

– 2023 – ANNUAL REPORT

...people dedicated to preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action.

www.PotomacAudubon.org 681.252.1387

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ABOUT US

Established in 1982, Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS) is a non-profit conservation and education organization serving Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in WV and Washington County, MD.

PVAS manages four nature preserves totaling over 500 acres where wildlife can count on preserved habitat and people can enjoy quiet contemplation, exercise, and exploration. The preserves are also used for educational programs, summer camps, nature and art workshops, bird walks, and other events related to our mission: preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action.

PVAS partners with land trusts, public agencies, schools, governmental entities, and other non-profits to steward the local landscape and reach new audiences. We value biodiversity in nature, and we recognize the importance of diversity across our organization. Diversity, inclusion, and equity are essential to our community and to our mission.

Each year we share our accomplishments as we work to build a community of knowledgeable, motivated and capable environmental citizens; steward sensitive habitats; and provide opportunities to learn about and explore the natural world.

Thank you for your role in helping PVAS accomplish so much.

Mike Sullivan, President Kristin Alexander, Executive Director







PRESERVING

PRESERVING

We had the opportunity to honor the legacies and contributions of our founders, board members, and volunteers this year. According to our 2023 audit, volunteers contributed about 7,500 hours of service!



Several events were held to honor the memory of Clark Dixon this year. Clark was a past PVAS board member and a founder of the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists, who sadly passed away in December 2022. A tree planting was held on Earth Day (one of Clark's favorite days of the year) at Sam Michael's Park, and this fall the Potomac Valley Master Naturalists held a native tree sale and coordinated a special campfire gathering at Cacapon State Park in Clark's honor. At the event, a bench and tree were dedicated at the park's nature center in Clark's memory, and many stories were shared around the campfire. Both events were attended by Clark's family, Master Naturalists, and PVAS members to recognize Clark's legacy and impact on conservation and education.



PVAS's annual Founders Day picnic, held under the Jean Neely Pavilion at the Yankauer Nature Preserve, was an opportunity for members to gather and celebrate the accomplishments of the year, Birdathon winners, the service of board members, as well as PVAS Founder, Jean Neely's, birthday. Jean was able to attend and all who came enjoyed delicious pork bbq and beans (provided by Gary and Diane Sylvester) and a variety of vegan options, sides and desserts provided by the events committee: Susan Brookreson, Gretchen Meadows, Diana Mullis, and Jane Vanderhook.



PVAS recognized Diane and Gary Sylvester at the annual meeting for their extraordinary contributions over the years, from providing food at a variety of PVAS events to brush hogging at preserves to building bridges and mowing trails for the annual race. (The list could fill up this report!) In recognition of their above and beyond efforts over many years, the PVAS Board announced the naming of the pollinator meadow at Cool Spring Preserve as the "Two Sylvester's Meadow."



RESTORING

Habitat restoration and native plant promotion continued in 2023, through conservation activities in the community and at the four preserves PVAS manages for people and wildlife. Partners and volunteers are critical to all we do – 35 workdays were held at the preserves with over 130 volunteers!



The two native plant sales placed 2,295 native plants with their forever homes. The fall sale included a presentation by local experts about the benefits of "going native." We are so grateful for our partnership with Sunny Meadows Garden Center who hosts the sales. They even generously donated an additional 400 native plants after the fall sale for use in our habitat restoration efforts at the preserves.



At Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve, the accessible "West Pond Trail" now culminates at an equally accessible viewing platform that overlooks the marsh. From there you can observe migrating waterfowl and other species enjoying the protected wetland. Volunteers, especially Steve Hartmann, were critical to making this improvement a reality.



Mrs. Thornton's Cottage, at Cool Spring Preserve, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2023 thanks to the application submitted by the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission. The cottage will be used for AmeriCorps housing beginning this spring, so renovations are underway this winter, jumpstarted by the 2023 Day of Caring volunteers.



At Yankauer, the Cedar Loop was improved with new gravel and trail liners thanks to the Harpers Ferry lob Corps. The accessible trail was becoming uneven and these improvements have made it accessible once again to wheelchairs and strollers.



More Chimney Swifts are using the tower PVAS constructed on Shepherd University's campus every year. Thanks to our volunteer "Swifties," Chimney Swifts were consistently observed using the tower in 2023 during spring and fall migration during our annual volunteer "Swift Watch." We were able to share knowledge and joy of Chimney Swifts and habitat restoration (and delicious "swift sundaes") through our "Swift Night Out" in August with 50 people in attendance.



We held three "Weed Warrior" trainings in 2023. This program, aimed at training volunteers to help with habitat restoration at the four preserves, now boasts 92 individuals who are certified to work independently on invasive removal at PVAS-managed preserves.



Bob Schwartz, Restoration Ecologist and PVAS volunteer, "adopted" a corner of Cool Spring where he has been leading volunteers to remove invasive species and replace them with native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers.



Eidolon Nature Preserve was hit particularly hard by ice and wind last winter. Volunteers Paul and Beth Dobson spearheaded several volunteer days to clear at least 50 trees from the trails and access road, allowing access to the beautiful trails once again.











ENJOYING

This year featured plentiful opportunities to enjoy the confluence of art, wellness, and nature.



Pages and Pathways Book Group was launched to provide opportunities for reading and nature enthusiasts to gather quarterly to discuss a common book and take a trip to a place to explore the topic more thoroughly. The Chesapeake Bay, Eidolon, and Cool Spring were explored through the lens of great reads chosen by leaders Ellen Murphy and KC Walters.

Alison Zak, PVAS's first AmeriCorps and now author, held a book launch of her new book, *Wild Asana: Animals, Yoga and Connecting our Practice to the Natural World*, at the Case Nature Center this summer, followed by a playful yoga session by the stone cairn along the Bullskin Run.



A visiting artist, Katama Murray, visited the area in the fall to share her eco-printing process through PVAS workshops, visits to local schools, and a concluding art show of South Jefferson Elementary's 5th graders' artistic creations at Cool Spring. Her workshops included nature walks with Nathanial Sharp to help guests connect with the natural world around them. PVAS member Anne Young coordinated all the events!



Nature Journaling has continued to be offered regularly by Deana Thorsell. A complementary group was added thanks to Will Janssen, who began a Drawing, Sketching and Painting Nature Group. Meanwhile, the self-guided nature journaling station at Cool Spring Preserve's gazebo continues to inspire writers, artists, and readers alike.



Wellness Walkers enjoyed the natural world and each other's company as they explored Cool Spring's meadow during peak goldenrod season, Virginia Arboretum at Blandy to see the Ginko grove in its fall splendor, the newly established Sweet Run State Park in VA, the C&O Canal and other sites!



In spite of wind and rain, over 150 runners and walkers participated in our 23rd annual "This Race is for the Birds!" raising over \$9,000 thanks to participants and sponsors. The event provides beautiful 5K and 10K courses through fields and forests at Broomgrass Community in Berkeley County.



36 free bird walks were provided in 2023 – all by volunteers. Monthly walks were offered at the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center, Cool Spring Preserve, and Rolling Ridge Conservancy. A special "family bird walk" was held at Cool Spring Preserve, too, inspiring the next generation of birders. Birdathon continues to be a fun way to stretch participants' birding skills while contributing to Community Science, and Birding 101 was back after a hiatus during COVID. PVAS is grateful to the knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers who make these birding activities possible.



Family programs included spring and fall foraging workshops about wild edibles and preparation techniques; two monarch tagging events for all ages where participants enjoyed learning about community science and the natural history of monarch butterflies; a series of monthly campfire programs with storytelling and s'mores including the "Trail of Bones."



PVAS continued our community outreach through "Nature in the Neighborhood" programs, which served over 150 children over two weeks in August. We partnered with the Jefferson County Boys and Girls Club, the Charles Town Library, the Children's Garden, and the Martinsburg Initiative. Aimed at reaching a more diverse audience than our summer day camps, the programs were completely free to participants thanks to grant funding.*



The Case Nature Center was opened to the public again after being closed since COVID. Rotating seasonal exhibits and displays have been enjoyed by neighbors who "never knew this was here" and visitors from as far away as Amsterdam! We've been grateful to the volunteer docents who greet visitors (and we could use more)!

ENJOYING









EDUCATING

This year, we added an Associate Director of Education to the team to help us manage our education programs' growth and ultimately increase our capacity for both youth and adult programming.



The watershed program reached every 4th grader in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties this year –76 participating classes serving 1,750 students - thanks to grant funding.* Morgan County students will participate in Spring 2024, also with grant funds. In addition to the 8 hours of hands-on learning, schools often participate in a service project at their school that will benefit the watershed, such as a tree planting or pollinator garden. This program tends to be highly regarded by teachers and students alike:

"I have been teaching for 15 years, and I believe we've been able to provide our students each year with this amazing program. My students always look forward to our class time and get excited when they see the facilitator in the building. This program is a good balance of instruction and hands-on learning."

> - Denise Irwin, Tomahawk Intermediate



We served an additional 1,600 children through other K-5th grade school programs that include topics such as birds, trees, insects, worms, skulls, and more. All programs are designed around WV Curriculum Standards to help teachers meet their required objectives. All of these programs were provided free to schools thanks to grant funding.*



In June, ten teachers from the Panhandle participated in a teacher training/ river experience facilitated by PVAS and partners. PVAS also provided a training to river guides at River and Trail Outfitters, focused on local pollution sources, water quality testing, and benthic macroinvertebrates. The guides are excited to share their knowledge with groups they take on the river next season.



Audubon Discovery Camp saw 568 slots filled, with 347 non-duplicate campers! Children enjoyed exploring, learning, and playing all summer at both Cool Spring and Yankauer. PVAS had a very creative summer camp team, bringing new activity ideas and fun new ways to explore the outdoors. Campers at Yankauer even had the opportunity to help the WV Division of Natural Resources research box turtles!



The Potomac Valley Master Naturalists had another full cohort this year. Not only does this group train 20 future Master Naturalists each year, but they also provide thousands of hours of conservation-related volunteer service to the community annually! They also plan fun and educational outings to unique places like Ice Mountain and Raven Rocks.



Monthly Programs were enjoyed in-person AND virtually to ensure accessibility of these informative presentations. 2023's topics included: Climate Change in our Backyard; MicroPlastics; Warmer, Wetter Woods; Fox in the Henhouse; Grassland Bird Conservation; Parks and Conservation; Gardening for Pollinators; Pioneering Women in Conservation; Box Turtles; and Volcanoes. We are so grateful to our talented presenters for sharing their knowledge and passion for their topics.



Walks with varied themes such as wildflowers, full moon, insect sounds, and other topics were met with great enthusiasm. Bob Dean led a sawwhet owl banding demonstration in November, and for those unable to get "out and about," virtual trivia nights were offered by Roy Boyle, called "Kingfisher Kahoot!"



This September, we piloted a new monthly family program called, "Turtle Time!" Visitors were invited to help us feed PVAS's turtle ambassadors and learn about their adaptations. Our first program had 81 people attend! The program has continued to attract new people each time.



69 different children (132 slots) participated in our "Wee Naturalist" program, geared toward young children and a loving adult to explore the natural world together. In Spring 2023, we expanded the program to include experiences at the Yankauer in addition to Cool Spring to help families connect with each location.

* See grant funding at the end of this report. The Eastern Panhandle Conservation District provided grant funds directly to Jefferson and Morgan County Schools to fund PVAS's 4th grade watershed program.



EDUCATING

INVESTING

PVAS made a significant investment in staffing in 2023. A revamped staff structure was put in place with the creation of two new Associate Director positions. KC Walters was promoted to Associate Director of Conservation and Operations and Sonja Melander was recruited for Associate Director of Education. In October of 2022, we added a Fundraising & Communications Manager, Ellen Kinzer, who has been tremendously helpful in coordinating publicity and conservation messaging and tracking donors. In March, PVAS hired the first ever part-time Administrative Assistant, Lindsey Kesecker, to help with the administrative side of our programming. These additional positions are critical to PVAS's continued growth.

Financially, PVAS ended the year in a very positive financial position thanks to our many generous donors and the important contributions they make to PVAS. From the annual auction to the lovely fundraiser at the Shepherdstown Mill, hosted by Shannon and Adam Thomas, your continued encouragement and sustenance enable our growth. Your support and participation allow us to inspire conservation and stewardship actions and help us manage the four nature preserves actively and thoughtfully for the benefit of people and wildlife. We continue to be awed and humbled by your generosity.

PVAS realized a decrease in "Other Assets" in the Statement of Financial Position because the Board of Directors renounced its claim on a life estate donation of real property after determining that we could not use it for PVAS programming. Expenses and Revenues shown in this report do not reflect this extraordinary event.

We send out a heartfelt thank you to all who have generously donated, those who have included PVAS in your wills for future gifts, and those who have given through generous in-kind service and volunteerism. We could not accomplish nearly as much as we do without your support, and we are truly grateful.



PVAS's growing staff:

Top row, left to right: Ellen Kinzer (Fundraising and Communications Manager), Katelyn "KC" Walters (Associate Director of Conservation and Operations), Lindsey Kesecker (Administrative Assistant), Laurel Schwartz (Watershed Programs Coordinator)

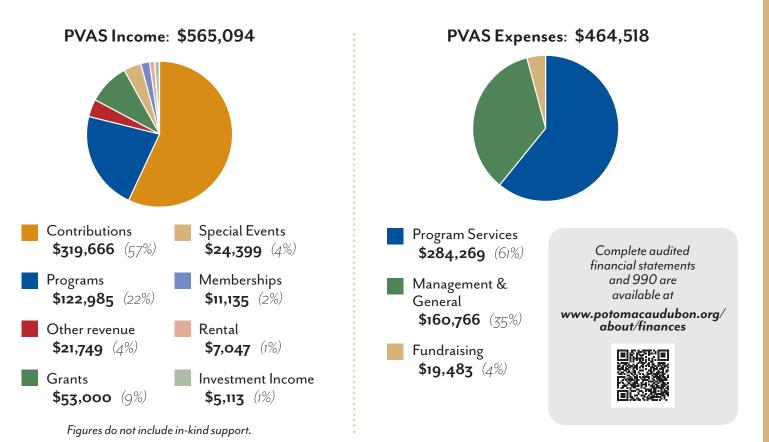
Bottom row, left to right: Sonja Melander (Associate Director of Education), Kristin Alexander (Executive Director), Amy Thomas (Lead Teacher/Naturalist)

Statement of Financial Position, Fiscal Year 2023

ASSETS	2022	2023
Cash and cash equivalents*	\$393,277	\$423,250
Property & equipment	\$612,836	\$592,713
Other Assets	\$244,673	\$9,514
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,250,786	\$1,111,177
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$21,504	\$18,397
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$1,229,282	\$1,092,780

* 2023 contributions are higher due to the receipt of a generous bequest.

Fiscal Year September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023



Contributions received September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023

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loseph Spuraas In memory of Clark Dixon loette Borzik and **Richard Parker** In memory of Clark Dixon John & Susan Marklin In memory of Clark Dixon, Ir. – What a life he lived and legacy he left behind! It was an honor to have met him over the years through Master Naturalists and Shenandoah National Park. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all and especially his family. Eldon & Virginia Winston In memory of Clark Dixon – A donation in fond memory of our friend Clark Dixon Georgia | eppesen & Bill Ashforth In memory of Clark Dixon Judith Jones In memory of Clark Dixon Lakita Edwards In memory of Clark Dixon Dr. & Mrs. Rav Vanderhook In memory of Clark Dixon

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Norleen & lim Hoadley In memory of Clark A. Dixon |r. – he will be missed by so many. Rich & Meg Brager In memory of Clark Dixon Paul & Ioanne Breitenbach In memory of Clark Dixon Tess and Bill Dew In memory of Clark Dixon Paul & Beth Dobson In memory of Clark Dixon Frank & Annette Van Hilst In memory of Dan & Ann Fisher Dick Potteiger In memory of Clark Dixon Suzanne Offutt & Michael Zagarella In memory of Ruth Ann Dean Edward Enamait In memory of Bob Taylor, MD NRP Lynn Truslow

In memory WM. H.

Alexandra Beaulieu &

In memory of Clark

(Marty) Martin

Tanner Haid

Dixon

Linda Benedict Colvin In memory of Mark Benedict Peter & Victoria Smith In memory of Bill Belton, Betty Lou Harmison, and Clark Dixon lack Young In memory of Martha E. Young Judith Cain In memory of Clark Dixon Melinda Cook In memory of Billy Lynn Murphy Joseph Spurgas In Memory of Stephanie Diamond

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John Arthur In honor of Harriet Arthur Dr. & Mrs. Rav Vanderhook In honor of Jean Neely Linda Spatia In honor of Nan Johnson lim & Melinda Schmitt In honor of Carolyn Thomas Mary & Walter Duke In honor of All Educators Bruce & Carolyn Thomas In honor of Lena Thomas Ellen & Kevin Murphy In honor of our newest camper. Lena Thomas Paul & Lisa Welch In honor of Nan Johnson

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Ellen & Kevin Murphy In honor of Clark Dixon Georgia leppesen & **Bill Ashforth** In honor of Kristin Alexander leani Slaby In honor of Bob Dean – In lieu of compensation for skillful, masterful carpentry, please accept this donation of support for one of Bob's most cherished causes Rotary Club of Shepherdstown In honor of Kathryn Burns Rufus Grant Smith & **Renny Travers Smith** In honor lean Neely Iohn D. Miller In honor of Stauffer & Elinor Miller Susan & loe Brookreson In honor of Jean Neely Ron & Carolyn Widmyer In honor of Jean Neely Georgia | eppesen & Bill Ashforth In honor of Jean Neely Anonymous In honor of Jean Neely lean Petti In honor of Vickie Stedman Kristin Alexander & leff Feldman In honor of Jean Neely

GRANTS

Berkeley County Public Service Storm Water District

\$21,650 to provide PVAS's watershed and tree education programs to Berkeley County 3rd and 4th graders

City of Martinsburg

\$10,000 to provide PVAS's watershed education program to schools in the City of Martinsburg

City of Ranson

\$3,000 to provide school programs for Ranson Elementary Students

Chesapeake Bay Trust

\$5,000 to work with Ranson Elementary Students to plan a green porch roof Case Nature Center

Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's C. Scott and Elizabeth C. Shade Youth Fund \$2,000 for PVAS to implement "Nature in the Neighborhood" camp for Berkeley County youth

Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's Fleming Family Fund \$5,000 to support PVAS programs at schools to ensure equity of program access in Berkeley County



Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation's Jane P. Snyder Youth Fund

\$3,000 to support PVAS programs at schools to ensure equity of program access in Jefferson County

Eastern West Virginia

Community Foundation's Jane P. Snyder Youth Fund \$2,000 for PVAS to implement "Nature in the Neighborhood" camp for Jefferson County youth.

The Nora Roberts Foundation \$15,000 for general support of youth

programs

Rotary Club of Martinsburg \$10,000 to install an accessible trail at Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve

West Virginia Rivers Coalition \$3,000 to provide PVAS's watershed education initiative program to 4th graders at Driswood and TA Lowery Elementary Schools

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If any of the information is inaccurate or incomplete, please get intouch with us so we may correct our records.

Thank you for your generous support!