

Valley Views

Volume 41, Issue 1

August/September 2022

President's Note

By Jim Cummins, PVAS President



As I write this, I am very nearly late for the submission deadline for *Valley Views*. There has been a lot to deal with over the past several years, and like a lot of us, I have suffered from fatigue. I've tended to procrastinate a good bit more than usual. But then Nancy and I took a hike through Yankauer yesterday; it was wonderful, and energized me. We are so lucky to have these natural places to go to and refresh our minds, bodies, and souls.

As we reflect on PVAS's 40th Anniversary, we should consider what our area would be like if PVAS had never existed. The four preserves we manage would probably not be there. When I say *we*, I mean all of us. The staff is excellent, but it is with *your* help and gifts of time, materials, and funding, that the preserves have become wonderful resources for so many.

The excellent staff we are so fortunate to have would not be here. Twenty-one years ago, PVAS had no staff. That changed when Kristen Alexander was hired. Her subsequent leadership, and enlistment of such talented and dedicated co-workers, has been transformative. Through them, and the volunteer work of so many of you, the preserves are not only well maintained and improved, but there are now many programs to educate and inform us, and to help us experience and appreciate the intricate beauty of the natural spaces around us.

PVAS programs have not only been about the preserves, but also about how we can best manage our homes, yards, and neighborhoods. Probably the best PVAS programs are the ones for the young, because it is through educating them that we have the most impact. Engaging the young with the out-of-doors brings so many benefits to their health, happiness, and appreciation of life - and also to the preservation of the wild. Most importantly, both young and old have developed many long-lasting friendships through the continued fulfillment of PVAS's mission.

While our counties and municipalities have largely focused their open space efforts on sports parks and entertainment arenas - all very well and good - PVAS has been a leader when it comes to creating and promoting natural spaces. As we have evolved, PVAS is increasingly working with our state and local govern-

ments to add more open natural spaces, and to present more nature programs and interpretation. These initiatives are so important to the vibrance, health, and sustainability of our communities.

At our 40th anniversary, there is so much to celebrate, and so much to appreciate. Thank you to all who have made and continue to make that celebration possible!

Summer Appeal Status

Thank you so much to all of you who have given so far to the Summer Appeal in honor of our 40th anniversary. Your generosity has been overwhelming, and we are at 70% of our goal as of the writing of this article. **Thank you!**

The gifts of various amounts inspired by our 40th anniversary (\$40, \$400, \$4,000, etc.) have captured the imagination of our members and friends, and we are so grateful for your generosity.

Thank you for the positive feedback on the beautiful timeline map our talented AmeriCorps volunteer, Gus Rasich, created for the mailing.

If you have not yet given, there is still time to do so. The deadline for this 40th Anniversary Summer Appeal is August 15th.

You can donate on our secure website at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/support/> or by mailing a check, made out to PVAS, to PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.

Thank you so much for your support of our conservation and education efforts. We have big plans and goals as we move into our next decade! Your support will help bring them to fruition.

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

Summer Birding

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

I recently received a hand-written letter in the mail asking about the apparent increase in bird activity in our area this summer. First, I was amazed that someone actually sat down and wrote a letter by hand – a very rare and pleasing surprise these days. Second, I was also noticing the same phenomenon. So, what's going on? Well, to the best of my knowledge, I think that we are seeing the result of a really pleasant spring with ample precipitation, which collectively bolstered the breeding success of our local birds. There appear to be more young birds around this year, and from what I have seen, many birds are attempting an additional nest this year. All of this means that there are a lot of noisy youngsters squabbling with siblings and begging their parents for food. Also, there is a resurgence of territorial males singing to attract mates and defend their territories, adding to the cacophony.



While it is certainly too early to tell, as the data from Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) routes are just now being entered into the database and compiled, I did notice during the running of my route this year a notable increase in the number of individual birds at each stop. While we are not to count young of the year at each stop, it was abundantly apparent that there were a lot of young birds of many species loudly begging for food and attention. I was delighted to see lots of young Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees, as both of these species have had several tough breeding seasons in our area.

Of particular note this year was the presence of an Eastern Whip-poor-will singing at dawn on my BBS route. This species has not been detected on my route for many years. In fact, it was removed from my field sheets several years ago due to the lack of occurrence on the counts. I was startled when I heard his unmistakable song (click this link to hear the song of an Eastern Whip-poor-will that I recorded elsewhere in Berkeley County, WV: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/463445041>).

Another species that I encountered during my BBS count this year was a group of Fish Crows. While these aren't rare in our area, this is the first that they have been detected on this count, which is mostly in the mountains and valleys on the western edge of Berkeley County and the easternmost portion of Morgan County. Is this species becoming more adapted to these forested habitats? Only time will tell.

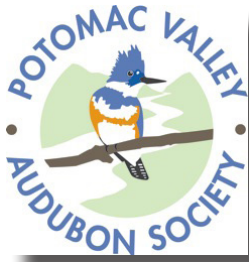


During birding outings in the last few weeks, I have noticed a resurgence of males singing at dawn and well into the morning as if they are trying for another nesting cycle. As many birders know, orioles of both species in our area become exceptionally quiet after the first nest is finished and the young have fledged. I was recently surprised when an adult male Orchard Oriole started singing in a Hackberry right over my head (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/465292871>). As I watched and listened, he would sing from one perch for a few minutes, then move a hundred yards or more to another perch and sing from there for several minutes. Obviously, he was trying to defend a territory – I hope that they do nest again.

Birds require good quality habitat to raise young successfully. I was very pleased to see that one of the warm-season grass/native wildflower plantings at Antietam National Battlefield in Washington County, MD, has really taken off this year. The flowers are amazing! This field had been in agriculture for many years, including spraying toxic pesticides that had disastrous effects on the breeding birds that called that or a portion of that field home. Now, more birds are in this field than I can accurately count! I have never seen so many Grasshopper Sparrows breeding in this field before. (To hear the song of a Grasshopper Sparrow from this field, click on this link: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/463234131>).

If your birding takes you to Washington Co., MD, I would encourage you to make an effort to hike the new Cornfield Trail that runs through the fields between Smoketown Road and south of The Cornfield Avenue. You can pick up this trail at the parking area of tour stop #4.

Photos © Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC: top right, Orchard Oriole; bottom left, Grasshopper Sparrow



40th Anniversary

You're Invited to our BIRTHDAY PARTY!

As a PVAS member, you are invited to our Annual Member Picnic/Meeting and our 40th birthday party! Please join us at the Yankauer Preserve for the festivities on Saturday, August 20.

This year's picnic will feature pork BBQ and beans by Gary and Diane Sylvester, additional options and sides (including vegetarian options) by the infamous Events Committee, and birthday cupcakes by Diana Mullis. Wine, beer, lemonade and water will be served at a "happy birthday hour" at 4 p.m., when you can meander the Cedar Loop's "Timeline Trail," read about PVAS's 40 years of education and conservation, and mingle with Founders and Friends. At 5 p.m. we will welcome everyone under the pavilion, wish ourselves a happy birthday, honor important guests and "PVAS Game Changers."

Dinner will be served around 5:30 p.m. This dinner and event are FREE but are limited to members and invited guests. Pre-registration is required so we know how many people to expect. (Due to space at the preserve, registration is limited to 100 people.) Please RSVP on the website (preferred) using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/35cfyamr>, by emailing Chanda at admin@potomacaudubon.org, or calling the PVAS office at 681-252-1387 and leaving a message if we miss you. (We'll be emailing you an invitation that includes the link as well.)

We look forward to celebrating with you!

Founder's Day

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

What a wonderful, celebratory day! Held on Founder Jean Neely's birthday, a group of founders and friends gathered under the Jean Neely Pavilion at the Yankauer Preserve to thank her for her hard work and vision in the creation of PVAS. A hearty rendering of "Happy Birthday" along with a toast to Jean made the moment extra festive.

There were many ways to celebrate. There was a "timeline trail" along the Cedar Loop that outlined the conservation and education successes over 40 years; guided walks by Ellen Murphy where she reminisced favorite moments teaching at the Yankauer Preserve; cupcakes and cake pops and cookies (oh my!) by Donna Hershberger; new PVAS hats, license plates and vintage camp shirts to purchase; a StoryWalk© featuring beautiful nature poetry and photography; a craft and scavenger hunt for kids; and a table of past Valley Views and newspaper clippings to enjoy leafing through.

Many thanks to the board members and volunteers who helped to make the day festive, and to the staff and volunteers who helped spruce the place up and worked behind the scenes to prepare for the day.



PVAS Events

PVAS kicks off its Fall Monthly Programs with an Exciting Twist!

By Krista Hawley, Adult Program Coordinator

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is very excited to announce that its September Monthly Program speaker will be author Doug Tallamy! The monthly program will be on a special date and location, details below, to make it a larger than usual event as part of PVAS's 40th anniversary.

This event is made possible thanks to a partnership with the Garden Stewards of the Shepherdstown Public Library as they kick off their Habitat Garden and Landscape project, bringing activities, programs and Pollinator Paloozas for all ages from September 7-10.

The evening of Friday, September 9 at the Frank Arts Center at Shepherd University, will feature a showing of the award-winning film *My Garden of a Thousand Bees* and a presentation by Doug Tallamy, bestselling author of *Nature's Best Hope*, *Bringing Nature Home*, and *The Nature of Oaks*. The evening is sponsored by HHMI Tangled Bank Studios and the American Conservation Film Festival. Check Heads Up, our Events Calendar as well as Facebook for Pollinator Palooza events and more information about the events.



Autumn Auction is Back!

PVAS's popular on-line auction will be up and running the first week of November - just in time for your holiday shopping!

We're now accepting donations of high-quality goods and services to be auctioned in support of PVAS. In the past, you have donated kayak trips, antiques, nature-inspired jewelry, homemade pies, felt critter ornaments, fresh baked bread, and other popular items and services. Those donations allowed PVAS to raise over \$9,000 in 2022!

To bring about another successful event, we need you! Do you have pottery, baked goods, heirlooms, a skill or service to donate,

or other items/ideas? If so, please contact us! To decrease the stress on our volunteers, we're trying to get an early start on collecting items, but we will be accepting donations until October 21st.

Please contact Chanda Drew at admin@PotomacAudubon.org or 681-252-1387 about any items you'd like to donate. Thanks in advance for your support!



Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met Dave Cooper?

No job (or tree) is too large for Dave Cooper, Certified Master Naturalist & Weed Warrior.

While his specialty is definitely tackling challenging overhead hazard trees with his chainsaw, Dave is also extremely happy to help out in whatever manner is needed. He is an incredibly dependable Race for the Birds volunteer, helping to make sure the course is safe and accessible for all. He spends hours working at the race site, clearing the trails of dangerous tripping hazards as well as using his chainsaw to remove any and all downed logs and trees.

Dave is a trained volunteer in the Weed Warrior program and has been a huge asset at the preserves. He recently spent a hot summer afternoon helping clean up and prepare the trails at Yankauer for the Founder's Day Celebration. He is passionate about ensuring the safety of the trails for all of our visitors.

Dave is a doting dad and an all-around wonderful friend that PVAS is lucky to know!



PVAS Events

In Memoriam...*By Kristin Alexander and Diana Mullis*

We recently learned of the passing of three long-time PVAS members and friends: Walt Pomeroy, David Miller, and Jim Jenkins. They each made significant contributions to PVAS over the years, and will be sorely missed.

David Miller Oct. 29, 1939 - March 2, 2022

David was a founding member and one of our early Treasurers, serving from 1984-1987. In later years, after retirement, he helped the newsletter editor get the newsletters out the door by putting address labels on all the newsletters and delivered them to the post office (a thankless job). David was a teacher at Berkeley County Schools for 30 years, and I had the privilege of overhearing one of his students thank him profusely for the impact David had had on him. To learn more about David you may read his obituary at: <https://tinyurl.com/3xs249jr>.

Walter (Walt) L. Pomeroy December 12, 1947 - May 24, 2022

As the Potomac Valley Audubon Society began its first year (1982) as a "Provisional" Chapter of the National Audubon Society's Mid-Atlantic, Walt was there as our Regional Representative, and was then promoted to Regional Vice President. Walt was our guide, mentor, cheerleader, supporter and helper in negotiating all that was required to become a Chartered Chapter of NAS. Walt, with his huge smile and sage advice, inspired us all to achieve many things that were way beyond our wildest dreams and imagination during his time 20 years with NAS and beyond with his "let's have a good time and do great things together" work ethic. So much of what we have achieved over these 40 years was significantly helped by Walt and his ability to connect us to the resources and people that helped us make things happen to achieve our mutual goals. To read his entire obituary go to: <https://tinyurl.com/42eu8bch>.

Jim Jenkins June 15, 1949 - July 1, 2022

Jim had a long history with PVAS. He served as Education chair from 1988-1990, and was one of the early recipients of a scholarship from PVAS to attend one of the National Audubon Society's teacher institutes. In later years he participated in PVAS's watershed education program with his 4th grade students. He was even the first teacher to bring his classroom to the Cool Spring Preserve for the first field trip there under PVAS ownership. He and his son Sam built the kiosk at Cool Spring as Sam's Eagle project, and another of Jim's troop members also contributed all of the benches at Cool Spring. Jim and Sam took the Master Naturalist program together in 2009. Jim was fiercely dedicated to his students and to hands-on learning. His classroom looked like a nature center at all times, with skulls, skins, microscopes, shells, and magnifying glasses inviting kids to explore. Read Jim's formal obituary at: <https://tinyurl.com/2sjmdwsd>.

Family and Youth Programs**Morgan County Public Library PVAS Pilot Youth Programs***By Mary Lynn Robinson*

The PVAS pilot youth programs held at the Morgan County Public Library weekly in June were a great success! Participation averaged 15 attendees at each of the four events, with mostly elementary age children and adults, with preschoolers and middle schoolers sprinkled in the mix. Thoughtful questions and comments were expressed even by the youngest participants.

Two highlights were the WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center bringing live raptor educational ambassadors and the Wild Turkey program where the children learned about quills and how to write with them.

The library could not have been more supportive and receptive, and even opened the library for the program on the June 20 holiday.

Plans have already begun for June 2023.



Family and Youth Programs

My time with PVAS...

By PVAS Education Staff and AmeriCorps Volunteers

PVAS is so fortunate to have had such dedicated and talented AmeriCorps Volunteers this year. We could not offer the same quantity and quality of programs or land management that we have this year without the help of these committed individuals. It has been our pleasure to provide them with new experiences in the environmental education and land management fields, and mentor them as they grew as educators and conservation professionals.

Again, we cannot thank our AmeriCorps volunteers enough for their dedication and commitment to their service this year. We hope that they know just how many students, families, and community members that they have positively impacted through their work during their term of service. Gus, Jade, Kristina, and Molly are all passionate and extremely creative educators, and we are so lucky to have been part of their career journey. Anthony's similar passion for conservation was obvious in his work. Below, they have written about their time with PVAS, what this experience has meant to them, some of their favorite memories, and their future plans.



Jade and Gus

Gus Rasich (*Youth Program AmeriCorps, 1 year*)

I feel that I've learned so much at PVAS in just one year. My biggest takeaway is that asking questions and leading program participants to formulate answers to their questions before giving them an explanation really helps them build curiosity and investment in nature. Helping fourth grade students identify macroinvertebrates on our watershed field trips is probably my favorite memory from this year. I really enjoyed encouraging kids to safely handle different critters, and observe their interesting behaviors and adaptations. I remember one student who was in love with this giant, objectively ugly crane fly larva and watched it for at least a half hour. I also really enjoyed all the opportunities PVAS provided for me to create teaching materials with my visual design skills. After my service ends, I plan to continue working on freelance design and illustration to hopefully prepare myself to work in exhibit design and future scientific illustration projects.

Jade Harris (*Youth Program AmeriCorps, 1 year*)

Over the course of this interval, I have had the pleasure of working with individuals whose experience and philosophies towards environmental education vary from my own. This has allowed me the opportunity to expand my perspective and approach to environmental education, and incorporate new techniques into my teaching toolbox. A highlight of my experience here was during Outdoor School, when we were learning about the scientific method and engineering. I attempted a "whiz-bang" activity where I was emptying a turtle water bin using a siphon, without an explanation to the kids. Once I got it started, I walked away to grab something and when I returned the siphon had stopped, and the kids had taken it upon themselves to figure out how to restart it. The students spent the next 15 minutes or so engaged in a self-lead investigation on how siphons worked. It was a special moment to see a new activity result in such a positive outcome. As for what comes next, I have accepted a position with the Girl Scouts of the Nation's Capital as their High Adventure Specialist.

I will be coordinating adventure opportunities for Girl Scouts in DC and the surrounding areas. I look forward to being able to continue engaging youth and encouraging a love for the environment.

Kristina Bonfils

(*Youth Program AmeriCorps, 6 months*)

I have learned so many teaching techniques and more about scat than I ever expected to learn or know. One of my favorite memories from the summer is with a kid who learned that I like slugs and fungi, then would consistently get excited about slugs and fungi to point out to me. During the school year my favorite memory was engaging a blind/special needs student in a lesson on birding, and then seeing his excitement when I returned for another lesson. PVAS has been a wonderful change of pace for me, but at this time I am still exploring what I want to do next. I am currently investigating where my aspirations lead me.

Molly Hillenbrand (*Youth Program AmeriCorps, 6 months*)

In the last 6 months, I have learned a great deal while working with PVAS. As someone who would like to continue working in the environmental science field, I feel the experience I have gained as an environmental educator will help me advance my career goals. I have learned to communicate effectively with individuals unfamiliar with scientific topics, develop lesson plans, and have learned to identify local flora. It's difficult to pinpoint just one of my favorite memories. Overall, the most memorable and cherished experiences I have had were from the positive reactions of the many kids I have interacted with. Each time I taught a lesson, my personal goal was to share my love of ecology and environmental science. In sharing my passion, I hoped to create memorable experiences for the kids that would last a lifetime, and just maybe encourage them to become good environmental stewards.

Anthony Marmorella (*Land and Conservation AmeriCorps, 6-months*)

My time at PVAS has quickly gone by. I didn't quite know what to expect when I started this position, but these past five months have taught me a lot. The most valuable learning experience during my service has been developing problem-solving skills. Land management and conservation provides new challenges every day and requires quick adjustments. I've learned on the fly and refined my problem-solving skills in ways I've never before had to do. My favorite moment from my service was attending an outdoor session of the Blue Ridge Conservation Alliance and Piedmont Environmental Council. I got to listen and speak to people from various conservation backgrounds and hear what work they were doing in the area. It was a great networking experience and chance to see a project in action. I've been extremely fortunate to serve with PVAS this summer. I hope to take the skills and experiences from this position to my next step in life. What that next step will be is as yet undecided. I would love to continue down the path of conservation work. A big thank you to KC, Kristin, and everyone else at PVAS!

We hope that you have had a chance to meet our AmeriCorps members at some point this year. If you see them before the end of their term of service, please thank them for the wonderful work that they have done in the community this year! We have been privileged to have them as a part of our team, and we hope that they know just how much their work is appreciated.



Molly, Anthony, and Kristina

Camp Programs

Audubon Discovery Camp Wrap-up

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

Summer camp has been a whirlwind of fun. Our camps, which were held at both Cool Spring Preserve and Yankauer Nature Preserve, were run by two camp directors and seven camp counselors.

From Counselor Gus being compared to a centipede, Counselor Jade to a burrito, to Counselor Kristina being called Ms. Potato, the campers made sure there was never a dull moment for the counselors. In return, we made sure to keep things lively for them as well.

We wanted to share some of the camp highlights with you:

At *Blast to the Past* camp, where campers got to experience what life was like in the 18th century, we told campers that back then children had to work, and that we would be trying out some of those jobs at camp. One camper responded, "You better be careful, child labor laws weren't invented until 1938." We were glad that this camper was looking out for his peers. And, we were careful to be sure that the "work" they did was fun. The campers made their own butter, jam, and bread, and sewed their very own Haversacks (shoulder bag).

At *Nature Sleuths* camp, campers had to investigate the pretend mystery set forth for them such as "Who illegally poached animals at the preserve?" After collecting fingerprints, doing blood-type testing, and animal print and bone ID, campers had enough evidence to determine the culprit. The week at Cool Spring ended with the campers presenting their evidence to camp director Amy's husband, Christian (also a former camp counselor from over 10 years ago), who pretended to be "Chief Inspector Jack Logan" a Scottish detective in a kilt and a thick accent. Jack Logan was a huge hit. After we revealed to the campers that the mystery was all pretend, a very exasperated camper exclaimed, "Are you telling me this was all for nothing?"

Camp Survivor is always a favorite. Campers learned to whittle, build fires, and administer basic first aid. Some campers even made survival shelters that turned out to be 100% waterproof. After learning how to bandage wounds and sling arms, Kristina's group role played a first aid scenario where they all fell and 'broke their wrists.' Jade's group came to the rescue. After assessing the situation and learning that it was all pretend, the campers told Jade that she needs to work on her definition of an emergency, because none of the campers had a real injury.

During the *Tools of the Trade* camp, middle and high school aged students met with environmental and other science career professionals and hobbyists to explore different career paths related to sustainability. Campers listened to presentations from a Sustainable Farm Manager, a Forester and Wildland Firefighter, a Scientific Illustrator, a Science Teacher, a former National Park Service employee, a Land Manager, and a birder.

At *Dirt Don't Hurt* camp, campers learned about life in the soil, and all the benefits that soil provides. Each day we awarded the "Muckiest Camper" award, to one camper from each group who was most covered in mud.

In total, roughly 358 children participated in Audubon Discovery Camp. This is the highest number of campers that we have ever served in our camp history, and we could not have asked for a more successful summer. We want to give a shout out to the Counselors in Training and PVAS volunteers Carolyn, Deborah, Diana, Susan B., Susan M., Pat, and Ellen, who gave their time at camp this summer. We couldn't have done it without you.



Nature in the Neighborhood

During the first weeks in August, PVAS will be hosting our new Nature in the Neighborhood summer program for the communities of Martinsburg and Charles Town. Funded by Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, this program was created with the goal of providing camp experience to children who don't have the opportunity to attend camps at our preserves.

For the first week of August, our camp counselors will be providing nature-based programs to children in the Jefferson County Boys and Girls Club, as well as children attending camp at Burke Street Elementary. For the second week of August our programs are open to the public. From Monday, August 8 – Thursday, August 11, we will have drop-in programs at Evitts Run Park, relating to everything from Opossums and Raccoons to Snakes and Beavers. During the same week, we will also be at the Children's Garden at Ambrose Park in Martinsburg, providing plant and garden themed programs. These programs are for ages 3 and up, and are free to the public.

Birding

Owl Rescue Initiated by a Call to PVAS!

By Bob Dean and Krista Hawley

As PVAS celebrates its 40th year, its dedication to the preservation of wildlife continues to thrive. On a hot summer morning, a call came in that an owl was trapped in some netting that was covering a fishpond. The caller was upset and worried, as the owl was clearly very stuck and in distress. Without hesitation, Bob Dean, one of PVAS's fantastic founding members and raptor-handler extraordinaire, put aside his plans for the day and set his sights on rescuing the entangled owl.



Bob shared the following with us:

Since I'm not a good record keeper I can't confirm the number of times this scenario has played out to end in an actual rescue, but it's a joyous number, because every rescue is an opportunity to send a noble bird back into its place in the wild. Sometimes the result is unfortunate; some injuries are mortal. Other alerts, such as the call I got from Krista Hawley on July 11 detailing the predicament of an owl caught in netting over a fish pond, portend a better, more joyous outcome. Without knowing what species it might be - screech, barred, great-horned, or something more unusual - I was off to Shepherdstown.

Upon arrival at the address of note, I followed the wooden walkway to the pond. It was right where it should have been, but no owl was immediately in evidence. As I looked around the pond the owl suddenly burst forth from behind a branch where he'd successfully avoided detection. It was a barred owl. They are known to fish and hunt for frogs. He was quite caught in the netting; there were perhaps 20 or more twists in the material from his persistent efforts to escape. As I began to snip one strand after another it became clear that a more prudent approach might be to cut the netting below the foot and move to a shadier, cooler spot to finish the extrication. Stan Corwin-Roach and his son Josiah had come with me, and they promptly cut the bird free. We moved to the back of my car where, with the help of my grandfather's 3X visor he used for reading newspapers in his mid-90s, I could see each piece of netting and cut it loose without touching the owl. Moments later he was completely free of netting, and it was determined he had won first prize: a shiny new bracelet complements of the Bird Banding Laboratory of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

As the owl sailed across the back yard after release, he made a soft vocalization that I'd never heard before. I'd like to think it was a thank you in the language of barred owls.



Bird Seed Sale Changes Afoot

We're going to be mixing things up a bit this year with the bird seed sale.

Due to the complexities of offering pre-orders, and supply chain availability/reliability, we are not going to do pre-orders for bird seed this year. It has simply become too burdensome and unpredictable for us, and frustrating for you.

Instead, we are going to merge the fall native plant sale with the bird seed sale, both at Sunny Meadows Garden Center, on September 17th. So, not only can you purchase native plants that are beneficial to pollinators and birds, but you can buy bird seed too!

In addition to the September 17th event, we are also

considering doing additional bird seed sale days in December, and perhaps February, to allow our members and friends to purchase bird seed throughout the winter while still benefiting PVAS. In all cases we will plan to have information and a knowledgeable volunteer on hand to help guide your bird seed and feeder purchases.

Please bear with us as we make this transition. As always, if you have feedback or suggestions, we encourage you to share your ideas for improvement. Contact Kristin at Kristin@potomacaudubon.org or 681-252-1387.



Conservation

A Monarch Minute: Preparing for the Fall Migration*By Bruce Guthrie*

The annual Monarch butterfly migration – when the iconic butterflies fly from the eastern states to Mexico to wait out the winter – is upon us. How can people help these insects – whose numbers are thought to have declined by 85 percent since the mid-nineties – on their long journeys?



For Monarch enthusiasts, the mantra is “milkweed, milkweed, milkweed.” These plants (genus *Asclepias*) are the nursery for Monarchs, the only plants on which they will lay eggs and upon which their caterpillars will feed. We are at a crucial time for the Monarchs, since the generation now hatching will be the one that will undertake the difficult migration. So, if your milkweed is bedraggled (perhaps decimated by previous generations of voracious “cats”), now is the time to supplement it from your local nursery.

Popular milkweed species include Butterfly Weed, Common Milkweed, and Swamp Milkweed. All three are native plants, which means they are adapted to thrive in local ecosystems. Butterfly Weed prefers a well-drained location. The leaves will feed the caterpillars, and the nectar of its orange blossoms will attract not only mature Monarchs but other butterflies as well. Common Milkweed likes a bit more moisture and plenty of sun. Its flowers are white or, depending on the cultivar, pink or pale lavender. Swamp Milkweed also likes moisture, but it doesn’t need a swamp and, once established, will do fine in drier conditions. It has pink blossoms. A fourth native species, Whorled Milkweed, is also on option. It will tolerate partial shade and produce white flowers.

If you grow several species of milkweed, you may want to arrange it by height. Common Milkweed, which may grow to five feet or more, could go in the back of your garden; Swamp Milkweed (about three feet tall) in front of the Common; and the shorter Butterfly Weed and Whorled Milkweed at the very front. The blossoms will provide a pleasing contrast in this arrangement.

Having provided a haven for the caterpillars of the migrating generation, the next imperative is to fatten up the Monarchs for their journey after they have emerged from their chrysalises. (The distance from Martinsburg to Michoacan, Mexico, is more than 2,000 miles.) If your garden is looking a little bare after the spring and early summer blossoms are spent, the travelers would appreciate some late-blooming nectar plants. The milkweeds themselves are a start. Two other late bloomers, New England Asters and Goldenrod, are recommended as prime wildlife hosts.



New England Asters produce bluish-purple blooms from September to late October. By the time the flowers disappear, any Monarchs who want to get to Mexico better be gone, too. The flowers have a daisy shape with a yellow center. (An old name for this species is Michaelmas Daisy, because of the shape of the blossom and the fact that they bloom around September 29, the old Feast of St. Michael.) New England Asters grow to a height of up to three feet. They like sun and do fine in dry soil but can tolerate partial and even full shade. The nectar attracts not only Monarchs but other butterflies, and many varieties of bees. Asters also are host plants for some caterpillars. And some common birds (cardinals, finches, chickadees) feast on the seeds.

There are about 100 species of Goldenrod (genus *Solidago*), and they serve as caterpillar hosts or nectar sources for 115 species of butterflies and moths. Bees and solitary wasps also feed on the nectar or pollen, and birds flock to the seed heads. Most Goldenrods like a lot of sun and moist but well-drained soil. Most varieties blossom from August to late October. They tend to be taller than the New England Aster. When Goldenrods and Asters (which are distant cousins) are grown together, naturalists say the juxtaposition of the yellow and purple blooms attract more pollinators than either plant draws when planted separately. Goldenrod has been blamed for activating people’s allergies, but Goldenrod pollen is too heavy to be carried by the wind. The allergy culprit, experts say, is ragweed, which often grows near Goldenrod and blooms at the same time.

**NATIVE PLANT SALE**

FALL 2022

Saturday, September 17

10:00am – 2:00pm

Sunny Meadows Garden Center

7437 Sharpsburg Pike

Boonsboro, MD, 21713

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By Anthony Marmorella, Land and Conservation AmeriCorps, and KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

Two more months have gone by, and we are as busy as ever around the preserves. From more workdays, to new events, there's been plenty of excitement. June began with the conservation team tackling the trails alone, but it quickly became unmanageable. In the middle of the month, we started hosting weekly workdays at the preserves. Our wonderful volunteers have been so helpful tackling this challenge with us. They have been particularly valuable at Cool Spring, where the invasives love to grow. With their help, we have been able to manage the trails and keep them clear! These workdays will continue through the summer. Check out our calendar to sign up for upcoming volunteer workdays at each of the preserves.

This July, we hosted another successful Weed Warrior training. In addition to our volunteers, the Weed Warriors we train also help maintain the preserves. Participants that attend and complete these trainings become certified PVAS Weed Warriors! Weed Warriors can show up at the preserves any time to tackle invasive plants. They also get access to toolboxes, and receive an awesome t-shirt to wear while performing their duties. Between the Weed Warriors and volunteers, we are lucky to have such a great group of helpers during these busy summer months. Without them, we would not be able to maintain all the trails and still perform the other conservation and land management duties. If you missed out on this training, we have another coming up on August 23rd at Cool Spring. If you are interested in becoming a Weed Warrior, email KC at Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org. Future trainings will be held as they are requested.



After years of planning and waiting for funding, the ADA trail project at Stauffer's Marsh is finally underway. A special team of volunteers was assembled for the first phase of installation, which included the parking spaces. We will now have space for two handicap vans with a loading/unloading zone. The next phase of the project will occur in September for the Day of Caring. We will need all-hands-on-deck to complete the entire length of trail between the parking lot and the marsh viewing platform located on the West Pond Trail. A date and sign-up form for this project will be available soon.



Calling all chainsaw volunteers! Summer storms are toppling trees left and right on the preserve trails. If you have a saw and skills to share, please contact KC at Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org.

Master Naturalists Reach for the Creek!

By Barbara Spicher



The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists organized a float trip on the Opequon Creek that took place on Saturday, June 25th. The kayakers and canoers met early in the morning at the historic Van Metre Ford Stone Bridge in Berkeley County. The participants left their boats at the bridge, drove their vehicles to the put-out site, and were then transported back to the stone arch bridge where they were met by the day's host, Captain Lou Scanicky. Before the departure, Captain Lou gave firm and detailed instructions on how to protect ourselves from any unlikely water mishaps. Then, at 10 a.m. sharp, the 15 paddlers proceeded downstream for the 3-hour adventure.

Along the water course we saw several owls, many different types of trees and wildflowers, and an amazing siting of a Great Blue Heron rookery with four nests. Due to recent rains, the water in the Opequon, usually only about 1-3 feet deep, was not clear enough to spot much below the surface. There was one downed sycamore tree that almost blocked the entire creek, but the boaters managed to pass it by in single-file. There was a bit of an adrenaline rush as the paddlers came upon a rock out-cropping that created white-water rapids. Thankfully, nobody capsized!

Our journey ended at the beautiful home and property of our host and hostess, Lou and Jake Scanicky, where we enjoyed a picnic and got to know one another better. Mostly we discussed the great enjoyment we get from learning about the natural world through the Master Naturalist program, and how much we look forward to future outings.

Advocacy

Advocacy Opportunity

Adapted from an invitation from the WV E-Council

The West Virginia Environmental Council will be hosting a 2022 Environmental Summit to bring together local and state environmental organizations, activists and citizens in WV to facilitate conversation around the opportunities and challenges facing the state's environmental movement. It will be held in Morgantown at the WVU Natural Resources Center, on September 24 and 25.

Day one of the summit will focus on coalition building, and growing the state's environmental movement. Day two will zero in on proactive strategy for the 2023 Legislative Session. Live music, hiking and outdoor activities will round out the weekend. The full agenda will be out soon and registration is now open at: tinyurl.com/WVECsummit.

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**.

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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/.

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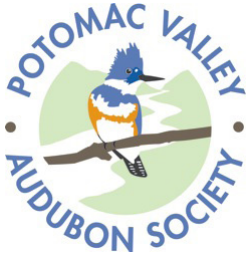
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Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

National Audubon has a membership program that is separate from PVAS. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org, and click on "join." If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson, or Morgan counties in West Virginia, or in Washington County Maryland, you will automatically become an affiliate of PVAS, but not a full PVAS member. Affiliates will have access to our communications, and invitations to our events. However, all National Audubon dues go to the National Audubon Society and are not shared with PVAS. We heartily invite you to become a dues-paying member of both organizations.



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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.

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Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639)newsletter@potomacaudubon.org

PVAS BOARD

PVAS Board meetings take place the first Thursday of every other month (September through June).

Meetings are open to all PVAS members. Please contact the President or Vice President if you would like to attend.