor with PVAS is what opened my eyes to the world of environmental education. I am always excited to mentor our new camp counselors each year, and give them a positive experience as environmental educators.

Without further ado, I would like to introduce this year's summer camp staff. Year-long AmeriCorps volunteers Abby and Emily (*photo right*) will finish their last few months with PVAS this summer, along with a few of our fantastic new hires.



Laurel Schwartz, (*photo left*) who served as one of PVAS's AmeriCorps environmental educators last year, will be returning to PVAS to work as the camp site director at Yankauer Nature Preserve. Since her time here at PVAS, Laurel has continued to pursue her passion for youth education and environmental research. In the fall season, Laurel worked part time as a soil science research associate for Virginia Tech. She worked with PhD candidate Jaclyn Fiola (a childhood friend of Amy's) on a vineyard topsoil project. Together, they traveled to local vineyards in Virginia and Maryland taking field soil samples and plant tissue samples. Laurel also worked part time for the University of Maryland, assisting with viticulture research at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center. She enjoyed working alongside experienced research professionals in both of these positions. Currently, Laurel is working as a substitute teacher for Jefferson County Schools. She enjoys teaching students of all grade levels, and is certified to hold a long-term substitute position in elementary education, and secondary science and social studies. She is very excited to serve as PVAS's Yankauer Summer Camp Director this summer!

Sara Brown (*photo right*) will be working as one of our four camp counselors this summer. Sara is currently a student at West Virginia University, where she is majoring in Wildlife & Fisheries Resources, and double minoring in Environmental Protection and Conservation Ecology. She has always had a love for nature and wildlife, yet she continues to grow more passionate about them as she furthers her studies. She volunteers in a wildlife genetics lab on campus and volunteers with a youth ministry in Bridgeport. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, singing, skateboarding, and bouldering. Sara is delighted to share her love of nature with the community!



Our final camp counselor is Molly Hardy, (*photo left*) a Shepherdstown native. She recently finished her first year at West Virginia University studying Wildlife and Fisheries Resources, with the goal of pursuing a career as a Wildlife Biologist. She is especially interested in ornithology. In her free time, Molly enjoys connecting with nature by birding, hiking, and gardening. Molly is passionate about environmental stewardship and conservation and believes that education plays a vital role in protecting and preserving the natural world. Molly attended PVAS summer camps as a child and believes that our camps helped her discover and learn about her passion for the environment. She is grateful and excited to have the opportunity to pass it on, and teach others about her passion.



## Notes from the Preserves

## In the Preserves

By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager

Spring was busy as usual but we are so thankful this year to be resuming 'normal' activities! While the volunteers were helping Krista prep the racecourse at Broomgrass, I hopped on the tractor and did all of the bush-hogging at Cool Spring. This is an important meadow management practice to keep woody species, especially Autumn Olive, from taking over the pollinator meadow and grassland spaces. We time the mow for the early spring before the grassland nesting birds return seeking nest sites. Meanwhile, Gary Sylvester handled the mega bush-hogging along the dam at Stauffer's Marsh. It is important to periodically bush-hog to keep woody species from infiltrating the dam infrastructure.

In mid-April, a team of ten volunteers turned out at Stauffer's Marsh for a special tree-planting workday. Education AmeriCorps Service Members, Abby and Emily, were awarded a tree grant from the Cacapon Institute's Project CommuniTree. This gave us 24 evergreen trees to plant along the West Pond Trail, between the road and the pond. These trees provide a critical screen for the safety and privacy of the waterfowl, while also creating a protective filtration layer to protect the pond from roadside pollutants. The trees include a mix of Canadian Hemlock, Arborvitae, Eastern Red Cedar, Pitch Pine, Norway Spruce, and American Holly.



The Weed Warriors put boots on the ground in May, starting the year off strong by pulling bags and bags of garlic mustard out of the woods. They also worked hard on keeping up with pesky weeds growing in the pollinator gardens. We will be recruiting new Weed Warriors this summer. Two trainings will be offered in June and July in addition to the late May training that just occurred. This is a fun program that empowers volunteers to combat invasive plant species at the preserves on their own schedule! It is a great opportunity to make the most of your preserve walks, and also involve friends and family.

The dog days of summer are upon us and Donald Vogel has joined the preserves management team as the summer Land and Conservation AmeriCorps Service Member. He is an Environmental Science and Policy major at the University of Maryland, and has just wrapped up his junior year. He has strong interests in environmental activism and conservation, particularly surrounding climate change. In his free time, he enjoys hiking, listening to music and cheering on all the DC sports teams. You will be able to meet him during preserve volunteer workdays.

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## PVAS Annual Picnic July 10, 2021

We are pleased to announce that our Annual Membership Meeting and Picnic will be held this year. Please join us at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 10, 2021 at Yankauer Nature Preserve to celebrate a successful year in spite of COVID-19.

This year, for continued safety, we will ask that everyone bring your own picnic supper to enjoy under or near the pavilion. If you'd like to take extra precautions, feel free to bring your own chair to spread out beyond the pavilion, weather permitting. PVAS will provide dessert in some safe way and Bob Dean and Jim Cummins have promised us some music, too! At the meeting we'll provide an overview of the past year, recognize Board members who have reached the end of their terms (Mina Goodrich and Don Campbell), and welcome new board members to PVAS.

You'll be receiving an email with an invitation requesting an RSVP soon!

## Conservation

### Top 5 Things to do at PVAS Nature Preserves this Summer

By Emily Sperling and Abigail Freidline, AmeriCorps Volunteers

#### 1. Gather yummy Wineberry fruits at Cool Spring in July

Looking to go on a hike and get a yummy sweet snack along the way? Stop by Cool Spring this July, where Wineberries will be waiting for you. A wineberry is similar to a raspberry, and bright red and juicy. Eating wineberries is not only delicious but can help the nature preserve as well, because this plant is an invasive species. They were introduced in 1890, and escaped cultivation. Wineberries grow fast, outcompete native plants and use up resources. Seeds are spread by the birds and animals that like to eat them. Wineberries can be enjoyed on their own or baked into a delicious dessert.



#### 2. Meditate at the Rock Cairn at Cool Spring

Take some time to get away. Enjoy an afternoon away from smartphones, tablets and TVs. The perfect place to go is the Rock Cairn at Cool Spring, just a short walk from the preserve's entrance. There you can sit in the peaceful clearing and enjoy the sound of birds and the gently running water of Bull Skin Run. Taking time to meditate can be very beneficial. Meditation can help reduce anxiety, as well as increase focus and creativity. This is a great location to bring a picnic lunch, a book, or even try some yoga. Meditation is not just for adults: bring your kids along too and help them learn the benefits of observing the beautiful world about them.



#### 3. Play 'I Spy' at the Potomac River outlook at Yankauer

Yankauer Nature Preserve has many things to offer this summer. Beautiful winding yet shaded trails take you through the forest. If you take the Kingfisher Trail, you will have the chance to gaze over the Potomac River. This spot offers the chance to take a break on the benches and play a game. I Spy is a great and simple game to help yourself and others see things you might not have noticed before. Start with colors and see how many you can find. Then move to objects, or test your knowledge of plants and bird species, and see how many you can spy. Play by yourself or with others: you might be surprised to see how much you can spy during your game.

#### 4. Peer across the cattails at Stauffers Marsh to find Redwing Blackbirds perching on the stalks

Wetlands are unique environments that support a wide range of birds, animals and wildlife. Stauffers Marsh is no exception. Stauffers supports many native species in West Virginia, but one bird you might see this summer is black with bright red and yellow on its wings, and perches on the cattails. These stunning and colorful birds are Redwing Blackbirds. These birds are easy to spot: they sit high up and make loud calls (conk-la-ree!). This call can be heard across the marsh. Their loud noises and perching behavior can signal an attempt to find a mate or protect territory. Female Redwing Blackbirds do not have the same bright colors as the males. They build nests and lay 3-4 eggs. Both male and female birds help care for the young. Come check out these interesting birds at Stauffers Marsh.



#### 5. Experience living history at Eidolon

Originally purchased in 1900, Eidolon Nature Preserve has changed ownership a few times before becoming a preserve co-managed by PVAS and The Nature Conservancy. From goat farm, to a summer vacation house, Eidolon has experienced various types of management in its past. While hiking through the trails that traverse the 354 acre property, keep an eye open for an old stone engraved with "CHD 5-3-31" which was carved by previous owner and goat farmer Claude Duckworth. Don't forget to stop by the stone cottage built by the most recent owners, Louis and Margaret Zapoleon. The Zapoleons fell in love with the land in 1939, and had purchased it by 1945. The beautiful stone cottage is the cornerstone of the Zapoleon's legacy. By visiting it you are truly transported to a simpler time.



**Conservation**

**Plant Sale Success**

*By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager*

The Monarch Alliance and PVAS have combined resources to ‘grow’ our spring and fall native plant sales. We have continued our relationship with Sunny Meadows Garden Center to bring our community quality native plants that support pollinators and wildlife.

The spring sale, held in May, was our first time hosting both an online pre-order sale and a day-of sale. For two weeks in early May, we had an online store that allowed people to shop early and reserve their plants for pick-up. This online store offered 32 species of perennials and 11 shrubs. It was exceptionally popular, with 150 orders placed! We even had to restock some plants that sold out in the first day the store was open.



Then on May 22, we had a busy day packing plants into cars while also hosting an in-person sale at Sunny Meadows. In total, we had over 4,000 plants find their forever homes in our community. This included over 1000 milkweed plants, the only species that support the growth of Monarch caterpillars. The success of this day is largely due to support from our Potomac Valley Master Naturalist volunteers who are now eligible to earn service hours for helping with our plant sales.



Mark your calendars now for the fall sale scheduled for September 18. We will again offer a two-week, online pre-order sale in late August. This sale will focus more on our fall blooming natives such as asters and goldenrod. We will also be offering more trees and shrubs at this sale.

**Advocacy**

**West Virginia Legislature Ignores the Environment (Almost)**

*By Neal Barkus, Panhandle Progressive*

Every year at this time, those of us interested in environmental preservation and conservation take stock of what the West Virginia Legislature has done for, or to, the environment. Sadly this process usually results in the same conclusion. We made very little progress. During the 2021 regular session just ended, the most notable environmental victory was preventing a harmful bill from passing out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was only accomplished after a massive citizen campaign of letters and emails.

The defeated bill was HB 2589, which would have exempted several hundred above-ground chemical storage tanks from the protections of the Above-Ground Storage Tank Act. This Act was passed after the drinking water disaster in 2014 that left 300,000 West Virginians without safe water for weeks. The storage tanks that would have been exempted by HB 2589 were the very type that had leaked before – those within the critical zone just above public drinking water intakes.

In general, this Legislature didn’t do as much legislating of any type as in years past, despite an overwhelming majority enjoyed by the Republican Party in both houses. The Legislature passed fewer bills during the 2021 session than in either of the two previous ones – 21% fewer than in 2020.

The process requires any bill introduced to be referred to a committee in the House or Senate and passed out to the full body only after a discussion and vote. However, only around 25% of bills introduced and referred to committee actually get taken up and considered by that committee. The rest simply die from inaction but may be reintroduced the following year. The decision whether to take up a bill rests with the committee chair and his decision is guided by the priorities of the party caucus.

Most of the environmental bills introduced in 2021 died in committee without ever being taken up by the committee chair. This was the fate of 25 bills I followed, including several introduced by Del. John Doyle (D-Jefferson) that responded to concerns raised by the Rockwool approval process. These included a bill requiring public hearings for all air quality permits and a bill forbidding a manufacturing plant from locating near a public school. Other notable bills that died this way were a bill banning one-use polystyrene food containers and a bill imposing a wildlife impact fee on wind power projects.

Perhaps the two biggest legislative advances for the environment came in the form of bills that were nominally energy-related bills but had an indirect environmental impact. The first of these was HB 3310, which for the first time will permit “purchase power agreements” for solar installations on private property. These agreements allow a third party to build and operate a solar power facility on a customer’s property and sell the power to that customer. The positive effect in West Virginia will be the reduction in demand from coal-fired power plants. But because this kind of arrangement cuts into the revenues of traditional utilities

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*West Virginia Legislature continued from previous page*

they have been hostile to the concept. Reflecting this, the final bill contains a limit on the total generation loss a utility could suffer from PPAs to 3% of that utility’s aggregate peak customer demand during the previous year.

The second of these two bills was HB 2667, committing the state to reduce the energy consumption in state-owned buildings by 25% below 2020 levels by 2030. To capture the progress in state buildings, each would be benchmarked, measuring that building’s energy use and comparing it to the energy use of similar buildings. The benchmarking process is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and is already 80% complete. A process for certifying the quality of energy-related contractors for work in state buildings was also a part of the bill.

HB 2667 would save not only energy but also taxpayer money. Therein lies the attraction for the nine Republican sponsors of the bill who are usually nowhere near an environmental bill, especially if there is any business opposition. One of these Republican sponsors was Moore Capito, the House Judiciary Committee Chair. The bill also had prominent Democratic sponsors, including the House Minority Leader.

Maybe in all of this there is the outline for success on environmental legislation in future Legislatures. Ensure that our bills involve tax savings or other business-friendly aspects as well as environmental progress. Line up sponsors from both parties. Promote the bills broadly and be ready to put citizen advocates into gear to support them. Of course, each legislature has a different character, with different players and power structures. The political context and hot issues are different for each. But the process of legislating doesn’t change much, and surely we can find a way to produce better results for the environment.

## PVMN

### Seeking Master Naturalists for New Positions on the Coordinating Committee!

The MN Coordinating Committee has developed three new positions in order to respond to and better serve the growing MN community. If you are a Master Naturalist and interested to learn more about these opportunities, please reach out to the Co-Chairs, Kris Phillips ([phillipskoc@gmail.com](mailto:phillipskoc@gmail.com)) and Rich Brager ([megandrichb@aim.com](mailto:megandrichb@aim.com)). They will be happy to share more information with you.



The positions include: **Technical Leader** (computer and software skills are required); **Communication Leader** (good writing skills are required); and **Continuing Education Leader** (good communication and organizational skills are required.) Please go to <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/master-naturalists/> for a full description of each of these positions.

## 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/](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/support/become-a-member/).

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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:

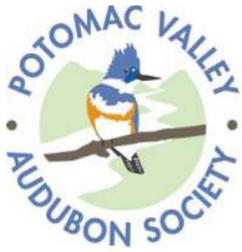
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PO Box 578  
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



**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](http://www.audubon.org), and click on “join.” If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson, or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become 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.



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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.

**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.

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

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

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- Past President: ..... Suzanne Offut (2022)
- Secretary: ..... Carolyn Thomas (2022)
- Treasurer: ..... Stephen Paradis (2021)
- Board Members-at-Large:
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  - ..... Susan Brookreson (2022)
  - ..... Don Campbell (2021)
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  - ..... Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2021)
  - ..... Herb Peddicord (2022)
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*Emerita Board Member:* ..... Jean Neely

**Special Contacts**

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