

# Valley Views

Volume 40, Issue 5

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## President's Note

By Jim Cummins, PVAS President



Spring has sprung so quickly that I haven't been able to attend to all my seasonal chores quite the way I would like; perhaps you are feeling the same. However, this spring feels particularly wonderful because COVID concerns have diminished, and the return to a more regular life is most refreshing and invigorating. We emerge from our isolation like sprouting flowers. PVAS's programs are similarly returning to normal. Throughout the pandemic, PVAS staff and volunteers performed remarkably, coping with a most difficult time and circumstances.

Thanks to your help, support, and involvement, PVAS survived the ordeal without major problems (fingers still crossed). Most recently, through your generous donations and pledges we achieved our Annual Appeal fundraiser goal! Thank you so much!

Looking forward, the 22nd Anniversary of "This Race is for the Birds!" will be both in-person (April 9) and with virtual options (April 2-9). Most exciting, on August 20th, PVAS will celebrate its 40th birthday at our Annual Meeting (details upcoming)! In this issue, you don't want to miss PVAS's founder Jean Neely's article for her reflections on the beginning, growth, and maturity of this remarkable organization. No one knows these histories better than Jean.

Plenty of fun and education for all ages can be found in fantastic upcoming PVAS programs, walks, and events. If you haven't done so already, please be sure to check out our calendar at our website <https://www.potomacaudubon.org>.

As we do our "spring cleaning" of our bylaws, there are some updates that need your approval including shifting Board terms to correlate with our fiscal year (now September 1) and to modernize our bylaws to allow for virtual meetings and votes. We'll be sending you, our members, an email with a direct link to the survey very soon and we hope you'll take the time to respond. Thank you in advance.

This Spring is glorious! Let us all enjoy the warmth and renewal. It is not too late to hang up a bird house. Please excuse me, I need to go get the ladder.

## Thank You!

With your continued generosity, we were able to meet (and slightly exceed!) our \$60,000 goal for our 2021 Annual Appeal.

Thank you so much for your support! The preserves, programs, and people PVAS provides truly appreciate your commitment.



## Join Us in Celebrating Earth Day Outdoors

**Celebrate Mother Earth with PVAS this Earth Day!**  
**We have fun youth and family programs scheduled throughout the week leading up to Earth Day.**

See our website for details and registration information.

### Earth Week Events:

#### Foraging with Family

Cool Spring Preserve

Friday, April 15

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

#### Family Wildflower Walk 1

Yankauer Nature Preserve

Tuesday, April 19

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., and 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

#### Family Wildflower Walk 2

Yankauer Nature Preserve

Wednesday, April 20

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., and 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.



### Earth Day Family Tree Planting

Cool Spring Preserve

Friday, April 22

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

## World Migratory Bird Day and Other Spring Birding Events

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

This year, World Migratory Bird Day falls on Saturday, May 14. The focus of this year's event is to create awareness about the effects of lights at night on migratory birds. Most of the birds that breed in our area are insectivores and therefore migratory, heading south during our winter to find food. These birds migrate by flying a few hundred feet above the trees and hills at night. During periods of high winds, dense fog, or heavy rain, these birds are grounded and cannot continue with their journey. On favorable nights, they wing their way either to or from their wintering grounds, staying in contact with flock mates by using short, quiet calls that drift down to our ears from the inky blackness of the night sky. These miniature marvels use the stars, the Earth's magnetic field, infra-sound, and other clues to find their way to the exact spot where they nested last year.

As one might expect, when these birds encounter bright lights at night, they become disoriented and often succumb to collisions with towers or buildings. It has been shown that turning off lights at night can help reduce or even eliminate the loss of these birds during their perilous sojourns. Several large cities are now successfully using weather radar (which can detect flocks of birds in flight) to coordinate the reduction of lights in and around buildings at night when the birds are migrating in the area.

Light pollution also affects the bird's ability to see the night sky, which is important to their orientation and successful migration. Light pollution also affects birds during the breeding season by disrupting their sleep, allowing predators to more easily detect prey, and affecting the life cycle of insects that the birds feed to their young. Recent research has shown that years of nighttime light pollution can be devastating to the area's insect populations. These significant reductions in insect biomass directly affect our birds' breeding success.

There are several simple things that you can do to help our resident and migratory birds to more safely travel, breed, and survive, in these modern times:

1. Reduce the amount of light outside your home or business.
2. Change the color of your lights from cool to warm.
3. Direct all lighting downward and shield lights that would shine into the sky.
4. Advocate for bird-friendly lighting in your area through lighting ordinances.
5. Become a community scientist by measuring the night sky brightness in your area and reporting your observations to <https://www.globeatnight.org>.

Unfortunately, Birding 101 will not be held this year due to the continuing pandemic. However, there are still a number of birding opportunities this spring. The Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon will be held the week of May 1 through May 7. This year, teams of 1-4 persons can sign-up and count birds at Cool Spring Preserve on the day of their choice. The team with the most species will be featured in *Valley Views*, have their team name added to the plaque, and the team will be able to display the Birdathon Owl at their home(s) for the year.

Climate Watch will be held on May 17 starting at Cool Spring. People interested in learning about Climate Watch and seeing how the counts are conducted can contact KC Walters for more information.

Also, see the PVAS calendar for the other birding opportunities that we are offering this spring.



Photos clockwise from top: Black & White, Canada, and Cerulean Warblers, and Baltimore Oriole © Wil Hershberger

## PVAS Events

## PVAS - Memories over Forty Years

*By Jean Neely, PVAS Founder and Emerita Board Member*

When Kristin called and asked me to do a timeline of the chapter from 1982-2022, I reluctantly agreed — but knew I wouldn't be able to do it by myself. I also knew that there were enough early members still around who could help out, and they did. I decided the best way to do this is to divide our history up in decades: the '80s, '90s, and so forth.

When I think of the 1980s, I think of the chapter's beginning. Officially, we were chartered in 1982, but the groundwork started long before that. In 1981, my husband and I went to the National Audubon Convention in Estes Park, CO, thinking it would be a nice summer vacation. As an Audubon Magazine reader, I had no concept of how Audubon was organized, so upon arrival at the registration desk when the lady asked me which chapter I represented, I asked, "What's a chapter?" Needless to say, I spent hours learning exactly what an Audubon chapter looked like, and was pleased to be able to bring the idea back to West Virginia.

The question was, could we manage it? The Mid-Atlantic Regional Office was located two hours north of us in Camp Hill, PA. They sent a press release to all newspapers in the Eastern Panhandle of WV, announcing that they were interested in organizing a chapter of the National Audubon Society, and that a meeting would be held in a Martinsburg library at 7 o'clock on a date in December 1981 that I can't remember. It went on to say that those interested should show up — and about 45 people did. One requirement was that we recruit 25 new members, which we managed to do.



*An early bird seed sale (1980's). Volunteers unloaded a trailer full of seed into members' cars to raise funds for camp scholarships.*

The '80s were when we helped the DNR "hack" young ospreys on wooden platforms facing the South Branch near Romney. I'm sure many of us still have fond memories of those three summers we spent on "Project Osprey". We started Birding 101 classes in 1987, and have held them every year since, except

during the COVID years. The class consisted of classroom work and weekend field trips starring Bob Dean, Wil Hershberger, and later, Matt Orsie. The bird seed sale was established in 1982, and was our first fundraiser. Its proceeds sent children to summer camps on scholarship.

Yankauer Nature Preserve came into the picture in the '80s when The Nature Conservancy of West Virginia approached us and asked us to take over management of the property, a responsibility that had proved difficult for them, due to their location in Elkins. In return for clearing the acres of red cedar and assorted trash dumped by passersby, including tires, old mattresses, one very large stuffed sofa, and so on, we could cut trails for hiking, and advertise its use for the public. When we asked to put in a kiosk for trail brochures and other information, they told us that no buildings were allowed on TNC properties. Later, at a NAS

convention I ran into a workshop leader from TNC's Boston real estate office. She advised me to ask them to donate an acre to us which would give us the right to build the kiosk. Ultimately, TNC donated 10 acres in exchange for our continued management and maintenance of the property.



*Jean Neely (PVAS Founder) welcomes Peter Burle (NAS President) to the NAS Regional Conference in 1993, held at Shepherd University*

Any highlights of the of the '90s must include PVAS's long fight (as part of the West Virginia Audubon Council) to save Canaan Valley by making it a National Wildlife Refuge. It was established September 11, 1994, as the 500th NWR, but it took years to make that happen.

When the new century rolled around, probably the most significant event in our history occurred when we met and hired Kristin Alexander, who eventually became our Executive Director. Immediately afterward, our first Annual Appeal was held and a new fundraiser was started. "This Race Is for The Birds!" was first held in 2001, and continues to be a popular event, now in its 22nd year.

The EPA gave a grant in 2003 to pilot a new children's program at local schools. Fourth graders were introduced to a highly effective watershed program, which continues today — modified, and improved, and expanded over the years.

Unfortunately, I missed the first fundraising event which was held at Wild Goose Farm in their barn. By all accounts, it was a terrific event with good attendance. The first decade also included the introduction of the Master Naturalist program by DNR. They asked PVAS to start a chapter in the Eastern Panhandle. Clark Dixon took over the job, and soon had a heavily attended program up and running.

I remember well when we started Audubon Discovery Camp at Yankauer, under a WalMart tent which Kristin and I had to put up and take down each week — sometimes sopping wet! Some years later, PVAS accepted the management of the Eidolon Preserve in Morgan County, modeled after Yankauer.

In 2011, Stauffer Miller donated a large tract of land in western Berkeley County, which promptly became Stauffer's Marsh. Just five years later, Linda Case negotiated the transfer of Cool Spring Preserve in southern Jefferson County, which became a 13-acre tract with nature center and cottage. Later in 2020, an additional 50 acres was added to that wonderful property. Late last year, beavers appeared at both Cool Springs and Stauffer's Marsh, and an otter was spotted at Cool Spring for the first time.

I could go on and on with literally dozens of recollections and fond remembrances, but space does not allow. I'm leaving out things like the PVAS license plate fight, the Audubon camp scholarships, the wonderful field trips, and Diana Mullis' wildlife rescue program that has existed for our entire 40 years.

And so, we have arrived at our 40th anniversary. I'm stunned at the transformation of a "little Audubon chapter" into a powerhouse organization with positive outreach into the community in many areas. I wonder what the 1982 members of our modest West Virginia chapter would think of it today as we celebrate 40 years.



## PVAS Events

### Adult Programs Celebrate Spring with Outdoor Activities and Educational Programming

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

Spring is here, and PVAS is excited to explore, observe, protect, and enjoy all that this season has to offer! Join us as we journal at the preserves, clear trails at Broomgrass, tune in and attend educational programs, test our wildflower and amphibian trivia knowledge, head to the woods to scout out our glorious spring ephemerals, 'walk and talk' at Yankauer and Eidolon, and much, much more

During April and May, wildflowers are nature's fireworks, exploding in the woods, along the trails, and beside the creeks. You'll find a wide variety of spring ephemerals blanketing your path on any of our Spring Wildflower Walks. Join wildflower enthusiasts, Mary Duke, Wanda Miller, and Kathy Bilton on any of their scheduled outings. You'll be amazed at their knowledge of our native flowers and their passion to share it with others!

Through the winter months, the Wellness Walks proved to be wonderful opportunities to bundle up and brave the cold while enjoying each other's company. Our February group was treated to a 'show and tell' around Cool Spring Preserve. PVAS's Land and Conservation Manager, KC Walters explained how our resident beavers have altered the preserve's land and waterscape. Our Wellness Walkers will be exploring Yankauer in April, at the peak of the wildflower season; and in May, they will be heading to Eidolon to celebrate spring on the mountain, which may include a sighting of the highly sought-after cerulean warblers.

Capture the emergence of spring through nature journaling at Eidolon Preserve on April 16, and at Yankauer on May 14. Tap into your senses by recording what you see, hear, smell and feel through writing, drawing, collage, photography: whatever technique appeals to you! Local artist and potter, Joy Bridy, is our journaling guide, and she encourages anyone with an interest to join, regardless of their journaling experience.

Springtime brings out the bird-er in all of us; expert, novice or backyard enthusiast, spring is the time for all of us to dust off our binoculars and head outside! The spring migrants are aglow with their best and brightest colors as they prepare for mating season.

If you have never been birding before, join one of our regularly scheduled walks to find out what all the buzz is about!

PVAS is eager to bring back our Quarterly Programs in Morgan County. On Thursday, April 28th, Mary Lynn Robinson, Certified Master Naturalist and Morgan County resident, will present *Fox in the Henhouse*. Mary Lynn has observed four Red Fox families and is looking forward to sharing her observations and research and hopes others will learn more about Red Fox characteristics and behaviors.

Barbara Shaffer and Kay Schultz, members of *Save our Soil*, will present *Lawns to Life! Earth Depends on It* at PVAS's Monthly Program on Wednesday, April 13th. During their program, they will share a wealth of information, including details about a local effort

to join together to replace grass lawns with diverse, native habitat, bit by bit. PVAS will wrap up our spring Monthly Programs on Wednesday, May 11th with *Raptors in Flight* where Matt Orsie will lead a fascinating discussion about the identification of hawks and eagles on the wing, as well as information about the timing of their migration.

Put on your WV naturalist hat and join us for a fun filled trivia evening with Kingfisher Kahoot! On April 20th, trivia guide, Roy Boyle, will test your knowledge of amphibians and wildflowers! Don't worry if you are not an expert, everyone is encouraged to give it their best guess and learn along the way.

The 2022 Master Naturalist Program is off to a great start with a full cohort of eager participants. Classes and field work will be held monthly at a variety of venues throughout the Eastern Panhandle. All certified Master Naturalists and students, as well as anyone interested in the MN Program, are invited to join in the PVMN 15 Year Birthday Celebration at Morgan's Grove Park on Saturday April 30th.

We are continually updating and adding to our calendar of events. Regularly checking <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/> is the best way to take advantage of our programming.



## PVAS Events

**"This Race is for the Birds!"**

In-Person on the trails of Broomgrass, Saturday April 9th, and Virtual Options, April 2-9th. It's race season again! PVAS's 22nd Annual "This Race is for the Birds!" is here, with options for everyone!

**IN-PERSON:**

If the trails of Broomgrass are calling your name, we are happy to welcome you to this beautiful community on Saturday, April 9th. Choose from a professionally timed 5K or 10K trail walk/jog/run that will take you along beautiful Back Creek, winding through single track woods and wide open Broomgrass fields.

**VIRTUAL:**

Choose our virtual event, and participate from the location of your choice. Pick any day between Saturday, April 2nd – Saturday, April 9th to accomplish your event. We encourage participants to get creative with their virtual 5K or 10K events: ride your bike, hike your favorite trail, run your fun neighborhood course, etc!

**VOLUNTEER:**

**Pre-Race:** If you would like to get a sneak peek at the gorgeous trails at Broomgrass, we would love your help at our last race-prep volunteer workday on April 7th. Visit: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/volunteer-opportunities/> to register.

**Race-Day:** Lots of ways to help! Course marshals, set up or cleanup crews, registrations, etc! Sign-up can be found here: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/volunteer-at-this-race-is-for-the-birds/>.

We are very happy to be able to host the race this year and hope that, with both virtual and in-person options, you are able to find your perfect event. Join us in celebrating healthy outdoor play in our, or your, beautiful community. Information and registration can be found at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/>. Please email [Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org](mailto:Race4Birds@PotomacAudubon.org), or call (681) 252-1387 with any questions you may have. All proceeds support the Potomac Valley Audubon Society's programs and preserves.



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## PVAS Events

### ***On the Wings of Dreams* Shop in Shepherdstown Continues its Support**

*By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director*

Local *On the Wings of Dreams* shop, located in Shepherdstown, WV, has once again donated a portion of its annual sales proceeds to the Potomac Valley Audubon Society. January 2022 marked the nineteenth year of ownership by Laura Rau, and the fifteenth year she has set aside three cents from each crystal and mineral sold during the year to donate to the Society.

This year's donation totals \$700. It is based on the 2021 calendar year sales of more than 23,000 crystals and stones. It brings the shop's total donations to the Society over the last fifteen years to \$4,500.

Laura is a big believer in PVAS's children's programs and loves the nature preserves. Her ongoing support of these efforts is incredibly appreciated. She has been donating 3 cents per stone and crystal for 15 years, even through the pandemic. We are so honored that she chooses to support the programs and preserves that PVAS manages. Thank you, Laura!



*Laura Rau (right), owner of On the Wings of Dreams, presenting the check to Kristin Alexander (center), PVAS's Executive Director. On the left is shop staff member Dinah Bartch. Photo by JJ Feldman*

### ***Volunteer Spotlight***

#### **Have you Met Tess Dew?**

Tess is one of the co-coordinators of The Monarch Alliance. She and Joette Borzik made sure TMA continued on when founder Sandy Sagalkin stepped down from leadership. Joette has since moved on, but Tess continues to lead TMA now, with the help of Becky Guthrie.

Tess is the primary contact for all TMA activities in Washington County, Maryland and basically has her hands in all activities of TMA! She coordinates volunteer efforts for the care of public Monarch Waystations, represents TMA at numerous public events, oversees TMA social media accounts and is in charge of all Core Committee meetings. This lady is a one-in-a-million and has dedicated herself 110% to carrying out The Monarch Alliance mission.



### **Join us for the the Birdathon!**

**This year it's a friendly team competition at Cool Spring Preserve from May 1-7.**

**Teams of 1-4 people choose a name and gather at the preserve on any day(s)/time(s) within the period, to count and record all birds observed - both species and number.**

**So, go online at: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/birding/birdathon/> for details, and *start assembling your team!***



RUTH ANN DEAN MEMORIAL  
**BIRDATHON**

## Family and Youth Programs

### Watershed Program Field Trips Underway

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

Our staff and volunteers have been excitedly preparing to host Watershed Program field trips throughout the months of April and May. This year, all of our Watershed Program participating schools have agreed to take part in a field trip. Our field trips are a chance for students to apply the knowledge they have learned throughout the Watershed Program in a hands-on, experiential learning environment. For most students, this experience is much anticipated and is their favorite part of the program. For PVAS, the goal of these field trips is to reinforce concepts taught in class and empower students to explore their local watershed in a safe environment.

On each field trip, students will study and evaluate the stream and land habitat at their field trip site. Under the guidance of an instructor, students will perform real water quality tests for pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature. Students will also have the opportunity to get into the water, in rubber boots or hip waders, and search for fish and macroinvertebrates. In class, they learned that identifying benthic macroinvertebrates is another way that scientists evaluate the water quality of a stream ecosystem. On the field trip, students are able to put themselves in the role of a scientist by searching for these organisms and using a dichotomous key to identify them.

After exploring the land and water habitat at their field trip location, students will evaluate the site for its positive or negative human impacts. Students will give the site a grade, and then be challenged to think of ways that the site could be improved to make a positive change for the Watershed. For a couple of schools, PVAS will partner with Cacapon Institute to provide a tree planting project on the day of the field trip. Students will get to assist with this tree planting project as they learn about how trees can improve water quality in their watershed. Next year, as 5th graders, Berkeley County students will brainstorm more ways to improve their local watershed and will have the opportunity to initiate a student-led action project to take place in their schoolyard or local community.

Bryan Hott, a fourth-grade teacher at Eagle School Intermediate, and longtime supporter of the Watershed Program, had the following to say about the impact of the field trip experience on his students over the years.

*"Quite honestly, this field trip has by far been the most immersive, educational, and engaging for our students! Eagle School Intermediate is a low-income, high poverty, Title 1 school. Due to the socio-economic status of the community, low-income situations at home permeate every aspect of the child's life, including his or her access to education and individual experiences. Less income means less taxes, resulting in a decreased school funding... Likewise, school trips are frequently too expensive for so many students and their families, even if they are a vital part of the curriculum... Without other financial assistance, we would not have been able to make this awesome project a reality for all of our students! It is something that leaves a lasting impact - one they will remember and treasure for many years to come!"*



Eagle School Intermediate, like all Berkeley County schools this year, has their entire Watershed Program curriculum and field trip experience paid for through generous grant funding. The City of Martinsburg and Berkeley County Public Service District provide funding for our Watershed Program in Berkeley County schools.



As we serve over 1200 students across 50 fourth grade classes in Berkeley County, we are so thankful to have the support of our community and many dedicated volunteers to help us provide safe and meaningful field trip experiences. Our volunteers participated in a field trip training in early March. During this training, they met our instructors and learned how to lead our field trip stations. It was wonderful to meet so many excited and knowledgeable volunteers, some of whom are new to PVAS, and haven't volunteered with us before. Without volunteers, we would not have the staff capacity to provide the same field trip experiences. If you are interested in shadowing one of our field trips and becoming a volunteer for this season, there are still opportunities available. Please contact me by email at [Laurel@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:Laurel@potomacaudubon.org).



## Family and Youth Programs

### Welcome New Environmental Education AmeriCorps!

By Amy Moore Thomas, Lead Teacher and Naturalist

We would like to introduce you to Molly Hillenbrand and Kristina Bonfils, our two new AmeriCorps volunteers who will be serving with PVAS as Environmental Educators for the next 6 months. These new staff additions bring our youth program education team up to 6! During their time with PVAS, they will be leading some of our Outdoor School programs, on-site school programs and school field trips alongside Gus and Jade, who have been serving as AmeriCorps volunteers since the fall. Molly and Kristina come to us with fascinating past experiences and we are excited to see how their backgrounds will enhance our programs.

Molly Hillenbrand grew up in the rural area of Sussex County New Jersey, where black bears, red foxes and frogs were common visitors to her backyard.

Childhood observations of wildlife championed her enthusiasm for Biology, and in 2016 Molly earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, with a minor in Environmental Science, from Stockton University.

Upon graduation she began to develop an interest in studying anthropogenic pollution and its harmful effect on flora and fauna. She enrolled in Montclair State University's Master of Science program, receiving a degree in Biology, with a concentration in Ecology and Evolution, in 2020. Her Master's thesis addressed trace element bioaccumulation within common snapping turtles and diamondback terrapins. While obtaining her Master's degree, Molly worked for Montclair State University's New Jersey Center



for Water Science and Technology (NJCWST) investigating freshwater aquatic pollutants and participating in the study of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). Working as a Graduate assistant teaching undergraduates and participating in public outreach, Molly developed a passion for sharing her knowledge and love for environmental science with others. She is excited to expand on this passion as an Environmental Educator with PVAS. In Molly's free time she dabbles in nature journaling, wildlife photography, birding, observing amphibians and reptiles, rock climbing, kayaking, gardening, and hiking.

Kristina Bonfils grew up in Ashburn Virginia, and currently resides in Bluemont Virginia. In 2015 she received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Geography, with an emphasis in Environment and Resources, from Old Dominion University, and with a minor in International Studies, and a Certification in Geographic Information Systems.

Most recently, Kristina was a Geospatial Specialist for Wetland Studies and Solutions Inc. where she prepared maps, managed spatial data, interpreted historic maps and aerial photography using ESRI and AutoCAD software. Kristina joined the PVAS education team because she hopes to share her appreciation of nature and make a positive impact with future generations. In her free time Kristina enjoys exploring new places and getting outside with her two dogs, Mushu and Boomer.



### Continue Your Celebration of Earth Week with PVAS Library Programs

**Monday, April 18th**  
Martinsburg Public Library  
11:00 a.m.

*On Meadowview Street*, by Henry Cole

**Tuesday, April 19th**  
South Jefferson Public Library  
11:00 a.m.

*The Leaf Detective*, by Heather Lang

**Wednesday, April 20th**  
Shepherdstown Public Library  
11:00 a.m.

*The Tree Lady*, by H. Joseph Hopkins

**Thursday, April 21st**  
Charles Town Library  
11:00 am

*Wangari's Trees of Peace*, by Jeanette Winter

**Friday, April 22nd (Earth Day)**  
Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library  
11:00 am

*The Boy Who Grew a Forest*, by Sophia Gholz

See our website for details and registration information.



## Camp Programs

### Who's Excited for Summer Camp?

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

The youth education staff can't wait for summer camp season to be here. We have ten different camp session themes offered at both Yankauer and Cool Spring Preserves throughout June and July. We have camps for children entering kindergarten all the way up to 12th grade. Our Counselor in Training (CIT) program gives middle and high schoolers the opportunity to improve their leadership skills and as they serve as volunteers at camp. For this article, we asked a former camper and CIT volunteer to share what camp means to them. Both of these camp participants are excited to be returning to camp again this summer.

*"I like summer camp because you're outside all day. Camp Survivor is my favorite because one day that week you make a fire, and you also learn how to whittle. At all the camps you hike and build forts out of sticks and tree branches. Camp also teaches about invasive species on hikes. After lunch you play games like 'skink tail,' mosquito tag, and other fun games. I can't wait to go to camp again this summer."*

Sam Cooper, Age 11



Mason Pizzi, Counselor in Training

*"Being a Counselor in Training at PVAS's Discovery Day Camp is a lot of fun. There are several things I enjoy about this experience. The first is getting to be outside all day at Cool Springs Preserve. Being in nature is calming for me. I also have a lot of happiness when I get to watch the younger children learn and play outdoors. Meeting new people is another good thing about working as a CIT. Also, I appreciate the opportunity to work on my leadership skills. We get to have many fun experiences, including crafts and games. My favorite activity to do with our campers is fort building and my favorite game to play is skink tails."*

*After attending as a camper for several years, I was very sad when I found out that I was too old to go. Then my sadness turned into joy when I learned that I could still participate as a CIT. Now I get the chance to give back and help my campers have a great time just like I did when I was younger."*

Mason Pizzi, Age 13

We are so happy to hear that our camps have had such a positive impact on both Sam and Mason. If you haven't had a chance to sign your child up for camp yet, be sure to do so soon. Sessions are filling up quickly.

We can't wait to meet new campers and see returning campers for a summer of fun, exploration and adventure!

### PVAS Recruiting Summer Camp Counselors

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

PVAS is seeking AmeriCorps Summer Associate VISTA's to serve as Camp Counselors.

This fun and energizing ten-week position is from May 31 - August 5.

For more information, visit

[www.potomacaudubon.org/about/positions-with-pvas/](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/about/positions-with-pvas/)

## Conservation

### Top 5 Plants to Attract Native Pollinators

By Anthony Marmorella, AmeriCorps Land Management and Conservation Service Member

One of the key indicators of a healthy and thriving ecosystem is the presence of native pollinators. These amazing creatures help pollinate flowering plants of all kinds, giving the rest of the ecosystem seeds, nuts, and fruits. Common native pollinators include: butterflies, bees, moths, birds, and even some bat species. Much of the food we eat today is available thanks to the work of these pollinators. Planting native plants is a great way to attract pollinators to your garden or any space, and can benefit the whole ecosystem. Here are five easy-to-find plants to attract native pollinators:

**1. *Echinacea*** - Echinacea is a flowering plant native to the eastern half of the United States. The colorful wildflower can attract a host of native pollinators like bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies. It has been used for centuries as a treatment and herbal remedy, an added benefit if you choose to plant it. Echinacea is best grown with full access to the sun. It grows well in all soil types, and is tolerant to low moisture conditions.



**2. *Rudbeckia*** (Black-Eyed Susan) - Known to many as Black-Eyed Susan, Rudbeckia is a good host for native pollinators. Like Echinacea, it is a coneflower. The eye of the flower head can hold hundreds of individual flowers which are very appealing to smaller insects. Butterflies and bees are especially drawn to its nectar. Rudbeckia is semi-

drought tolerant, making it a safe seed to plant in any home garden. The seeds they produce are popular among many birds including American Goldfinches.

**2. *Asclepias verticillata*** (Whorled Milkweed) - Whorled Milkweed is another plant that does a great job attracting native pollinators. Most milkweeds are good hosts, but some are not suitable for gardens. *Asclepias verticillata* is suitable, and better yet, deer and rabbit tolerant. The beautiful white flowers it produces attract bees, wasps, and butterflies with its nectar. It's also a larval host for monarch butterflies, a migrating species of butterfly that's been threatened with the loss of milkweed around fields.



**4. *Monarda fistulosa*** (Wild bergamot) - Wild bergamot is a colorful perennial plant that's suitable for gardens and can thrive in meadows and prairies. The nectar it produces in its blooms draws a unique range of insects. Butterflies, hummingbirds, bees and predatory wasps are the biggest visitors to wild bergamot. That includes sand wasps, one of the biggest predators to the obnoxious marmorated stink bug. It's been found to be a valuable plant to monarchs as well, providing nectar to the butterfly. The native plant is resistant to deer and is heat and drought tolerant.

**5. *Solidago rugosa*** (Rough-leaved Goldenrod) - This is the perfect plant to plant in spring. It requires little maintenance and is resistant against grazing animals. Like other goldenrods, Rough-leaved Goldenrod provides for several key pollinator species. It has distinctive bright yellow flowers and produces seeds enjoyed by birds in the dormant season. It tends to attract smaller pollinators like wasps, small butterflies, and mason bees. Goldenrod does require lots of sun, so it's important that it's grown in an open, sunny area.



### A Monarch Minute: Spring Native Plant Sale

By Tess Dew, Monarch Alliance

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society and The Monarch Alliance will hold their Spring Native Plant Sale on June 4 at Sunny Meadows Garden Center in Boonsboro, MD. The sale will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., but the best way to stock up on native plants for your yard or garden is to order in advance online and pick up your order on the day of the sale. You can also buy from Sunny Meadows' expansive selection of plants, but pre-ordering facilitates quick pick-up and ensures you will get the plants you desire.



The plant sale is an important fundraiser for PVAS and TMA. Proceeds allow TMA to provide grants to community organizations that wish to set up Monarch waystations to benefit these iconic and beautiful butterflies.

The key to the survival of the Monarchs is milkweed, the only plant genus that Monarch caterpillars eat, so we are urging people to buy these plants. We are offering four species: common milkweed, swamp milkweed, whorled milkweed and butterfly weed. Common milkweed is ideal for meadows and large spaces because, once established, it will proliferate wildly. If you have a smaller space – perhaps a corner of a garden – you might choose swamp milkweed, which doesn't spread as profusely. The name is a bit of a misnomer; it likes moist areas, but it doesn't need a swamp. It can grow in full sun or partial sun, and it is drought-tolerant once established.

In mid- and late summer, swamp milkweed produces pink blossoms that provide nectar for Monarchs and other pollinators. But the crucial role of this plant, like all the milkweeds, is as the host for Monarch caterpillars. Monarchs lay their eggs on the leaves, and when they hatch, the caterpillars voraciously eat the leaves. Very hungry caterpillars, indeed! We recommend planting enough for at least a nice clump, about 10 or more.

The latex in the leaves of all the milkweeds provide a toxin that builds up in the caterpillars and, after metamorphosis, make the adult insects unpalatable to birds and other predators. (You can find videos online of birds vomiting after eating Monarchs.) One reason for the Monarchs' bright colors is to warn birds that they aren't suitable meals – which is also the reason why other butterfly species (particularly the Viceroy, but also the Painted Lady and Queen) mimic the Monarch's coloration.

*continued next page*



## Conservation

*Plant Sale continued from last page*

(An interesting aside: You may find another caterpillar, of the Milkweed Tussock Moth, munching on milkweed. Like the Monarch caterpillar, this smaller, spiky caterpillar is building up toxins that will protect the adult. Because it doesn't come out during the day, the rather nondescript adult has not evolved the bright warning colors of the Monarch. But since bats may feed on the adult Tussocks at night, the moths have developed the ability to produce an ultrasonic sound that is inaudible to us but is heard by the bats. Like the Monarchs, the Tussocks are warning predators that they are unpalatable. Although not as pretty as the butterflies, these moths are native to this area and play their part in the ecosystem. The keen appetites of the caterpillars are another reason to plant plenty of milkweed.)

The Spring Plant Sale also offers a diverse array of nectar plants that are crucial to butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. One that we recommend is sweet pepperbush. This adaptable

bush grows to four to eight feet tall. It can grow in full sun or total shade, though it does best in partial shade. Pepperbush prefers moist soils, making it ideal to line streambeds, but it can tolerate drier conditions. It is resistant to pests and deer. It produces 6-inch spikes of fragrant white flowers. The sweet pepperbush is of particular interest because it blooms in July and August, when many other flowering plants have done their thing for the year but Monarchs need nectar to bulk up for their long migration to Mexico. Pepperbush spreads easily from runners.

PVAS and TMA are dedicated to encouraging the use of native plants, which have evolved to thrive in local conditions and fit into the area's natural web of life. We hope you join us in nurturing our ecosystem. Pre-orders may be placed online from May 1 to May 21. Sunny Meadows is at 7437 Sharpsburg Pike, between Sharpsburg and Boonsboro.

Mark your calendar for June 4!

## Fire - Nature's Re-newer

*By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC*

Long before European settlers arrived in North America, fire was an integral part of the landscape. From natural ignition, to use by indigenous peoples, fires occurred every year in some area of the continent. Not all areas burned every year, but as fuels accumulated, fire was inevitable. Most of these fires were quick, cleansing the ground of dead plant material, reducing the intrusion of some species into open areas, and reclaiming nutrients from plants back into the soil: the result – a vigorous flush of new growth.

Native peoples quickly learned to use fire to manage the land to improve hunting and maintain wild food production. These lessons have been passed down through the generations and incorporated into modern society. We now manage pasturelands with fire to keep woody species from taking over, to control weed species that are dangerous to livestock, and to reinvigorate the soil. These same techniques, refined and improved by dedicated professionals, are now used to help improve and manage landscapes from forests to grasslands.

To preserve and maintain an area for grassland nesting birds, the residents of Steamboat Run (near Shepherdstown, WV) enrolled their meadow into the PVAS' Grassland Birds Initiative. Initially, management was achieved through rotational mowing of the different plots within the meadow. After a few years, it was apparent that Johnson Grass and Box Elder would be a perennial issue within the meadow. Using pesticides to control these invasive species was discouraged due to the negative environmental impact of these chemicals.

This year, Steamboat Run is trying something new – fire. Conversations with the homeowners of Steamboat Run, PVAS, and Sustainable Solutions LLC., led to using a controlled burn on the eastern section of the meadow as an experiment to see how effective this management tool will be for the control of Johnson Grass and Box Elder.

Saturday, February 20, was the date set by the fire master, James Remuzzi, to conduct a nice, slow, controlled burn. After



*Photo © Wil Hershberger*

setting a test fire to see how the fire would behave with the state of desiccation of the plant material and the current winds, the team was given the go-ahead to start the burn. Beginning at the downwind side of the section, team members used drip cans to spread fire lines along the edge of the meadow. These fire lines quickly roared up to a hot, intense fire that soon settled down into a slow and steady burn, moving slowly into the prevailing breeze. This slow-burn allowed the fire to burn off most of the dead grasses and forbs that had accumulated on the soil's surface, and allowed the fire to dwell long enough around the Box Elder shoots to kill the bark layer without consuming the entire plant.

As Spring progresses, the burned section of the meadow should explode with a lush growth of grasses and wildflowers nourished by the ashes of previous years of growth. It will be interesting to see how well the heat from the fire conducted into the soil layer and whether it will have gotten hot enough to control the Johnson Grass. Did the fire effectively kill the bark layer of the Box Elder saplings to keep them from sprouting this year?

During this winter day, the meadow was quiet and mostly empty. As the birds come back from their winter rest, they'll find a renewed, lush section in the meadow. The old, thick duff layer will be gone and the soil layer will be more accessible. With the lush growth, insects will feed on the vegetation and in turn, feed the next generation of birds being raised in and around the meadow. Though fire can be destructive, it can also be a powerful tool for renewal.

## Notes from the Preserves

## Spring In the Preserves

By KC Walters, PVAS Land and Facilities Manager

It's spring, and the overall theme for this season is growth!

We are super excited to welcome Anthony Marmorella to the PVAS team. He will be serving as the Land Management and Conservation AmeriCorps for the next six months. This is the first time we have had a half-year service member for this position, and it is already taking a big load off of my shoulders as we dive into the busiest seasons. Anthony is a recent graduate of West Virginia University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental, Soil, and Water Sciences and a minor in Conservation Ecology. Ten years ago, Anthony attended a PVAS summer camp at Yankauer and now he is excited to return as an AmeriCorps. We will have him leading volunteer workdays soon, and I hope you all get to meet him!

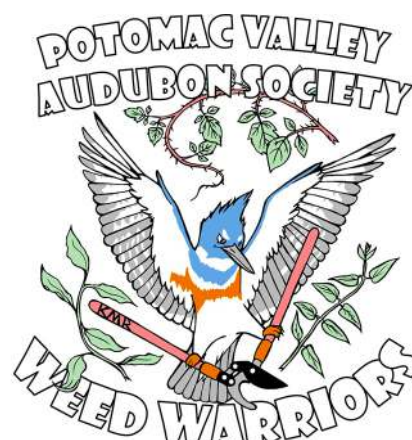
Because of our growing AmeriCorps service member numbers and growth in virtual programming offerings, our dire need for more office space has become quite apparent. A simple phone call to super volunteers and all-around good fellows, Gary and Pete, led to the construction of new walls in the Nature Center at Cool Spring. These walls created two new offices, one for the full-time youth program staff and another for our AmeriCorps service members. These "jacks-of-all-trades" built two flawless walls matching the existing aesthetics of the Nature Center. You would never know these walls didn't originally exist if I didn't tell you!

The accessibility of Stauffer's Marsh will soon increase! Thanks to the persistent dedication of volunteer Steve Hartmann and a \$10,000 grant from the Audubon in Action program, we will be installing two handicap parking spaces and an ADA trail from the parking lot to the kiosk and down the West Pond Trail with a destination of the Marsh Viewing Platform. Creation of this accessible trail has been endorsed and supported by the Martinsburg Veterans Affairs hospital, local Rotary groups and Veterans organizations. Steve's vision and goal has been to share the Marsh that is so dear to his heart with fellow veterans, especially those with disabilities. I am thrilled to announce that this project is coming to fruition.



Spring means volunteer workdays are back! We have upcoming workdays at all four nature preserves and there's much to be done, from monitoring the boundaries, to installing new trail signs, to tackling invasive plants. Please check out the events calendar on the website and register to volunteer. I can't wait to see everyone again.

Another program growing this spring is the Weed Warriors. I am planning on offering at least three sessions of Weed Warrior training this spring and summer. This is a great program and activity for families. Everyone can be a Weed Warrior! Check the website calendar for upcoming trainings.



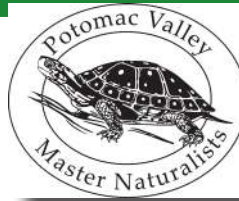
*Above: the champions of Stauffer's Marsh's meet for the first time! Stauffer Miller, Preserve Donor (right), and Steve Hartmann, dedicated Preserve Caretaker (left), enjoy a rare encounter at Stauffer's Marsh on a warm March day following the Wellness Walk.*





## PVMN

## Happy Sweet 16, Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program!



*By Leslie Boyd, PVMN Communications Leader*

Just as the rest of society has had to adapt to a “new normal,” the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program, which combines education with public service, has done so as well. The program is beginning its 16th year, and has made many changes so that it can continue to safely educate its participants and provide volunteer opportunities. Coordinating Committee members have worked diligently over the last two years to provide instruction safely online through Zoom, as well as to offer classes outdoors.

This year, the program welcomes a new cohort of 20 participants who will receive 62 hours of classroom and field instruction. The classes range in topic from environmental education to natural history. They are held monthly at a variety of locations in the Eastern Panhandle, such as Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County and Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Springs. Students have four years to complete all of the coursework and provide 30 hours of volunteer service, although many complete their certification training within one year. In order to retain that certification, Master Naturalists must complete eight hours of continuing education and sixteen hours of volunteer service every year.

Despite having to adapt and learn in different ways, some participants were able to earn their initial certification in 2021. We would like to recognize those following individuals: Laurie Biggs, Janice Boserman, Leslie Boyd, Roy Boyle, David Curfman, Bruce Guthrie, Rebecca Guthrie, David Martz, Rachel Michaels, Allen Miller, Karli Rogers, and Bahe Rock. We would also like to commend our five-year honorees: Paul Breitenbach, David Cooper, Pamela Ellis and Becki Jones, as well as our ten-year honorees: Susan Fluharty and Marybeth Grove. Finally, we also want to express appreciation to the following individuals who provided 100 or more hours of volunteer service: Rich Brager, Laura Clark, Elizabeth (Tess) Dew, Charlotte Fremaux, Dale Kirchner, Kristan Phillips, and Stacy Toupe.

The program is excited to host our annual gathering in person this year. We will gather on April 30th, at Morgan's Grove Park in Shepherdstown, where we will belatedly celebrate our 15-year Anniversary.

If you are interested in learning more about the Master Naturalist Program, please visit our website at <https://www.potomac-audubon.org/master-naturalists/>.



## Advocacy

## Rockwool Update: Current Status and Legal Challenges

*By Charlotte Fremaux, PVAS Advocacy Working Group*

When Rockwool was in the planning stages PVAS issued a statement in opposition to the placement of a heavy industrial facility in Jefferson County, especially as it was to be located in an area on karst topography, and in the direct vicinity of schools, farms, residences, and wells. As we all have witnessed, construction proceeded, despite legal challenges and public outcry, and the plant is now fully operational.

There have been challenges and lawsuits regarding specific perceived violations of Rockwool's permitting and operations during the past few years, brought by both organizations and citizens. The Jefferson County Foundation (JCF) has been conducting an ongoing series of challenges to most aspects of the widely perceived shortcomings of the entire process of permitting and operating the Rockwool facility. More than 30 community organizations and municipalities, politicians from WV and VA, and private citizens have opposed the construction and operation of the Rockwool facility since they broke ground in 2018. Among them are The Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club, West Virginians for Sustainable Development, Potomac Riverkeeper Network, Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Potomac Valley Audubon Society, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, West Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, to name just a few.

### *Regarding Clean Air Act violations, and the change in fuel for the melting furnace:*

In July, 2018, the Eastern Panhandle Chapter of the Sierra Club challenged the data Rockwool used to determine its facility's impact on air quality and the population that would be affected, noting that Rockwool used outdated 1992 demographic data, and that the population and land use had dramatically changed in the intervening years to include residential neighborhoods and schools located near the plant. It also challenged the air quality modelling as inadequate, as it did not evaluate the effects of the significant toxic substances that would be emitted by the two smokestacks. The DEP countered all of the points raised by the letter and declared that the permitting process had correctly considered all of the issues. Further concerns were raised about the lack of on-site or nearby air quality monitoring to which the DEP DAQ stated it monitors “ambient air,” had no intention of adding any monitoring devices near the plant, and cited as adequate the existing monitoring devices (in WV, VA, MD, and DC), the closest being in Martinsburg (13 miles away), and the most distant being 52 miles away.

Jefferson County Foundation (JCF) has led ongoing challenges to Rockwool's air quality permitting and their response to challenges and to concerns from the community. Rockwool had always intended to use two fuel sources as fuel for their melting furnace: coal and natural gas. Their air permit authorizes this dual fuel source for the melt furnace, but does not specify the quantities of either source to be used (an inadequacy of the current permit). In March 2020, in a letter to the WVDEP, Rockwool stated its plan to stop using coal as fuel, switching to only natural gas in its melt furnace. It also stated that “in order to fire entirely on natural gas, a minor adjustment in the use of raw materials that are authorized by the permit is required.”

It did not state in the letter whether this would mean an increased use of coal, a decreased use of coal, or no change. The WVDEP Division of Air Quality confirmed the receipt of the letter and stated that, “all applicable conditions in the permit remain

*continued on next page*

## Advocacy

in effect,” without asking questions or confirming exactly what is being burned in the melt furnace, if the composition of what is coming out of the smokestacks is any different, or if use of different air emission control technology is warranted. It is to be noted that burning coal and burning natural gas result in different pollution emissions, and have different best available control technology.

JCF sent a letter to the WVDEP DAQ pointing out that DEP had treated the change with enough review and simply appended it to the permit. JCF stated that the change in fuel source represented a “significant modification” that needed to be addressed in the air quality permit, allowing the public to be notified and the emissions reevaluated. A letter in July, 2020, requested the DEP to take action and require a new permitting process, to which the DEP countered, without taking action, that the permit was still valid. Failing to get the WVDEP to take any action, JCF sent a letter to the EPA in May, 2021 requesting that it take action to stop Rockwool’s operation until they could analyze Rockwool’s compliance with Clean Air Act requirements, and citing its original complaint that WVDEP and Rockwool refused to address the issues caused by Rockwool’s change of fuel, and the public health ramifications therefrom. Representatives from the EPA Region 3 met with JCF in August of 2021. JCF pointed out that Rockwool may not be using the Best Available Control Technology for natural gas as required by the Clean Air Act and therefore could reduce its air emissions potentially significantly if it did so. Pursuant to the action requested, in January 19, 2022, JCF provided additional information to the EPA.

The EPA has since declined to take action at this time, but left the door open to taken action in the upcoming operational permitting process (Title V). JCF is currently working on plans to take action to address these issues in the Title V process, which should start in May of this year.

The issue of supplying fracked gas to the facility is another grave concern, as currently Mountaineer Gas does not appear to have a complete pipeline to the facility of sufficient capacity and relies on a “virtual pipeline,” which means it transports the gas needed for Rockwool’s plant operations by tanker trucks for part of the distance to the plant. For more information about this issue, please go to: <https://www.jeffersoncountyfoundation.org/gas-hazard/>.

### ***Regarding Rockwool’s handling of stormwater and inadequate water permit registration:***

Rockwool’s facility is built on karst topography, which is at risk of rapidly-spreading groundwater pollution in the event of a release of toxic substances and other pollutants. Well water constitutes many residents’ drinking water source, and this also has ramifications for local farms, and all those who rely on the Potomac River. JCF has received testimony from highly qualified expert witnesses who have given evidence and opinions as to the dangers of operating this type of factory in karst terrain, and to the specific concerns raised in the subsequent hearings, noted below.

Most recently, Rockwool applied to have its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Operational Permit (Multi-Sector) reissued on November 19, 2021. The WVDEP approved it on November 23, without notice or allowing any comment from the public. On December 22, Jefferson County Foundation filed with the WV Environmental Quality Board an appeal to that issuance, asserting that the DEP incorrectly issued the Registration of the general permit, allowing Rockwool to operate under the state permit to discharge stormwater associated

with its activities, in violation of several rules and regulations required to correctly implement the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards. (The NPDES Operational Stormwater Permit is crucial to the protection of our water resources from the potential impacts of the activities of Rockwool.)

It also asserted that the DEP exceeded its authority by disregarding the state’s own environmental laws, improperly issuing the Registration without meeting the legal requirements. Jefferson County Foundation claims, as the Appellant in the case, that they have been denied the ability to protect the health of the groundwater, and asked for a stay of the terms and conditions of the Registration that permits Rockwool to discharge sewage and/or industrial waste with its stormwater discharges. There were four days of hearings on this issue in January and February 2022. While the EQB denied the stay, during the hearing Rockwool voluntarily agreed not to discharge anything other than stormwater, and by making such statements on the record, subjects itself to liability if it violates the agreement.

The next step is an Evidentiary Hearing in August, 2022, which will be held virtually. It is open to the public, so if you would like to observe, please email Jefferson County Foundation at [jeffersoncountyfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:jeffersoncountyfoundation@gmail.com).

JCF has designed and is administering a groundwater monitoring program to screen for pollution from the Rockwool facility. For more information on that program, please go to: <https://www.jeffersoncountyfoundation.org/our-work/clean-water/well-testing-program/>.

### ***Regarding the constitutionality of Rockwool’s tax abatement agreement with WVEDA:***

In May 2019, the West Virginia Economic Development Authority (WVEDA) authorized the issuance of up to \$150 million in lease revenue bonds for up to 10 years, retaining the tax-exempt title to the land, thereby exempting Rockwool from paying the same real and personal taxes that other individual and business taxpayers must pay. If allowed to go unchallenged, the losers will be Jefferson County and the Jefferson County Schools.

The Jefferson County Foundation challenged the legality and constitutionality of the tax exemption plan and sued to block the state from exempting Rockwool from paying taxes. (The previous tax agreement was known as the PILOT agreement, which offered similar tax relief. In August 2019 the Circuit Court in Jefferson County ruled that agreement to be invalid, without considering its constitutionality. It was at that point that Rockwool appealed to WVEDA.)

West Virginia University Law School Professor Robert M. Bastress (along with co-counsel law firms Arnold & Bailey, PLLC and DiPeiro, Simmons, McGinley & Bastress PLLC representing JCF) filed a complaint for declaratory judgment against WVEDA’s tax agreement with Rockwool that it be declared unconstitutional as violating certain chapters of the WV State Constitution, and declaring the actions by the WVEDA to be null and void. Professor Bastress noted that the WV State Constitution makes it clear that “taxation shall be equal and uniform,” and suggested that “if the state wants to push for tax loopholes in order to ostensibly attract business, then they have to amend the constitution.” Oral arguments before the State Supreme Court were held on March 15.

### ***Regarding the findings by Denmark’s Mediation and Complaints-Handling Institution for Responsible Business Conduct (NCP Denmark):***

*continued on next page*



## Advocacy

In October, 2019, a coalition of community and governmental entities (one of which was PVAS), led by West Virginians for Sustainable Development, put forth a complaint to NCP Denmark alleging violations in the areas of siting of the project (on karst topography and close to a socioeconomically disadvantaged elementary school, and within a 2-mile radius of one third of the county's school-aged population), the commitment of political improprieties, and air and water quality concerns.

In June of last year, this body determined that Rockwool failed to comply with established international guidelines in the planning and construction of its facility in Ranson, making this the first successful challenge brought against a multinational corporation operating in the US using these international guidelines (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) [Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), to which 40 countries are signatories). NCP Denmark handles specific complaints concerning Danish entities in the areas of human and labor rights, environmental standards, and corruption. The two key deficiencies found by NCP Denmark were that Rockwool failed in its due diligence to rightfully consider the potential negative impacts upon the community, instead focusing only on its own risk assessment; and that Rockwool had not properly engaged the community and provided opportunities for the stakeholders to have input into the planning and execution of the project. During the two-year process, Rockwool denied wrongdoing and refused to engage in mediation offered by NCP Denmark.

While NCP Denmark has no legal authority to act directly against Rockwool, it has given Rockwool a year to address the deficiencies it found, and will publish a report reviewing the situation and whether Rockwool has corrected its non-compliance. To read the original complaint and for more information, please go to: <https://www.sustainablewv.org>.

### *So why is this relevant to PVAS and its members?*

We all know the importance of being informed and aware of what is going on in our government and our environment. The story of Rockwool is a lesson in what happens when we are not informed, and how easily our world can change when we are not paying attention.

The ensuing fight to retain the existing character of Jefferson County has been ongoing since the public first heard of the project; and many organizations and private individuals have protested, testified at public hearings, written letters, and donated to support the ongoing legal challenges. Other counties are just as susceptible to threats to open space, environmental quality, and human health.

If the Rockwool story has taught us anything, it's the significance of staying informed and the importance of local elections. It is now obvious how much influence our local representatives can have. The upcoming elections will be critical for our region. We encourage you to participate in upcoming candidate forums so you can make informed voting decisions and guide the future of our region.

The Jefferson County Foundation has been at the forefront of the fight for accountability regarding Rockwool and its impacts on our environment and public health. Please visit their website, for more information, stay informed by following their legal challenges, and support their, and our, cause: <https://www.jefferson-countyfoundation.org>.

Finally, keep an eye on our allies' initiatives and efforts on the PVAS Advocacy Page to help you stay informed on issues important to you: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/conservation/>.

## 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/).

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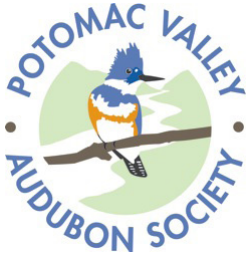
Membership Chair, PVAS  
PO Box 578  
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



**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](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.

*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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	.....Dana Fogle (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:** .....*

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## 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.