

Valley Views

**Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society**

Volume 22, Issue 4

December 2003

Annual Pot Luck Dinner December 10



The December meeting is our Annual Pot Luck Dinner and Silent Auction. So come on out and have some fun with your fellow PVAers.

We'll be meeting at St. John's Lutheran Church in downtown Martinsburg, 101 W. Martin Street.

The church has graciously allowed us the use of their spacious church hall. Head for downtown Martinsburg on N. Queen Street. The church that is on the corner of Martin and Queen. There is parking in a lot adjacent to Luther Hall where we will hold our meeting.

Help make this auction/fund raiser a success by participating. Bring any items (baked goods, old books, art work, etc.) before the meeting so they can be priced. Please call Susan Brookreson, 304 263-2823, ahead of time to let her know of items you will donate will be helpful.

Remember to bring a dish to share and your own plates, napkins and utensils so we can be environmental. Drinks and cups will be provided. Hope to see lots of you there!

Time For The W.V. Winter Bird Count!

West Virginia backyard birders, time to grab a pencil and binoculars and begin the Fifteenth Annual Winter Bird Count.

The count began November 8 and runs twelve weeks to allow recording some early spring arrivals. For forms, visit www.wvdnr.gov. Questions? Phone (304) 637 0245 or email: rtallman@dnr.state.wv.us.

Upcoming Programs

Wednesday, February 11, 2004 -Duties of a Game Warden –Bruce Lemmert

Bruce Lemmert has been a Virginia Game warden assigned to Loudoun County since 1989. In 1996 Bruce was selected as the Virginia Game Warden of the Year. In 1997 Bruce was chosen as the Wildlife Officer of the Year for the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officer's Association and in 2002 he was the recipient of the Guy Bradley Award, from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Prior to becoming a game warden, Bruce served Franklin County, Virginia as their Director of Parks and Recreation and as the Assistant County Administrator.

Wednesday, March 9, 2004 – Lois Napier and Her Birds of Prey

Lois' journey into the world of raptors began in 1992 with a visit to the Wildlife Center of Virginia, a wildlife rehabilitation hospital. There she photographed the resident birds of prey to use as models for her artwork. Enamored, Lois volunteered as an animal caretaker in the hospital. That experience enabled her to come into contact with wildlife and to directly see the impact that man has on it. After about 2 years, Lois was invited to become a docent and at that time began her tenure as an educator. As an artist and naturalist, Lois has spent the last 20 years studying wildlife and nature.

Lois currently holds permits from both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to possess non-releasable birds of prey for education. Her permits allow her do programs in Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.

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

President's Perch

Hello everyone - hope you bought lots of birdseed and have your feeders full. I just saw the first purple finch that I've seen in years (very nice)! If you didn't get your birdseed order in, I still have some seed left, give me a call at 304-267-3482.



Please don't forget that our regular meeting this month, December 10, will be at the St. John's Lutheran Church in downtown Martinsburg. It is our annual Pot Luck and silent auction ... see details in this newsletter. Also, there won't be a newsletter in January, so keep this one around so that you will know what's going on and where to find us.

You will be receiving our Yankauer Preserve's Annual Appeal (letter and report) around the middle of December. Kristin Alexander and her volunteers have achieved a lot in a short period of time! The environmental education opportunities that we are providing to the community are impressive and well received. Thank you Kristin! This venture is dependent upon the generosity of our members and friends, and we have not been disappointed. You have been generous with your money and your volunteer time. So please read the letter/report when you get it, you will be proud of what we've done so far. It's all been achieved with your help, and we thank you for your support!

Happy Holiday's to you, and I hope to see you at our Holiday Pot Luck ...

Diana Mullis, President, PVAS

Fiddlers of the Fields Falling Silent

By Wil Hershberger 2003

As fall moves ever forward to winter, the choruses of late summer and fall wane. These diminutive singers are such an integral part of late summer that most people don't realize the tremendous variety of species composing this orchestra. Participants in the PVAS field trip were introduced to some of these musicians and it was wonderful to see the expressions on their faces as they learned just how varied and numerous these insects are. We were lucky to find a nice variety of species in the fields and woods along the C&O canal near Shepherdstown WV.

Short-winged meadow katydids were by far the most numerous and perhaps the hardest to hear. As their name implies they have very short wings and as such produce a high pitched song (ca. 15,000 Hz). Round-tipped conehead katydids were much easier to hear but much harder to find. Their habit of dropping head first into the base of the grass tufts can make them hard to approach. We were lucky to see a male

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singing from his hidden podium. Also abundant were the Woodland meadow katydids, a robust little songster that was easily approached and observed. A real hit was a single singing Broad-winged tree cricket that was fiddling away from the underside of a milkweed leaf. He paused his performance while we marveled at the delicate beauty that typifies the tree crickets.

As the evening darkened the Northern true katydids, the familiar singers of August and September, started to sing a slower version of their song, "katy-did, katy-didn't." They were not recognized at first until it was pointed out that all of these musicians are poikilothermic. They are subject to the ambient temperature and their songs and activity level reflects that. In fact, the Snowy tree cricket is so linearly controlled by temperature that counting the number of chirps in 13 seconds and adding that number to 40 provides a close approximation of the ambient temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

Perhaps the best looking member of the orchestra that we found was the Black-legged meadow katydid. These red-eyed, turquoise-winged insects are just stunning. Oblong-winged katydids and Lesser angle-winged katydids were also encountered after dark. We were able to watch a male Oblong-winged singing from the side of a tree. It was sad to note that his neighbor's wings were damaged by one of the recent frosts.

All of these singers are members of the order Orthoptera – straight-winged ones. The orthoptera sing by rubbing their forewings together. The front pair of wings are modified in the males for the production of sound. These thickened tegmina are set up so that there is a file of small teeth on the bottom side of the upper tegmina that rubs across a thickened ridge, the scraper, on the top of the lower tegmina. Rubbing the file over the scraper sets thinner areas of the tegmina into motion creating the sounds that we hear. The insect holds the tegmina at such an angle as to create a chamber that amplifies the sound produced thus making it easier to hear and allowing the sound to travel farther. Their ears are on their front legs and are usually seen as a darker or lighter area near the joint. This mechanism of singing has been around for at least 360 million years. It is just amazing to imagine T. rex resting in the jungles of the Jurassic period listening to insect choruses that sounded very similar to what we hear today.



As winter chills the air and the last of these musicians goes silent, please reflect on this marvelous phenomenon - the Fiddlers of the Fields.

For more information of the Orthoptera see: <http://buzz.ifas.ufl.edu/>

News from the Yankauer Nature Preserve . . .

Third Annual “This Race is for the Birds!”

Congratulations on another successful race! A huge thank you goes to our volunteer race directors, Diana Gaviria and Jane Lewis. The race would not have been possible without their expertise and dedication. Also contributing to our success were our race sponsors and supporters: Butterfly.net; Jefferson Security Bank; Norm Thompson Outfitters; Yellow Brick Bank Restaurant; Hammer, Ferretti & Schiavoni; Martin & Seibert LLC; Specialty Business Supplies; Dickinson & Wait Craft Gallery; Paul F. Davis, DDS; Associated Oral Maxillofacial Surgeons; Riverbend Designs; Davitt McAteer, Attorney; Hoxton Financial; Potomac Portables; Shepherdstown Outback Basics. Of course, the event also needed many volunteers and we give thanks to the dozen plus volunteers that made it happen. The event raised about \$5,000 for the Preserve. This is the best yet!

Annual Appeal Coming Soon to a Mailbox Near You!

The annual appeal for the Yankauer Preserve programs will be going out in mid-December, along with a summary of our amazing year of progress. Please be sure to look for it, and please participate by either giving or pledging as much as you are able so we can continue to expand and strengthen the Preserve’s programs. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

Pavilion’s “Phase 1” is Complete!

Thanks to yet another tremendous volunteer effort, the pavilion is up! We’d also like to recognize the contributions of McCleary and Early who loaned us some equipment and a small crew. BTE Associates cleared the site and poured the concrete footers. The determination, flexibility and generosity of the volunteers made this long-awaited project a reality. “Phase 2”, still in need of funding, will consist of a permanent raised floor and storage area.



Fifth Graders Inaugurate Pavilion and a New Program

Fifth graders from Ranson Elementary School inaugurated the pavilion while they helped us pilot the program, “Cycles in Nature.” A hearty thanks goes out to our volunteer instruc-

tors Keith Alexander, Susan Brookreson, Laura Eaton-Poole, Jeff Feldman, Jen Jones, Kitty Kelly, and Mary Ellen Kinkel. The science teacher, Ms. Caine, who helped develop the curriculum, also deserves thanks for letting us use her and her students as guinea pigs.

Field Trips

Christmas Bird Counts

The Eastern Panhandle Christmas Bird Counts will be held as follows:

Dec. 20 - Charles Town (Jefferson Co.)

Jan. 3 - Inwood (Berkeley Co. with a small arc of eastern Morgan Co.) Bob Dean is the compiler for both counts and will be happy to answer any questions or send information to interested individuals. If you know you will be helping with this, please contact Mr. Dean at 309 Limestone Ln., Martinsburg, WV 25401, 304 754-3042, or dean8189@aol.com

January Field Trips

For more information on any field trips please call Ken & Patsy Hunter at 304-725-3936 or send an e-mail to phunter@npca.org

Sunday, January 18, at 8:00 a.m. we will explore The Nature Conservancy’s Altoona Marsh in Jefferson County and neighboring ponds for over-wintering passerines, raptors and waterfowl. Ken Hunter will lead. We will meet at the parking lot for the small shopping center at Tuscawilla Shops on Tuscawilla Hill Drive off Rt. 50 between Middletown and Charles Town. Please let us know if you are planning on coming, we would like to let you know if we have to postpone due to weather.

Saturday, January 24, Please join PVAS as we join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in their monthly nature walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship on Harpers Ferry Road, Rt. 671 in Virginia between the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers. We meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station at 8:00am.

Mark your calendars

Sunday, February 8, weather permitting; we’ll head over to Cambridge Maryland on the Eastern shore to Blackwater Wildlife Refuge – lots of bald eagles, ducks and snow geese.

Sunday, February 22, Lynn Weisman, Tess England and Bruni Hydell will lead their traditional trip along the Shenandoah river – More details next month.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
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A proud partner of the United Way of
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 United Way of Jefferson County, and the
 Combined Federal Campaign.



DATED MATERIALS

MAIL TO:

<http://potomacaudubon.org>

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The *Potomac Valley Audubon Society* meets at 7:30PM on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April, in the auditorium at the USGS Leetown Science Center, Leetown/Kearneysville, WV. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about *PVAS* or its programs and activities, please call any of the board members listed here or see <http://potomacaudubon.org>. *PVAS* serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

PVAS BOARD
 The *PVAS* Board meets the first Wednesday of the month (Sept.-April) at Shepherd College, Snyder Hall, Room 317, 7PM. These meetings are open to all *PVAS* members.

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