



Valley Views

Volume 41, Issue 2

October/November 2022

Director's Report

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director



Once again, I am overwhelmed by this organization's accomplishments, the dedication of its members, volunteers, staff, and the generosity of its donors... There are so many things about which PVAS can be proud.

First, what a wonderful anniversary party! We had 90 guests join us at the Yankauer Preserve for the festivities. You can read the details in the enclosed article, but in short, it was a lovely evening for our members and gave everyone the opportunity to share favorite PVAS memories, proud accomplishments, greet old friends, make new acquaintances, and put names with faces for the first time! It was a festive and fun occasion, and it was wonderful to have so many people from various walks of PVAS life attend. Great food in a beautiful setting with wonderful people gathered for a joyful occasion. Who could ask for more?

At the event, we acknowledged those who have made extraordinary contributions to PVAS. But, in truth, every person in the organization has made it what it is today. Every one of you is a game changer and has made a significant contribution. Whether you are a founder, member, donor, volunteer, participant... we couldn't have accomplished nearly as much over the last 40 years without each and every one of you. PVAS has made significant impacts in conservation and education because of YOU! And I thank you for that.

And speaking of thanks... The generosity of our donors has wowed me once again. In honor of our 40th anniversary, we set what I'll confess was a bit of an audacious goal for our organization's summer appeal: \$40,000. But you not only met that goal: you exceeded it! I can't thank you enough for showing us how much you appreciate what we do, and that you're willing to support our efforts to make it happen.

The Board met in July to pass our annual budget, which begins September 1. The budget is over \$500,000! And that does not include capital projects. We are growing, and making a larger impact every year. I can't express how grateful I am that your support is growing with us. We'll need your help as we take

on the next conservation challenges, develop new educational programs to address current issues, maintain our nature preserves as their visitation increases, and invest in our amazing, dedicated staff.

As much as we've accomplished, there is always more to be done. We are so grateful to have you at our side as we launch into a new decade of preserving, restoring and enjoying the natural world through education and action. THANK YOU!

Cool Spring Preserve to Host Artists Tour

Cool Spring Preserve will participate in an amazing weekend with the Over the Mountain Studio Tour, November 12th and 13th, 2022. We will be Stop 2 of 8 local studio stops, and will host three artists and their work. Rod Glover will be showing his unique botanical pictures made with the leaves and flowers that he has gathered and pressed. Diane Myers will be showing her beautiful hand-woven textiles, and Linda Case will feature original floral and abstract mixed media works.

This is the 33rd year for the Tour, and will feature 17 unique and juried artists and crafts-people. Always the 2nd weekend of November, the studio tour is free and open to the public 10am-5pm both days. Support your local creative economy and buy one-of-a-kind presents for yourself and those you love.

For more information and maps, visit www.overthmountainstudiotour.com. Or contact info@overthmountainstudiotour.com.

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

Fall Migration in the Preserves

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

October is a great time to be out in the field looking for birds that are migrating south through our area. While September might be the peak for fall migration, October can harbor some real gems: Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and many other species that have been absent all summer are coming back into or through our area.

The PVAS preserves are magical magnets for birds, and certainly for migrants. A number of wood warblers will still be moving through our area and can be found at any of the preserves: Magnolia, American Redstart, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and Palm, to mention a few. During fall migration, many of these species will be silent, skulking through the trees and briars, searching for food to power their southward migration. Occasionally, you might hear an adult male belt out a song or two, but this is rare in October.

Sparrows are some of the real treasures to be found during this time of year. Some species are in our area only briefly during fall migration. At Stauffer's Marsh, you might find Swamp Sparrows and Lincoln's Sparrows scurrying along the ground or low in the vegetation – giving only a fleeting glimpse of their gorgeous plumage. Later in the month, Fox Sparrows will arrive. These large, reddish-brown birds are gorgeous and often sit silently in full view. They can be found not only at Stauffer's Marsh but also at Cool Spring Preserve.

A quiet morning walk at Eidolon may provide some wood warblers, but be sure to look for Hermit Thrushes that are coming back into our area to spend the winter. Birding data for Eidolon is in short supply – only 127 checklists on eBird. Be sure to use the eBird app to keep track of your bird sightings while at Eidolon. Doing this will help us create a clearer picture of the birds that use this wonderful preserve and when they are there. One of the magical sounds of late fall and winter comes from pairs of White-breasted Nuthatches (a non-migrant) as they call back and forth while they forage along the trunks of trees. Also, listen for the mew-calls of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and the soft clucking of a Hermit Thrush.



Red Cedar? Yankauer Preserve is also in need of your birding data. There are only 132 checklists on eBird, so please use the eBird app to track the birds you encounter at this gorgeous preserve.



A slow walk through the Yankauer Preserve can be very productive, with lingering Eastern Phoebes, Cedar Waxwings, Blue-headed Vireo, and an occasional Eastern Towhee to keep you company. The habitats at Yankauer should be perfect for hosting migrating Northern Saw-whet Owls. Who will be the first to find one roosting tight against the trunk of an Eastern



PVAS Events

Adult Programs

By Krista Hawley, Adult Programs Coordinator

This fall, our Monthly Programs will return to the Education Center at the Hospice of the Panhandle. While we are working towards streaming these programs virtually, we hope that you will be able to join us *in-person* on the first Wednesday evenings of October and November. Than Hitt, Research Fish Biologist at the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center, will be presenting on Wednesday, October 12th at 7:00 PM. He is excited to share his experience and research with us all during his talk, *Climate Change in our Backyard: An Introduction to USGS Research in Bullskin Run and Streams Across the Region*.

On Wednesday, November 9th, we welcome presenters Lindsay Amsberry, and Julie Prevratil. Lindsey Amsberry is a biology instructor at Frederick Community College. Julie Prevratil works towards actively teaching the public about human effects on wild marine life. Together, Julie and Lindsay will present *Gently Down the Stream: Protecting Our Waters from Plastic Pollution*, where they will share eye opening information about the many sources of plastic pollution.



Fall is a perfect time to join one of PVAS's monthly Wellness Walks. We welcome anyone who would like to join these walks. We are able to vary our pace to meet all ability levels of walkers. There is much to see and explore on the trails. Our Wellness Walks are also a great opportunity to meet new people! Join us at Yankauer Nature Preserve on Tuesday, October 11th, or at Poor House Farm on Tuesday, November 8th.

If you have been thinking of joining one of our monthly bird walks, this is the time! Fall migration brings a variety of birds through our area and our knowledgeable trip leaders are happy to share their birding interest with you all.

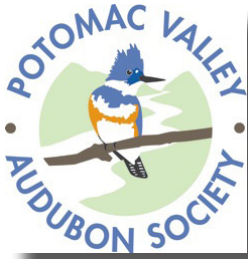
The 2022 Master Naturalist Cohort will be finishing up their year with classes on Geology, Soils and Invasive Species on Saturday, October 1st at Cacapon Resort State Park. The applications for the 2023 class year will open sometime in late October with a closing date of January 31. If you or

someone you know is interested in learning more about our Master Naturalist Program, please do not hesitate to contact the Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee at PVMN@PotomacAudubon.org.

While the days may be getting a tad bit cooler and the nights a bit longer, we are still staying active and offering many interesting opportunities! From a 'hands-on' Owl Pellet Workshop to a Fall Tree Identification Field Trip, we hope you will join us as we continue to explore and celebrate all that nature offers!



To find out more about these and other upcoming programs, please subscribe to our bi-weekly Heads Up or visit our calendar of events at potomacaudubon.org. We are adding programs and events all the time, so our website is the best way to stay up to date and informed!



40th Anniversary

40th Anniversary Celebration!

By Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

A heart-felt thank you goes out to everyone who was able to participate in our 40th birthday party on August 20th at the Yankauer Preserve. It was a lovely evening for our members and special guests. The pavilion was festively festooned with fairy lights and tables were decorated with bouquets provided by guests. (Thank you!) Members enjoyed a “Happy (Birthday) Hour” with wine, beer, lemonade and cider while socializing with old friends, meeting new ones, and wandering the “timeline trail” that featured highlights of PVAS’s conservation and education history.

The “Annual Meeting” element featured special recognition of those who have contributed above and beyond in PVAS’s 40 years. The original founders of PVAS in attendance were presented with sunflowers: Joe and Susan Brookreson, Diana Mullis, Suzanne Offutt and Mike Zagarella.

Our cadre of volunteer land managers over the years, Steve Hartmann, Rodney Woods, Lou Scavnicky and Tim Murphy, were recognized for their dedication to the preserves and making the facilities and trails what they are today. (Nan Johnson and Joe Gentile were also recognized but not in attendance.) The accessible trails at Yankauer and Stauffer’s Marsh, the bathrooms, electricity, and running water at Yankauer, and trail signage at all the preserves are attributed to the hard work and dedication of these volunteers. Although they were not able to attend, Gary and Diane Sylvester and Pete and Mary Palmer were also recognized for their tireless efforts and dedication to the preserves.

The opportunity was also taken to recognize members of the Events Committee who have organized dozens of fundraising events for PVAS over 13 years, totaling more than \$140,000 through their extraordinary efforts. The events committee members even prepared and served the meal for the event, including the delicious pork BBQ and beans contributed by Gary and Diane Sylvester. The group consists of Susan Brookreson, Gretchen Meadows, Diana Mullis, and Jane

Vanderhook. Alice Barkus was recognized but unable to attend, and Deb Patthoff, who sadly passed away several years ago, was also acknowledged.

Diana Mullis was recognized as an “Unsung Hero” for her dedication and volunteerism over nearly every one of the 40 years PVAS has existed. She is a founding member and has served on



the board multiple times and in every role, has coordinated the Bird Seed Sale, wildlife rescue efforts, events, programs, and on and on. Diana also became “PVAS Historian” over the last year, helping me process 40 years of Valley Views and other documents to prepare for Anniversary festivities and recognitions. Her tireless efforts over the years are beyond compare and appreciated beyond words.

Staff were recognized for their above-and-beyond efforts and dedication. They’ve had a few obstacles to overcome over the last couple of years, but they didn’t miss a beat and were able to creatively pivot programs and preserve maintenance to adapt to the community’s needs.

Finally, we recognized “Game Changers” for PVAS. Jean Neely is obviously the first to come to mind as the founder and stalwart board member, volunteer and donor over the years. Stauffer Miller, who donated Stauffer’s Marsh to PVAS, was recognized for his generous gift to PVAS and dedication to ensuring that people have access to the marsh for education and enjoyment in perpetuity. Linda Case was also recognized for her transformational gift of Cool Spring Preserve, formerly CraftWorks at Cool Spring, which Linda founded. Linda followed up her original gift of 13 acres in 2016 with an additional 50-acre donation in 2020. Her generosity provided PVAS with its first “home” as well as its first property in Jefferson County on which PVAS can steadily work towards its mission.

The last game changers recognized were Mina Goodrich and

continued on following page

PVAS Events

Anniversary Celebration continued from previous page



Larry Dean. Mina and Larry recognized the financial commitment needed to take on the additional property of Cool Spring and helped PVAS confidently proceed by pledging \$25,000/year for 5 years back in 2017. And in addition to that, they recently renewed their pledge through 2027. This generous gift allows PVAS to move forward with confidence to provide meaningful and educational experiences in the natural world at its preserves and programs.

The recognitions concluded with a call to dinner. Delicious pork BBQ, baked beans, bean salad, slaw, veggies, fruit and, of course, birthday cupcakes were served and a very enjoyable dinner was enjoyed by all attending. I want to thank everyone who helped make the event possible, and who was able to come to the event and make it a very festive 40th anniversary.



Pictured on page 4, from top: Founders, l-r: Susan Brookreson, Diana Mullis, Suzanne Offutt, Mike Zagarella, Joe Brookreson; Land Managers, l-r: Steve Hartmann, Rodney Woods, Lou Scavnick, Tim Murphy; Events committee, l-r: Gretchen Meadows, Jane Vanderhook, Susan Brookreson, Diana Mullis; Linda Case. Pictured on this page, clockwise from top: Larry Dean & Mina Goodrich; Staufer Miller & Kristin Alexander; Evelyn Gettys, Ellen Murphy, Marybeth Grove, Kevin Murphy; and the crowd under the pavillion.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have You Met Paul and Beth Dobson?

If you have been to a PVAS Volunteer Workday or Preserve recently, you have probably met Paul and Beth Dobson. As active members of the 2022 Master Naturalist Cohort, Paul and Beth have their 'volunteer hands' in 'all things PVAS'! The two of them make a dynamic duo and the volunteering they do for PVAS is diverse and dependable. This duo has been seen knee deep in the creek, sharing their passions and helping to educate youth on Watershed field trips. Both Paul and Beth also help to keep Eido-lon Nature Preserve trails free of downed logs and safe for everyone. They have read to children at the local library and are happy to lend a hand at whatever task needs to be done at our annual Day of Caring as well as "This Race is for the Birds!" during race prep and on race day.

Beyond the hard work they do, they also enjoy participating in lots of PVAS's and PVMN's fun activities! Whether they are joining the Master Naturalists on a kayak trip, sharing a meal at PVAS's 40th Anniversary Celebration or exploring the trails during a Wellness Walk, Beth and Paul are a delightful couple, and we are so very lucky to have them as part of the PVAS community.



PVAS Events

PVAS Auction Returns!

Back by popular demand, PVAS will be launching its 2022 Online Auction on October 30th. Get your holiday shopping done early and support PVAS at the same time!

We are still accepting high-quality gifts and services, if you are interested in donating something to benefit PVAS. So far PVAS members, volunteers, and friends have donated items and services including local kayak, rafting and paddleboard adventures, a cabin getaway, hand-made jewelry, dried flower wreath, fresh bread, felt critters, pottery, artwork, fresh homemade pie (fruit of your choice) and more. We can accept items up until October 21st.

The auction itself will begin Sunday, October 30th at 12pm and will close at 9pm on Sunday, November 6th. A “sneak peek” of the auction website will be made available on October 25th. Go to www.potomacaudubon.org to find the auction link.



This online auction was inspired out of necessity in 2020 by COVID, but has proven so popular and successful that we've kept it going. This will be year three! It's a great way to support the preserves, programs and conservation efforts of PVAS while getting great gifts for yourself or others!



Purchased items will be available to pick up between Friday, November 11th – 16th at various pre-arranged locations in Berkeley, Jefferson, Morgan and Washington Counties.

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 Hetsberger

Family and Youth Programs

Fall Programs for Youth and Families

By Amy Thomas, Lead Teacher and Naturalist

We have a lot of fun programs in store this fall. We are continuing to offer our home-school "Outdoor School" program for the third consecutive year. Homeschoolers ages 5- 10 sign up to attend weekly classes each month, each centered around a nature theme. These Outdoor School classes are held at both Cool Spring Preserve and Yankauer Nature Preserve. What's unique about these programs is that they are held entirely outdoors, using the natural world as the classroom. Students participate in cross-curricular activities such as reading, geography, science, math and the arts. We balance these more formal lessons with plenty of unstructured time for students to explore nature on their own and learn from their own discoveries and observations.

After September's "Plants and Pollinators" theme, students were able to explain how pollination works, describe the monarch migration, and identify the threats that have caused the monarch population decline. Students are also well versed in the importance of native bees and how they have co-evolved with native flora. They even participated in community science monarch tagging and parasite data collection. One parent left us the following comment on a post-program survey: "Our son learns so much and brings the knowledge back to the family to share. We have been very impressed!"

We truly feel that our Outdoor School program is helping shape our future biologists and naturalists!

We will also be continuing to provide our monthly Wee Naturalist preschool programs. During this 1.5-hour program, preschoolers and their adult guardian explore nature together during story time, a short hike, and craft. Upcoming themes include "Halloween Hike," "Fun in the Forest," and "Animal Tracks and Trails."



Finally, we also have some exciting family programs scheduled! On October 28th, we are holding our 3rd annual "Trail of Bones" program. Families are invited to Cool Spring Preserve to take a Halloween hike to find hidden animal skulls and bones along the way. The hike will be followed by a family campfire. We will also be leading a "Beaver Moon" night hike on November 9th and a Winter Solstice night hike and campfire on the evening of December 21st.

We hope to see you and your family at one of these programs.



Registration is Open for Wee Naturalists!

Do you have a 3-5-year-old who loves getting outside?

Sign up for our Wee Naturalists lessons!

Participants will listen to stories, be engaged in hands-on lessons and activities, and explore nature at

Cool Spring Preserve.

Spots are limited, so sign up for the themes below today!

Contact Laurel Schwartz, Laurel@potomacaudubon.org

with any questions that you may have.

To register, visit our website: www.potomacaudubon.org/education/youth/weenats/

Halloween Hike, October 28th

Fun in the Forest, November 18th

Animal Tracks and Trails, December 9th



Family and Youth Programs

Watershed Program Update

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

Our education staff is excited to start off another season of watershed education with Jefferson and Berkeley County schools. We look forward to seeing fourth grade students eager to learn, as well as their dedicated and passionate teachers. For Jefferson County schools, this will be the first in-person program year since 2019. We are ready to make this program as meaningful as possible for these students.

In early August, thirteen Jefferson County fourth-and-fifth grade teachers participated in a Watershed Program teacher training on the river. Teachers canoed together on the Shenandoah River, while having meaningful conversations about watershed education and ways to connect students to their environment. On the way, we made a few stops to investigate water quality and aquatic life of the Shenandoah. Teachers were able to participate in the same activities that students experience on their field trips. Fourth grade teachers shared their experiences with last year's student action projects. Then, we all brainstormed ideas for future projects and ways that teachers can assist students as they drive the decision-making process. Overall, it was a great experience for everyone involved.

For Berkeley County fifth grade teachers, Experience Learning will be hosting an after-school teacher training workshop, so that teachers can learn more about student-led watershed action projects. OLN Coordinator Carolyn Thomas and I will both be attending this training. We look forward to networking with teachers and learning more about the action project model that Berkeley County classes will be employing this year.

PVAS also hosted a Project Wet and Project Learning Tree wetlands-focused professional development opportunity for West Virginia teachers in August, at Cool Spring Preserve. Instructors from the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and Department of Forestry led this training. Primary and secondary teachers from all over the state were able to attend. I, with another PVAS education team member, also attended this training, and gave teachers a tour of the wetland habitat at Cool Spring. Teachers came away with lesson plans and activities that will allow them to bring STEM-based nature education to their classrooms.

We are so grateful for the teachers that are willing to become more involved and invested in bringing systemic watershed education to their classrooms. Our PVAS Watershed Program is experiencing a period of growth, and is continuing to reach hundreds of students in the tri-county area. We look forward to continuing to update our membership as we bring watershed education to the local community this year. Soon, we will be conducting Watershed field trips in both Jefferson and Berkeley County. If you are interested in volunteering to help with these field trips, please contact me by

email at Laurel@potomacaudubon.org. Volunteers are essential to the success of our field trips, and we appreciate all of our Watershed Program volunteers.



Family and Youth Programs

Welcoming Our New AmeriCorps Educator

By PVAS Youth Programs Staff

We are thrilled to welcome a new member to our youth education team! Allow us to introduce Ellie George, our new AmeriCorps Environmental Educator, who will be serving with us through this year.

Ellie is an avid enthusiast of all things scientific. She graduated from Shepherd University with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a minor in English. She spent her summers before college volunteering as a counselor at Tri-County 4-H Camp in Hedgesville. During college, she tutored in several STEM subjects, and spent her summers between semesters as an AmeriCorps Summer Associate at Camp MoCo with Starting Points of Morgan County, and as a student researcher at Shepherd University. After graduation, she worked as an intern with the National Conservation Training Center's library and archives, and a lab assistant at Hagerstown Community College.



Ellie George

Ellie spends her free time reading, crafting, writing music, and exploring nature.

If you see Ellie at one of our programs or events at any time during this year, please give her a warm PVAS community welcome. We look forward to introducing her to our community and volunteers.

We are also excited to announce that our current AmeriCorps member, Molly Hillenbrand,



Above, Ellie George and students



Above, Molly and students



will be joining us for another six-month term. She has been an energetic and enthusiastic team member with us since February 2022, and we are so happy to have her again this fall. If you see Molly at any PVAS programs, feel free to ask her about her service! She is always bubbly and eager to chat with community members.

Conservation

Top 5: Seeds of Sustenance

By KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

Help birds this winter by filling your feeders with seeds of sustenance!

Black Oil Sunflower

The first seed of sustenance we recommend is Black Oil Sunflower. Black Oil Sunflower seeds are considered very 'meaty' and have a higher oil content meaning more nutrients and calories are packed into every birdy bite. Yet the husk is tender and easy for even small birds to break open. This seed feeds the greatest variety of backyard birds. Sunflower seeds are best offered to birds in hopper, platform or tray feeders. They can also be sprinkled on the ground for ground-feeding birds.



Safflower



Love seeing those bright splashes of red at your feeders during the gray months? Try Safflower seeds to attract Cardinals! The thick, hard shells are too tough for some birds but Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Chickadees and Sparrows all enjoy a good Safflower seed. As an added benefit, squirrels and Starlings are said to not prefer Safflower. These white seeds are high in protein, fat, and fiber making them an important source of quality nutrients for birds. Because Safflower is not native to our region, our backyard birds may not recognize it as food at first. So, it is recommended that you mix Safflower with Sunflower. Gradually, your birds will see (and taste!) just how wonderful of a food the Safflower seed is!

Nyjer

While nyjer is often referred to as "thistle seed" it comes from the African yellow daisy, a plant that is not related to thistles. Clinging birds with sharply-pointed bills such as finches, sparrows, buntings, and juncos generally go for nyjer seed. The high oil content of nyjer fills these birds up with energy. Nyjer is a more expensive seed, so it is best served in specialized feeders to avoid waste. These feeders would be made of fine mesh or have very small seed ports. Finch 'socks' are one option for serving nyjer.



White Prose Millet



Ground feeding birds such as juncos, doves, towhees, sparrows and quail love millet seed. Some types of millet or milo are thrown into seed mixes as a cheap filler with poor nutritional value. However, white prose millet is high in protein and is a good source of magnesium, copper, zinc, manganese and B-vitamins. It also has a slightly sweet taste that birds love! The seed is very small, making it easy for smaller bird species and young birds to eat it. Because white prose millet is favored by ground feeding birds, it is best to scatter it on the ground or serve it in a low platform feeder, particularly near brush piles that these birds like to hide in.

Cracked Corn

Cracked corn is exactly as it sounds; corn kernels that have been ground up into chips that are manageable for backyard birds to feast upon. While low in oil content, cracked corn is high in fiber and protein. Cracked corn is preferred by many of our larger backyard birds such as quail, turkey, ducks and pheasants, but is consumed by just about any feeder bird. Scatter cracked corn on the ground or serve in a low tray feeder and watch your backyard come to life!



You'll find all of these great seeds and much more at the PVAS Bird Seed Sales on December 3 and February 4!

The 2022 Monarch Alliance Grant Cycle is Officially Open!

Receive up to \$1240 worth of plants to establish community Monarch Waystations.

Applications due December 15, 2022.

For more information and to apply: www.PotomacAudubon.org/Monarch-Alliance/Grants/

Conservation

A Monarch Minute: IUCN Declares Monarch Butterfly 'Endangered'*By Bruce Guthrie*

An international conservation coalition recently placed the migratory Monarch butterfly on its endangered species list, strengthening the case for the U.S. government to take similar action.

The July action by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, made up of more than 1,400 government and civil society organizations, cited damage to the species caused by the use of pesticides and herbicides that kill Monarchs and their milkweed hosts, habitat destruction in the butterflies' wintering grounds, and the effects of climate change. The IUCN said that under projected future conditions, the probability that the migratory Monarch population will decline within 60 years to levels where extinction is inevitable is 56 percent to 74 percent. For the Western population, the IUCN said the probability is 99 percent.



The assessment applies to the subspecies *Danaus plexippus plexippus*, the population that makes the annual migration from as far as Canada to central Mexico, or, in the case of the Western Monarchs, to Southern California. The World Wildlife Fund calls this migration of thousands of miles by these tiny insects "nature at its most powerful." (There are other Monarch subspecies, in South America, Australia and the Pacific islands, and the Mediterranean, but they do not migrate. *Plexippus plexippus* account for 90 percent of the world's total Monarch population.) Urging protective action, the leader of the IUCN assessment said, "From planting native milkweed [the sole food for Monarch caterpillars] and reducing pesticide use to supporting the protection of overwintering sites and contributing to community science, we all have a role to play in making sure this iconic insect makes a full recovery."

The IUCN calculates that the Eastern Monarch population declined as much as 84 percent from 1996 to 2014, while the Western population fell 99.9 percent from the 1980s to 2021. (The most recent count of the Western numbers showed a strong increase. An interesting theory to explain

this is that among the factors in the rebound are things that we think of as West Coast disasters: wildfires and the extended drought. The fires, the reasoning goes, have cleared areas that have become wildflower meadows, providing nectar for butterflies, and the drought, combined with supply chain problems, have led farmers to plant fewer acres, leading to less pesticide and herbicide use.)

Unfortunately, the IUCN action does not trigger protective action by the U.S. government. Responding to petitions calling for Monarchs to be declared endangered, the Fish and Wildlife Service looked at the issue in 2020. It concluded that "listing the monarch under the Endangered Species Act is warranted but precluded at this time by higher priority listing actions" and insufficient agency resources. Fish and Wildlife cited habitat changes, insecticide use, and climate change as threatening the species. The agency promised to update its assessments annually and to make a decision to list or not to list in 2024.

There are some tentative federal actions to help the species. The infrastructure package signed into law last December included the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act, which provides \$10 million in grants over five years to plant native grasses and plants, including milkweed, on roadsides and highway rights-of-way. The infrastructure package also included the Monarch Action, Recovery, and Conservation of Habitat Act, which provides \$250 million over five years to remove invasive species along transportation routes and encourages replacement with pollinator-friendly native plants.

These actions may help, but for now the ball is largely in the court of citizen action. People can plant milkweed, particularly in the spring, when the Monarchs are returning from Mexico, and the fall, when the caterpillars who will make the long journey south are hatching and gaining strength. People can also plant nectar plants and forgo the use of pesticides and herbicides.

Those who wish to help or get more information can check out the Xerces Society, the Monarch Joint Venture, Monarch-Watch, and other national organizations. And, locally, you are encouraged to join The Monarch Alliance, operating in the Eastern Panhandle and Western Maryland! Visit us at potomacaudubon.org/monarch-alliance/, or find us on Facebook.

Photos © Laurel Schwartz



Conservation

A Swift Update

By KC Walters

As the fall Swift Watch season comes to a close, we wanted to provide a swift update on happenings at the roosting tower at Shepherd University.

The “Swifties” (dedicated volunteers who watch the roost tower each evening), began the fall watch in early August. Right away, we had a small flock of 14 Chimney Swifts using the big tower to roost at night. The annual Swift Night Out was held on Saturday, August 13. It was a gorgeous evening and we had at least 50 participants join the Swifties at the tower for a night of education, ice cream and, of course, swift action! The participants were invited to visit five stations to learn more about Chimney Swifts. Each station was focused on a specific topic; biology, conservation, migration, nesting and tower construction.

After visiting all of the education stations, the participants came to the ice cream station where they had to pass a swift quiz to receive their free swift sundae. We then gathered on the lawn and watched a small flock of swifts dive into the tower, one at a time, in sneaky, ninja fashion. In total, eight Chimney Swifts were observed entering the tower during Swift Night Out. Meanwhile, in downtown Shepherdstown, Nancy Kirschbaum and Carol Winckler observed 150 Chimney Swifts dive into a chimney near the Shepherdstown Community Club.

Overall, throughout the month of August, we consistently had approximately a dozen swifts using the tower each night. In early September, Dr. Sher Hendrickson brought her Ornithology class to the swift tower. KC met the class there to give them a brief lecture on Chimney Swifts and the overall Shepherdstown Swift story, while simultaneously teaching them how to perform Swift Watch. It was a fun evening and such a joy to see young people engaged in birding. The class has even established their own Instagram page where they can share their birding adventures. It is called “Dr.H_bird_nerds,” if you are interested in following them. By the end of September, swift numbers at the tower began to dwindle, as more and more birds left the area for their great journey to the Amazon Basin.

We plan to open the tower this winter, when we are sure all Chimney Swifts have departed this area, to check for any evidence of nesting activity from the summer. Swift discovery and use of the tower has been a slow but steady process and we look forward to continued progress over the years to come!

We look forward to continuing the Swift Watch as the Chimney Swifts return to our area next spring. If you are interested in becoming an official “Swiftie” and joining the Swift Watch, please reach out to KC at Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org.



Pollinator Palooza - Community Programs at the Shepherdstown Library

By Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Program Coordinator

PVAS was thrilled to collaborate with the Shepherdstown Library to bring nature education to the community. Youth and family events were focused on pollinators and pollinator plants. Events took place over a four-day period in mid-September.

During the Pollinator Palooza, PVAS instructors led nature programs that were free and open to the public. One program explored seeds and all of the different ways that they can spread in the ecosystem. Program participants made seed bombs using native seeds to take home with them. Another lesson explored Monarch Butterflies and engaged participants in a butterfly hunt around the library grounds. Artist Doug Pfifer also demonstrated beautiful pollinator sidewalk chalk drawings for families.

On the last day of the Pollinator Palooza, families participated in a Bioblitz, which is a community science project. Participants identified both native and non-native plants, insects, and animals found on the library grounds, to have as a baseline to compare to in the coming years. PVAS hosted bird walks to contribute data to this project as well.

With lots of volunteer support, the Shepherdstown Library was able to put in native plant pollinator gardens, and plant native tree species around the grounds. Peggy Bowers designed these gardens, and the project is ongoing, with plans for more native plantings in the future.

Thanks to sponsors, The American Conservation Film Festival and HHMI Tangled Bank Studios, PVAS was able to host Doug Tallamy at Shepherd University, as our monthly program. Doug Tallamy is a renowned naturalist and author, and is an authority on native planting and backyard habitat. His presentation was both incredibly informative and inspiring. We hope that you were able to attend or view the talk online!

PVAS was proud to be a part of these events, and we value our community relationships that make programming like this possible.



Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters, Land and Conservation Manager

August and September included some big volunteer workdays at the preserves.

On August 17, a dozen students from Shepherd University participated in the annual Day of Service by volunteering at Yankauer. These students started off with a warm-up hike clipping overgrown vegetation along the trails. They then took on the hard task of spreading gravel over the wheelchair accessible areas around the pavilion and bathroom. This was much needed after years of wear and tear on the trail made it highly uneven. These students were very hardworking, and their service was greatly appreciated. We still have more gravel to spread on the remainder of the Cedar Loop and are planning another large volunteer workday in October.



PVAS once again participated in the United Way Day of Caring. This year, it was held on Tuesday, September 13 at Stauffer's Marsh. We took on one of our biggest projects ever with the installation of a wheelchair accessible trail. The visionary behind this project was Steve Hartmann, who dreamed of creating this trail for disabled veterans over ten years ago. However, it wasn't until this year that PVAS was able to finalize the planning and secure the funding to make it happen. The accessible area includes two van-sized, gravel parking spaces with a loading/unloading zone and approximately 900 linear feet of trail extending to the kiosk and then following the West Pond Trail to the marsh viewing platform. At this time, the viewing platform is only accessed by stairs, however, we have near-future plans to add a wheelchair ramp.

Thirty volunteers were present for the Day of Caring representing PVAS, Potomac Valley Master Naturalists, Martinsburg Rotary, and Berkeley-Jefferson Extension Master Gardeners. With so many hard-working volunteers, the work was completed quickly and we were surprised to be finished by 2pm! Funding was provided by the National Audubon Society's "Audubon in Action" grant, the Martinsburg Rotary Club and Steve Hartmann. In-kind services were provided by Mary and Peter Palmer, who provided their skid loader to move gravel and dirt for the trail, and also by the Berkeley County Sheriff's Reserve, who sent two officers and squad cars to make sure volunteers were safe along Back Creek Valley Road while working. It is going to take a while for the



grass on the new trail to grow. We encourage you to check it out in the spring!

August also meant saying farewell to Anthony Marmorella, after he successfully completed 900 hours over six months in service to PVAS through the High Rocks AmeriCorps program. He grew tremendously during his time with us and his quick wit will surely be missed on

the PVAS team. He hopes to start another AmeriCorps position soon, serving with the Montana Conservation Corps, and we wish him all the best in his future endeavors!



Looking ahead into the fall, we hope to keep the spirit of volunteerism alive with a few additional big projects before winter sets in. Please keep an eye on the website calendar for upcoming service opportunities, such as installing the remainder of the trail signs at Cool Spring.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

WVMN 2022 State Conference

By Rich Brager, PVMN Co-Chair

I was fortunate enough to attend the 2022 West Virginia Master Naturalists State Conference, which was held at Chief Logan State Park in beautiful Logan County. The conference spanned three days from July 8-10th. As I joined our chapter of WVMN in late 2019, and Covid struck shortly thereafter, this was my first chance to take part in a State Conference. I am very glad I went.

There were about a half dozen of us from the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists in attendance, which is a good turnout considering the nearly six-hour drive. Total attendance was nearly one-hundred Master Naturalists.

There were many opportunities for naturalist training during the course of the weekend. Participants were able to select which courses they wanted to attend for each morning and afternoon session. In addition, there were bird walks each morning starting at 6:00 a.m. - too early for my old bones - but thoroughly enjoyed by those who went. There were also evening activities on Friday and Saturday. On Friday, there was a BBQ picnic (held indoors due to thunderstorms) and then an indoor "Fire Ring Sharing Circle" - without the fire. There was poem reading, storytelling and even a fiddler for entertainment!

On Saturday morning, I attended the Native Moths of West Virginia class. We learned how to differentiate between moths and butterflies, and about their life cycles. We also learned that there are 150,000 species of lepidoptera worldwide, but only 20,000 are butterflies. On Saturday afternoon, the Wildlife Center Tour was virtual, again due to incessant thunderstorms. But not to worry: our instructor, Ranger Lauren Cole, was worth the price of admission for the whole conference! Her knowledge, personality, humor, and enthusiasm were staggering. Combined with her



southern WV lilt and nearly photographic memory (she could even remember all her students' names!), the class was super engaging! She told us about the rescue animals under her purview, and how she cares for them. Those are the luckiest animals on the planet! She also shared the strategies of the West Virginia elk introduction program, and how

WV collaborates with KY, VA, and Canada to ensure its success.

On Saturday evening, we attended the business meeting where all eighteen of the newly certified Master Naturalists from 2021

were recognized. I am proud to say that twelve of the eighteen were from our very own Potomac Valley Chapter!

On Sunday morning, I attended the Gardening for Native Pollinators class. Our instructor for this session was also Lauren Cole: Lauren again waxed eloquent. She told us about the best native plants to attract birds, bees and butterflies, and recommended doing these plantings rather than simply putting out bird feeders. She also gave us information on the WV Wild Yards Program as well. You can get your yard certified and receive your very own WV Wild Yards Program sign to display in your garden. Lauren also introduced a very helpful online tool to use for native garden planting specific to WV: <https://dep.wv.gov/WWE/getinvolved/Pages/WV-Planting-Tool.aspx>. Open it up, select your county and the purpose of your project, and get planting!

So, would I recommend that Master Naturalists go to the state conference next year? That's a resounding yes! Attendees get to visit another part of our beautiful state, meet like-minded people, and learn more about nature. Additionally, I was able to earn nearly 10 hours of advanced educational training simply by attending the conference.



Death Of a Giant

By Kay Lawson Gilbert

The immense white birch tree in the back woods is dying. Its broken limbs now pasted to the sorrowful sky, as woodpeckers tattoo its papery-white skin with black funerary designs.

Clusters of insects and blotches of mold congregate and multiply in its folds of scalloped bark and toothless grin, as gatherings of birds, in silence grieve, on rotting branches - like feathery leaves.



©K. Lawson Gilbert poetry

Advocacy

Advocacy Action

By Charlotte Fremaux, PVAS Advocacy Working Group

The following issues and information received from our partner organizations require your advocacy!

1. Motorized vehicles in State Parks:

In the September session, WV State lawmakers debated the pros and cons of the proposal that would allow motorized vehicles on public lands, specifically in State Parks. Our partner organization, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, opposes this proposal, as do retired State Parks administrators and bipartisan members of the public. According to WV Rivers, off-road vehicles are not compatible with the preservation of nature, wildlife, and the health of the woods and streams, and are disruptive to the activities of hiking, biking, birding, fishing, and hunting, all of which are widely enjoyed in our State Parks. WV Rivers had previously sent requested the public's support in opposing this legislation. The legislation is expected to be re-introduced during the 2023 session, so stay tuned. We will alert you to opportunities to weigh in as soon as appropriate.

For more information, please email public lands coordinator Mike Jones at wvrivers@wvrivers.org. A link to a Herald Dispatch article describing objections to the legislation can be found here: https://www.herald-dispatch.com/news/lawmakers-push-back-against-allowing-off-road-vehicles-in-state-parks-after-opposition-from-retired/article_189565fe-10c5-5613-9e69-052a1e62238b.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=29eeb208-bbbc-4d4e-b335-b42c82a66678.

2. Corridor H

By now you will undoubtedly have heard of the controversy surrounding the Corridor H Parsons to Davis route, an approximately 10-mile, new, four-lane, divided highway, which will be a component of Appalachian Highway Corridor H (US 48). Responding to public requests files under NEPA, WVDOT held a public meeting on September 12 where information was given and the public was allowed to comment. The comment period ends December 12.

The Friends of Blackwater is lobbying for what is being called the "Northern Route" which avoids dividing the towns of Davis and Thomas, prohibits all trucks from Thomas, doesn't degrade the view from Blackwater Falls State Park and the Canyon, and stays out of the protected historic area. Friends of Blackwater has created a brochure ([Information](#)) describing the objections to the WVDOT "Preferred Route," which would negatively impact both the natural areas and the towns of Davis and Thomas, significantly degrading the former, and permanently dividing the latter. A description of their comments and further links can be found here: <https://saveblackwater.org/corridor-h-comments/>.

A majority of the residents and business owners in both towns, as well as people who hike the trails and enjoy nature in Mon Forest and Blackwater strongly support the "Northern Route." Please support our partner organization, the people, and natural beauty of the area and send in a comment today! Here is the link to the WVDOT comments page: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeJbTeJPANiYbbL7xN68KIzILqi7g3c-js-bNA0zCfiUvIRyNg/viewform>.

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP!

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

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

Gift Membership Form

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

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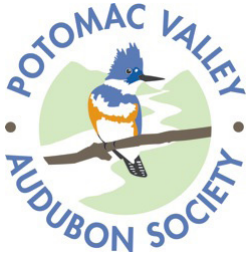
Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

National Audubon has a membership program that is separate from PVAS. To become a National member, go to the Society's website at www.audubon.org, 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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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.