

Valley Views

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December 2022/January 2023

President's Note

By Jim Cummins, PVAS President



While I like all four of the seasons, as I have previously confessed and apologized to snow lovers, winter is my least favorite. However, I am glad that: 1. we do get snow because it is beautiful and mostly fun; 2. we still have a fairly cold winter in our region because it helps control insects and plants that are more problematic in southern regions, and; 3. our winters are relatively short compared to those of our northern neighbors. Another good quality of winter is how its beginnings are marked by many cultures with both celebrations and hope. Stored fall harvests are typically good reasons for joy and feasting.

Our first day of winter, at the solstice's shortest daylight, is a natural time to be both anxious and hopeful for the new cycle, the new year. Winter is an important time for careful attention to our bird feeders as we will be well rewarded. The birds using them, although mostly out of their breeding plumage, seem especially beautiful against the snow, amongst vibrant evergreens, and in the openness of leafless tree branches.



Northern Cardinal © Wil Hershberger

I also confess that, while I am a decent birder, many of you are much more skilled. I love birds and have watched and studied them since I was a youngster in the 1960s. I greatly admire those who are familiar with birds from all over this country and the world. I get excited when I see new birds when I travel, but I have never made a special birding trip. Instead, my lifelong interests have been watching and being familiar with the birds in the yard and nearby surroundings. They are my neighbors, my friends. Since I have resided in the same house for 45 years, many of these friends are now the great-great-grandchildren of the feathered friends that I had when I first moved here. I feel very fortunate that the environment of my neighborhood has improved over time, becoming much more diverse, so I also have a lot of new friends – a pair of indigo buntings being a new seasonal favorite in our neck of the woods.

The love of nature and its feathered communities can be found along many paths. It is wonderful that those paths can be so diverse. We are especially fortunate to have the many paths in our PVAS managed and influenced landscapes. Thank you for all that you do to care for and maintain those valuable spaces and corridors for both mother nature and human nature.

Thank you for your strong support of PVAS's November auction through your donations of items, time, and funding. Please continue that giving spirit into our annual appeal! As we move into the new year, may our celebrations with family, friends, and neighbors be full of joy. May our hopes for the future be stronger than ever and become realized with each new season.

Join us at 2022 Holiday Parade

Join PVAS for the Shepherdstown Holiday Parade on December 3rd! All are invited to march down the street behind the PVAS banner. The event will be held rain, shine or snow, so dress for the weather. Bring your binoculars, family members, your dog, your favorite stuffed animal or critter costume, your Santa hat... whatever you makes you feel festive and jolly as we welcome the holiday season.



The procession begins at 10am, so we'll plan to meet up on Church Street at 9:30. Volunteers along Church Street will help you find "Potomac Valley Audubon" in the lineup. Look for the PVAS banner and our smiling faces. We'll have butterfly wings and other festive items to share if you don't bring your own.

If you have questions, please contact Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org. We hope to see you there!

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

The Magnificent Golden Eagle

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

On a cold and snowy January afternoon several years ago, Bob Dean and I were scouring the forests of western Berkeley County for any birds we could find for the Inwood Christmas Count. To our astonishment, a large raptor came sailing over us, just above the treetops – an adult Golden Eagle! We were speechless. While this species is found in the higher elevation counties in the state during the winter, there are very few that over-winter in Berkeley County. Wow – what an amazing experience to have been in the right place at the right time to witness this magnificent bird.

Golden Eagles are one of the largest raptors in the world, with a wingspan that can reach nearly 7 feet. Large females can tip the scales at 14 pounds, with some individuals living up to 20 years in the wild. This species is found throughout North America, Europe, and some areas of Northern Africa. These magnificent eagles can prey on large animals, including deer, large birds, rabbits, prairie dogs, and livestock. They will also scavenge on dead animals as they are found. Golden Eagles use several hunting techniques to secure prey. They can swoop down from a high soaring altitude, or fly very close to the ground, like a cruise missile, to surprise prey. In some areas, like Denali National Park, Golden Eagles will walk, on the ground, right up to an animal and grab it – a testament to their formidable size.

Some populations of Golden Eagles are migratory, leaving their northern nesting grounds and flying thousands of miles to over-winter in warmer, southern climates. Many of the hawk watches in our area record a dozen or more during fall migration, typically in November and early December. Waggoner's Gap tallied 50 individual Golden Eagles in a single day in 2012!

Golden Eagles are typically monogamous. Migratory birds can nest in as little as 4-5 months. Non-migratory birds often nest throughout the year. Nests are large structures built on ledges, in trees, and even on the ground in northern or desert areas. Nests are reused from year to year, often by the pair that used it last. Nest building and repair occur during the non-breeding season for non-migratory birds, and shortly after migrants return to the nesting grounds. It can take 100 days from the laying of eggs to the fledging of the nestlings. The young are dependent on the adults for about 50 days, for migratory birds, and for up to 7 months, for non-migratory birds.



The change to adult plumage takes four years to complete. One-year-old birds are distinctive, with dark-brown plumages punctuated with a large white band at the base of the tail, and white patches near the ends of the wing. Second-and-third-year birds look smudgy, with the white areas becoming larger and less well-defined. Once the birds go through the definitive prebasic molt (at 4 to 5 years old), they now attain adult plumage, which is dark brown all over except for the nape area. The nape area is lighter, with a golden

sheen – the namesake of this species. The wing linings are silvery (as is the underside of the tail), contrasting with the dark brown of the leading edge of the wings. In flight, the Golden Eagle is an impressive sight with large wings held out straight, and a large, broad tail, as well as an impressive hooked beak. The wings of Golden Eagles do not present as a flat board, as do the wings of the Bald Eagle. Rather, they are thicker with a more sculpted look. The golden nape area of an adult is something that you'll never forget once you see it in a good light.

During early November, Golden Eagles can be observed on their southward migration at many of the popular hawk watching sites in our area. Washington's Monument State Park near Boonsboro, MD, is one such location. And, winter trips to the higher elevations of West Virginia could certainly yield a sighting or two of the magnificent Golden Eagle.



Photos of Golden Eagles ©Wil Hershberger

PVAS Events

Adult Programs: Welcoming Winter*By Krista Hawley*

What will winter have in store for us this year? A winter wonderland full of snowy hikes and cozy, warm fires or unseasonably warm temperatures that lure us outside for morning bird walks and sunny afternoon adventures? Whatever the forecast, we at PVAS are excited to offer you a variety of winter activities!

This Autumn, we were gifted with an incredible show of autumn colors. The trees were 'on fire' and the leaves seemed to hang on endlessly. We happily celebrated this spectacular gift with Wellness Walks, Birds Walks, Tree Identification Field Trips and more! However, cold winter weather doesn't mean an end to these fun activities – we will plan to bundle up and continue to enjoy the beauty of our area.

Everyone is welcome to participate in our various birding events. Each season brings new birds, and since the leaves are off the trees, winter can be an excellent time to get your eyes on your favorite feathered friends. The USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center is a hotspot for birding and our partners graciously pair up with PVAS birders to lead walks around the not-so-large, but diverse, property. Beth Poole steadfastly continues to lead her 'Third Wednesday' monthly bird walks on the trails of Cool Spring Preserve. Beth knows the trails well and where the best birding spots are. While you are there, don't forget to check out the latest beaver activity both in the Bullsken Run - and also around the preserve!

We are very excited about Bill Telfair and Scot DeGraf's new opportunity for birding at the Rolling Ridge Conservation Lands. These guided walks will take you around the trails and perhaps you will be treated and see a pair of the Pileated woodpeckers in permanent residence. The walks will take place on the second Tuesday of each month.

Additional opportunities to participate in birding events include some long-standing Community Science Projects. The C&O Canal Winter Bird Survey takes place in January and offers insight to the wintering bird populations in the Park. On January 21st, Bill Telfair will be surveying miles 71, 72 & 73 along the C&O Canal as his part of the Winter Bird Count. Please join his efforts for this important look at what is happening with birds in our area. The Christmas Bird Count is another long-standing Community Science Project

that is open for anyone with an interest. The Charles Town Count will take place on Saturday, December 17th, and the Inwood Count is on Sunday January 2nd. A Tally Rally takes place at the end

of each of the Christmas Bird Counts and is a fun way to connect with others about their sightings as well as share a hot meal together. Sign up with friends and family, dress warmly, and head out to count some birds!

We will continue to walk together in the new year with monthly Wellness Walks at the preserves and various local trails. The December walk will be a Winter Solstice Walk at Poor House Farm on Tuesday, December 20th. The group is happy to have new friends join

these social walks so please head over to PotomacAudubon.org and register today!

The Master Naturalists have completed their classes for the 2022 cohort year. It was a great year with the majority of classes being held in-person, for which we were grateful. Applications are now being accepted for the 2023 year, and can be found at PVMN@PotomacAudubon.org. If you have questions, please feel free to email the Coordinating Committee at PVMN@PotomacAudubon.org. Watch the website calendar for two open houses that are being scheduled for January, in both Morgan and Berkeley Counties.

We look forward to being able to gather together throughout the winter months. To find out more about these and other programs, subscribe to our biweekly *Heads-Up PVAS!* E-newsletter, and check our website regularly: www.potomacaudubon.org.



41st Annual



Bird Seed Sale

December 3
February 4

10:00am – 2:00pm
Sunny Meadows Garden Center
Boonsboro, MD

Proceeds Benefit Potomac Valley Audubon Society
www.PotomacAudubon.org



© Wil Hershberger

PVAS Events

Case Nature Center Dedication

By Kristin Alexander

On September 29th, PVAS held a ceremony at its Cool Spring Nature Preserve to dedicate the Preserve's main building as the "Case Nature Center." The dedication was made to honor Linda Case for her generosity and efforts to advance conservation and education in the county. Linda is a major benefactor of PVAS, and orchestrated the process that enabled the Society to take ownership of the Cool Spring Preserve in 2016, and then donated another 50 acres to PVAS in 2020.

We were honored to have about three dozen people attend the ceremony including community leaders, partners, PVAS Board Members, members, and volunteers. Charlotte Fremaux, the PVAS member, volunteer, and artist who designed the new entrance sign, was present as well.

Jim Cummins, PVAS President, facilitated the dedication. Presenters included: Mike Sullivan, who was integral to the application and acquisition of what was previously CraftWorks at Cool Spring, and the subsequent donation of the additional 50 acres from Linda Case; Bondy Shay Gibson-Learn, the Superintendent of Jefferson County Schools who spoke about the value of the preserve to local children; Linda Case, donor and supporter, who spoke about her relationship with PVAS and her trust in the organization to take care of the rare marsh; and Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director, who spoke about Linda's rare generosity and the background on the new entrance sign.

The sign's artwork features two of the rare species that Linda has protected through her generosity: the rare Sedge wren, and a



From left to right: Mike Sullivan (Vice-President), Jim Cummins (President), Bondy Shay Gibson-Learn (Superintendent of Jefferson County Schools), Kristin Alexander (PVAS Executive Director), Linda Case (Honoree)

rare sedge called *Carex trichocarpa* (hairy fruited sedge). These rare species were chosen to represent the marsh because they depend on the unique marsh habitat that has been protected by Linda Case's generous gift.

We are so grateful to Linda for all she has done for PVAS. Her gift of the Case Nature Center and Cool Spring Preserve have truly been a game-changer for Potomac Valley Audubon.

2022 Annual Appeal Is Underway!

December 1 is the official launch of our 2022 Annual Appeal/End of Year Giving Campaign!

After a year of celebrating 40 years of conservation and education successes, we hope you'll support PVAS programs, preserves, and conservation efforts as we enter the new calendar year and beyond.

We recently sent you our "Annual Report" that summarizes all the ways we worked to "preserve, restore, and enjoy the natural world through education and action" over the last year. It always makes my head spin when I stop to look back at the myriad activities, programs, projects, and accomplishments over the last 12 months. We have an extraordinary team of staff, volunteers and board members who manage to make amazing things happen each year - and 2022 was no exception!

With your continued help into 2023, we will continue to provide critical educational programs, steward 500+ acres of preserved green space and habitat, and encourage positive conservation practices.

We'd love your continued support as we enter the new year. You may donate by:

1. Using the enclosed remittance envelope to mail a check to "PVAS" at PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.
2. Our secure credit card payment processing at this link: www.potomacaudubon.org/annual-appeal/.
3. Contributing a portion of your IRA to PVAS, which has certain tax benefits.
4. Donating stocks.
- 5) Including PVAS in your will for a future gift.

However you choose to give, your donation is 100% tax deductible. Thanks to the generosity of members like you, we will continue to pursue our mission using safe, meaningful, and impactful methods that are sensitive to the needs of the community, both human and ecological.

Thank you, and have a safe holiday season!

PVAS Events

Fond Farewells and a Welcome

By Kristin Alexander

We are experiencing some turnover here at PVAS!

We are very sad to announce that Krista Hawley, our Adult Program Coordinator of nine years, and Chanda Drew, our Communications/Marketing Manager of nearly one year, are leaving PVAS.

Krista will be working with Jefferson County Schools tutoring children at several schools in the county. This is similar to work she was doing prior to her work with PVAS and we know she will be WONDERFUL in this role, but we are sad to see her go. She has been a stalwart team member at PVAS, coordinating bird walks, field trips, monthly membership programs, wellness walks, and our annual "This Race is for the Birds!" She was also the liaison between PVAS and the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists for all those years. We will miss her warmth and wisdom but she promises not to be a stranger so we hope you'll continue to see her around often.

Chanda departed in October to pursue a new career with the US Coast Guard in a more technical role managing servers. We are grateful to her for her database prowess and dedication to PVAS's mission during her time with us and are glad she's staying in the area. We wish her all the best in her new career path and hope she stays involved as well!



Though her arrival was pre-planned and had nothing to do with Krista's and Chanda's departure, we would like to introduce you to Ellen Kinzer. Ellen began with us in October as a contract fundraising coordinator. We've known Ellen for several years through the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program and as a volunteer for PVAS. Ellen attended school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and graduated with a degree in Wildlife Ecology. She previously served as a digital media specialist for Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, an archivist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a seasonal ranger at Fort Frederick State Park. The last several years Ellen has been working at the C&O Canal Trust as a Development Associate. Ellen will be helping PVAS keep up with its recent growth by developing a major gift program, as well as donor and membership engagement efforts. If you'd like to welcome Ellen to PVAS, her email is Ellen@potomacaudubon.org.

Waka Moi Moi

By Krista Hawley

Twenty-two years ago, I lived in the village of Asawai. The people of Asawai don't believe in saying "goodbye" but rather they say "waka moi moi" which means go and walk beautifully (with health, safety and comfort). I have since carried this mentality and positive spirit with me in my adventures.

It's hard to believe nine years have passed since joining the PVAS family. The saying that "time flies when you are having fun..." couldn't hold more truth. Nine years went by in the blink of an eye.



My first few months were spent in complete awe of the selflessness and generosity of the PVAS community. I could not believe the time and effort our members committed to various projects, events and our mission. I was impressed by the level of expertise that everyone was willing to share along with a friendly smile and loads of enthusiasm. What I observed drew me in and made me want to be part of this amazing community.

The incredible thing is, nine years later and I'm still completely blown away by the volunteerism I witness. You are what makes PVAS tick. You are the heart of this incredible family. Thank you for all the smiles and laughs, the *countless* hours in the fields, woods and trails, classrooms, zoom meetings, and fun events. Thank you for your endless support, encouragement, and dedication

As I embrace new opportunities, I feel blessed for all the friendships and will carry all our wonderful memories in my heart. Fortunately, I am not going far and look forward to remaining a part of the PVAS community, just from a different perspective. This is not a farewell, my friends, but rather waka moi moi, until I see you again.

Good-bye Molly

We are sad to say goodbye to an incredibly dedicated and driven AmeriCorps member, Molly Hillenbrand. Many of our members have met Molly during her term of service (just short of a year). Molly is well-liked by all for her bubbly personality and go-getter attitude. She's been a hit with children at outdoor school, summer camp, wee naturalists, and school programs.

While we will be sad to see her go, a bright future awaits her in her new position. She is excited to start her new job in New Jersey, and will be assessing water quality with the EPA.



PVAS Events

Auction Wrap up!

The On-line Auction was extremely successful thanks to those who donated items or services to sell as well as those who bid on and/or purchased the items! Over 300 items or services were donated, and the sale of those items grossed over \$10,000 for PVAS programs and preserves (\$1000 more than last year!)

We couldn't have done the auction without volunteers Gretchen Meadows and Jane Vanderhook. These two women photographed, uploaded, described over 300 items, managed the auction bidding process, and sorted and packaged the items for delivery to their forever homes. This was an enormous job and we can't thank them enough for their generosity of time, talent, commitment and organization.



"This Race is for the Birds!"



Saturday, April 1, 2023

A 5K or 10K Trail Run/Walk
on the Trails of Broomgrass,
Or participate virtually from anywhere!

Registration opens December 15, 2022
<https://www.potomacaudubon.org/race/>

Give the Gift of Membership!

Do you have a relative who lives locally that doesn't want or need more "stuff" but would enjoy PVAS activities?

Give the gift of membership! See the back panel for a membership or go to the gift membership page of our website: <https://tinyurl.com/msumc3wd>.

Introducing "CourseStorm" – Our New Program Registration Software

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

Based on your feedback, we're going to be transitioning to a new registration "app" that will simplify registration for our programs, camps, walks, volunteer days, and other activities that require pre-registration.

The new system is called "CourseStorm" and it should streamline all program registrations. The app will store your contact information so you do not have to fill out ALL your contact information every single time you do a program with PVAS, and you can register multiple people from your household at once. It will also simplify communications between the person coor-

dinating the program and the registrants, handle cancellations and refunds, and other administrative matters we are currently handling manually.

We hope this is a smoother registration process for all of you! There will be a learning curve as we do the roll-out, so please be patient with us. We'll start using the new system in December to register for programs that will be held beginning in January and onward. So, if things look a little different starting this month, now you know why!

Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met Ellen Murphy?

Have you met the 'one and only' Ellen Murphy, former PVAS Program Manager and volunteer extraordinaire? Ellen has her hands in 'all things fun' and is more than willing to step in where needed. She can be found volunteering her time with various youth programs such as summer camp and watershed field trips, or hosting adult educational programs and Wellness Walks.

Her positive attitude, contagious smile, and friendly disposition are a welcome breath of fresh air on the trails and in the classrooms. She is happiest when walking, discussing a newly read book, or investigating interesting 'finds' along the trails. We love that Ellen, even in her retirement, remains part of our 'PVAS family'.

Photo: Always the good sport, Ellen is all bandaged up by kids at survivor camp



Family and Youth Programs

School Program Snapshot

By Amy Thomas, Lead Teacher and Naturalist

This fall, PVAS provided field trips to three elementary schools in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, funded by the Eastern WV Community Foundation. First grade teacher Maryanne Recher of Marlowe Elementary school said that oftentimes their school has to ask students to pay for themselves to attend a field trip. When googling field trip options for her students this fall, she was excited to discover that PVAS offers free field trips to Berkeley County schools. She jumped at the chance to schedule a Bugs-A-Billion program for all three first grade classes at her school. The first part of the program consisted of one in-class lesson introducing the students to insects.

PVAS instructor, Amy, brought live mealworms in different life stages (larva, pupa and adult) for the students to study the life cycle of an insect. For an adult, holding a mealworm larva or an adult beetle might not rock their world, but for a first grader who may have never held an insect before, this was the most fascinating thing ever. One girl stated "I love this beetle. I was afraid of bugs; now I'm conquering my fear." After collecting the insects, Amy asked the students if they were ready to look for insects in their schoolyard. The students literally jumped out of their seats in excitement. When they visited a mulched garden on the school grounds, students cheered for every cricket, worm and slug that they found. As an instructor, it truly touches your heart to know that such a simple experience brings so much joy to the students. Teaching the same hour-long lesson three to five times in a day can be exhausting; however, it is moments like these that remind us educators why we do what we do.

For the second part of the program, students went on a field trip to Yankauer Nature Preserve. Along with the teachers and students, parent chaperones, the school counselor and principal also attended. One field trip activity consisted of rolling over logs on the Cedar Loop to look for insects and other bugs. Here the students found millipedes, worms, pill bugs and salamanders. One student proclaimed himself the 'Salamander King'. Another said that the logs were "nature's treasure chest" as finding the critters underneath was like finding treasures.

The field trip also consisted of playing an insect pollination game, and going on a hike on the Kingfisher Loop. All of the PVAS instructors noted that one of the highlights of the hike for the students from every class was finding pawpaw seeds on the ground. They were simply fascinated by collecting them, and because we don't allow natural objects to be removed from the

preserve, we asked students to "plant" the seeds along the trail. The students took this task very seriously. One student remarked that in honor of PawPaw trees he was going to start calling his father Pawpaw.

At the end of the field trip when we asked Ms. Recher how she thought the program went, she responded by saying "Having a PVAS staff come to our school alone was amazing. The field trip added to the amazing experience. I think the students even enjoyed simply getting out to walk!" One very satisfied student said, "I'm so happy we had this day, because now I want to come here all of the time."

These kinds of programs are not only important in that they give students the opportunity to explore nature, but also to demonstrate to teachers how they can incorporate outdoor exploration and learning into their own lessons.

Many of our field trips would not be possible without the help of devoted PVAS volunteers. Deana Thorsell, Susan Moore and Taylor Faehl were our volunteers for this field trip, and they did a wonderful job. Taylor, age 15, was previously one of our Outdoor School students and Camp Counselors in Training. As her mentor, it has been an honor to watch her transform from the student role to leader/educator role. She says that she absolutely loves being able to teach others. Deana is a Master Naturalist who volunteers so she can

share her love of nature and give back to PVAS and the community.

We hope this gave you a snapshot of a PVAS youth program field trip. We are always looking for volunteers to help lead field trips. If you are interested in volunteering, you can reach out to Amy, Amy@potomacaudubon.org. We provide our volunteers with training and guidance.

Sign Up for Winter Outdoor School

If you have a homeschooler in your life that loves the outdoors, check out our upcoming winter Outdoor School themes.

January- Bring on the Birds. This month is all about ornithology. Students will become bird experts as they study bird adaptations such as feathers, wings and beak shape. We'll go on bird watching hikes and scavenger hunts, and dissect owl pellets.

February- Science in the Woods. This month is all about using the scientific method to conduct experiments. We will conduct an experiment tapping trees to see which produce the most sugar water. At the end of the final class, we invite parents to join us for a mini-science fair presentation where students will be presenting their results.

For more information about these sessions, and to register, check out our website. potomacaudubon.org/education/youth/outdoor-school/.



Family and Youth Programs

Watershed Program Update

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

Our PVAS education team has been working hard all fall to deliver Watershed education to both Jefferson and Berkeley County, and will continue to do so into the spring season as well. This fall, 4th grade classes at Driswood Elementary, T.A. Lowery Elementary, St. Joe's School, Mountain Ridge Intermediate, and Tomahawk Intermediate, all participated in the Watershed Program. Though our education staff is small, we are passionate and dedicated to providing this program to the youth of the Eastern Panhandle.

In early November, students at Driswood Elementary and Tomahawk Intermediate participated in Watershed field trips. With volunteer support, these field trips went smoothly and we were

rewarded for our efforts with lots of smiles from teachers and students. There is nothing like seeing a child muster up the courage to pick up a crayfish for the first time.

For many students, exploring the creek environment is something that they have never had the opportunity to experience before. We are happy to share some of the smiling faces of our community's youth, through photos. Watershed field trips are so impactful, and we believe that they create lasting memories for many students and teachers.

There is much work being done behind the scenes as well, toward making these types of programs more systemic within the school systems. It is evident that teachers and administrators

value this program, as well as other nature-based environmental education programs that we provide to the schools. We value all of the support that we have received over the last 20 years of providing this program.



A huge goal of our program and field trip is to create a sense of self-efficacy in students. For students, this translates to a belief that their actions matter, and they can create positive change in their environment. The following is a quote from a Morgan County 4th grade teacher, whose students participated in the program last Spring.

"What I value most about this program is the education that it provides for the students. It provides them with information on how to be a responsible citizen and how to properly care for the earth. Not only does it teach them about our watershed and its benefits, but it inspires them to care for our watershed because it connects to so much more."
- Morgan Golden, Teacher at Pleasant View Elementary

It is such an honor to be involved with this program and with the meaningful environmental education that this organization provides to the community. However, it would not be possible to maintain the reach that we have without dedicated AmeriCorps educators and community volunteers. If you or someone that you know may be interested in either an AmeriCorps service term, or committing a few hours to volunteer at a field trip, please contact me at Laurel@potomacaudubon.org.



Wee Naturalist Winter and Spring Sessions Available

Do you have a preschool aged child in your life who is interested in exploring nature and learning all about animals? Check out our new Wee Naturalist themes.

December 9-Animal Tracks and Trails * January 13-Furry Friends * February 17-All About Beavers
March 24-Spring Scavenger Hunt * April 28-Exploring Insects * May 26-Creek Day

To learn more about our Wee Naturalists preschool programs and to register for any of these sessions, please visit our website, potomacaudubon.org/education/youth/weenats/

AmeriCorps Positions Open

PVAS is excited to welcome new AmeriCorps members to the team, with 6-month positions available starting in March. We are looking for a few Environmental Educators, as well as an AmeriCorps for Land and Conservation.

To apply for the Environmental Educator position, contact Amy Thomas: Amy@potomacaudubon.org. To apply for the Land Management and Conservation Technician position, contact KC Walters: Katelyn@potomacaudubon.org. For more information about these positions, visit our website: <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/about/positions-with-pvas/>.

Conservation

Nature Notes: Spotted Lanternfly

By Herb Peddicord, Consulting Forester

When the Emerald Ash Borer beetle was discovered in Morgan County fifteen years ago, the Cacapon State Park area was one of the earliest places that it was seen. Unfortunately, the area of the county along Warm Springs Ridge contained 15-18% ash trees. It was the perfect feeding ground for the explosion in population. Now, there are almost no adult ash trees remaining in this area. The Emerald Ash Borer spread continued until most, if not all, of the ash trees are now dead in the surrounding counties in three states.

A new invasive pest that is getting everyone's attention is the Spotted Lanternfly. The Spotted Lanternfly arrived in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia from nearby Winchester, Virginia. It, too, arrived in a perfect feeding ground of tens of thousands of ailanthus trees (Tree of Heaven), which is the host plant for this insect. The population has continued to grow, and we are awaiting a big explosion in population.

First, a little background information taken from the USDA Pest Alert:



"The Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive pest, primarily known to affect the Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus altissima). It has been detected on many host plants including apples, plums, cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots, almonds, and pine. It also feeds on oak, walnut, poplar, and grapes. The insect will change hosts as it goes through its developmental stages. Nymphs feed on a wide range of plant species, while adults prefer to feed and lay eggs on Tree of Heaven. If allowed to spread in the US, this pest could seriously harm this country's grape, orchard, and logging industries."

The Spotted Lanternfly was first detected in Pennsylvania in 2015, and appeared at a landscape company in Winchester on rocks that were delivered from a rock quarry in PA. Quick action by Winchester and Frederick County could not contain the fly as it can walk, jump or fly short distances and hitch rides on autos or trains. It has spread rapidly into several states and here in WV's eastern panhandle, it is in five counties.

I have personally seen it in three counties and it is very heavy on Tree of Heaven in southeast and central Berkeley County. The adults gather on the host plant and as they feed, they constantly excrete a sticky and stinky, sugar rich fluid, similar to honeydew, that builds up on the ground, causing a sooty mold to form.

What can we do about this growing threat? The #1 treatment is to remove the host Tree of Heaven. It is impossible to remove them all, but if you have only a few Tree of Heaven around your property, herbicide should be used. If you have acres of them, seek professional advice. (The Tree of Heaven is an invasive tree that sucker sprouts from the root system when cut and it will become much worse if the root system is not destroyed.)

Additionally, this time of year until spring hatching, we can look for the egg masses. They can be found on smooth surfaces on the trunks of host plants or on other smooth surfaces such as brick, stone, lumber, and dead plants. Smash smaller masses or scrape larger masses with a knife into a jar of alcohol or hand sanitizer. (Should be a lot of that around). If you are reading this from a place that does not have the Spotted Lanternfly currently, report any sighting to your local US Dept of Agriculture office. Of course, you can also smush any adult flies that you see as you are out and about.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

As the year comes to an end, it's always a great idea to reflect on our successes and accomplishments before starting on our lists of goals and ambitions for the new year. Each year working in the preserves presents a whole new set of surprises and challenges. The year 2022 was certainly no different. Yet, despite these challenges, quite a few projects were completed, including several facilities upgrades allowing the preserves to better serve the community.

We started off the new year with a bang, unveiling the com-

pleted boardwalk at Cool Spring Preserve. This new boardwalk can be found on Linda's Loop and provides a wonderful view of the Bullskin on your way to and from the Outdoor Classroom. This portion of the trail crosses through a wet portion of the pollinator meadow, so this boardwalk serves visitors by keeping their feet dry, while also protecting the Bullskin and sensitive vegetation from erosion and runoff.



continued on next page

Notes from the Preserves

Not long after that, the concrete slab for the back patio was poured by Blackwater Concrete. This patio provides us with double the program space that we had previously. It was such a conservation victory to not have the entire backyard turn to mud in the spring, without decreasing our services to children. Amy even added her own personal touches to the patio with animal tracks!

In February, we took our activities inside and worked on the construction of additional office space. Thanks to Peter Palmer and Gary Sylvester, we were able to build new walls creating two offices within the Nature Center, one upstairs for Amy and Laurel and another downstairs for the AmeriCorps volunteers.

When spring sprang, we made the final payment of the conservation easement with the West Virginia Land Trust to forever preserve Cool Spring and all its natural wonders. This final payment was supported through the Wild East Action Fund, which seeks to accelerate the pace of conservation within the Appalachian Trail landscape.



Before the growing season took off, we held a special workday at Cool Spring Preserve sponsored by the WVDEP's Make it Shine initiative. We had students join us from Shepherd University, along with Master Naturalist volunteers. The team cleaned up two former farm dump sites and cleared out an entire dumpster full of irrigation tubing from the old orchard.

In a flash, summer camp was upon us. With it came children, muddy clothes and wet towels. Thankfully, we were able to make a significant upgrade to the Nature Center with the addition of a small, stackable washer and dryer. We were so glad to bring back the use of reusable towels and rags, over single-use paper towels, to help us stay mission oriented in all of our activities.



The summer growing season kept us on our toes with routine maintenance outside. However, we were still able to make time for special projects such as the installation of the trail signs at Eidolon. This project was long overdue and we are so pleased that it is now possible to find the entry to the Ardal Trail at the top of the mountain! One mountain resident was not a fan of the new signage and his (claw) mark can be seen on some of the signs.



We didn't get to spend all summer outside. In the Nature Center, we ended up making another significant upgrade by adding a UV water filtration system. With the building functioning on well water, and the surrounding land use being agriculture, this upgrade was a no-brainer for visitor and staff health and safety.

After camp finished up for the season, Tops Landscaping came on site for three days and constructed steps down the hillside from the parking lot to the back patio at Cool Spring. The steps are entirely stone and blend in seamlessly with the landscape. We are so thrilled that our visitors no longer have to play "tumble down the hill" to access our back patio.

Before the summer wrapped up, we had a special workday at Yankauer. A dozen Shepherd students joined us for a Day of Service. These students were very hard working and managed to clear trails and spread new gravel on the wheelchair accessible areas around the pavilion. This was just in time for the 40th Anniversary party!

September is hands down the best volunteer month because we get to serve as hosts for the United Way Day of Caring. This year, we completed one of our biggest projects to date with the installation of two handicap parking spaces and a wheelchair accessible trail that runs to the kiosk and then follows the West Pond Trail to the marsh viewing platform at Stauffer's Marsh. We had help from 30 volunteers representing four different organizations.

We continued the spirit of the Day of Caring with a follow-up workday at Cool Spring Preserve. Thanks to a donation of mulch made by Sunny Meadows Garden Center, we were able to revamp the Nature Playspace before Outdoor School started again.

At the end of September, we cleaned up our act and hosted the dedication of the Case Nature Center in honor of preserve donor, Linda Case. To commemorate this day, Cool Spring Preserve finally gained a sturdy, permanent entry sign depicting a rare Sedge Wren created by Charlotte Fremaux, and brought to life by Davis Designs.

Although the latter part of 2022 seems quiet now, it's only because we have so many exciting projects brewing for 2023. I am personally looking forward to working with you all for another exciting year to come in the preserves!



PVMN

Master Naturalist Program Accepting Applications

By Leslie Boyd



If you love the outdoors and enjoy learning about nature, the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program could be just what you are looking for. The program offers certification training classes on a variety of subjects, as well as many volunteer opportunities. We are now accepting applications for the 2023 year - and we are so excited to be back in person. Please visit our open house on Wednesday, January 11th from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Education Center at Hospice of the Panhandle, where current Master Naturalists will be present to answer questions about the program.

For more information, and to access the application, please visit PVMN@PotomacAudubon.org. Kris Phillips wrote this about the program,

"I really enjoy spending time with other nature-loving Master Naturalists, whether walking in the woods, clearing a trail, or discussing a recent nature-themed book. I love the learning aspect - there always is something new to learn and appreciate about the natural world. I get a lot of satisfaction out of helping family and friends identify a bird, mushroom, or insect they recently saw."

Advocacy

By Charlotte Fremaux, PVAS Advocacy Working Group

The challenges facing our environment are many – and are in the news, as COP27 concludes with less-than-anticipated progress, and news of less-than-perfect-cooperation by the largest emitting nations. It is, then, incumbent upon us to act as defenders, stewards, and advocates of nature at all times. Locally, there is a lot going on that needs our attention and advocacy.

WV Center on Climate Change/Friends of Blackwater have released a study on the effects of climate change the Allegheny Highlands. The area is known as one of high biodiversity, the conservation of which is important for the region, and for the larger biosphere. This report is comprehensive, and the extensive bibliography invites further study: <https://wvclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/On-The-Chopping-Block-Updated-Report-2016.pdf>.

The Corridor H controversy goes on, with WVDOT refusing to consider the more environmentally friendly alternatives. Read here: <https://mountainstatespotlight.org/2022/11/15/thomas-davis-corridor-h-highway-wv/>. The WVDOT comment period is open until December 12, and your quick action will benefit everyone: <https://transportation.wv.gov/highways/engineering/comment/CorridorHParsonsToDavis/Pages/default.aspx>.

Also, please check WV Rivers' website: <https://wvrivers.org>, and Friends of Blackwater: <https://saveblackwater.org> for updates and action opportunities.

The work of the Jefferson County Foundation goes on, addressing air quality and clean water (especially as affected by Rockwool). Please visit their website: <https://www.jeffersoncountyfoundation.org/make-a-difference/>.

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.
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- 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/.

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

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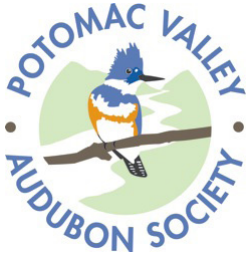
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Thank you for your support!

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.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
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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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Special Contacts:

Executive Director: Kristin Alexander (304-676-3397)Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org
Land/Conservation Mgr: KC Walters (304-283-7319)Katelyn@potomacaudubon.org
Lead Teacher/Naturalist: Amy Moore (240-818-4714)Amy@PotomacAudubon.org
Watershed Ed Coord: Laurel Schwartz (681-252-1387)Laurel@PotomacAudubon.org
Fundraising Coordinator (Contractor) Ellen KinzerEllen@PotomacAudubon.org
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PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-754-3753)dianamullis7@gmail.com
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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 May, except December). Meetings are open to all PVAS members. Please contact the President or Vice President if you would like to attend.