

VALLEY VIEWS

**Potomac
Valley
Audubon
Society**

Volume 25, Issue 1

September 2006

PVAS May Manage New Preserve Soon

PVAS is moving closer toward managing a second nature preserve for The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The October 2005 issue of Valley Views noted that TNC was considering having PVAS manage a new nature preserve in Morgan County, WV, but TNC had not yet taken title to the property because of legal issues.

Those issues have now been resolved, and TNC and PVAS are in the process of working out a management agreement similar to the agreement by which we manage the Yankauer Nature Preserve in Berkeley County.

It is our hope that this agreement will be finalized this fall. Once that's done and we've agreed on a plan for use of the property over the next few years, TNC and PVAS will make a formal, joint announcement and the new preserve will be opened to the public.

This preserve, which is called Eidolon, is located a few miles west of Berkeley Springs. It is a very different kind of property from Yankauer, encompassing 355 mostly wooded acres along the summit and east side of Sideling Hill.

It hosts a wide variety of wildlife, includes several miles of walking trails, and offers spectacular views of the surrounding countryside.

We've already made plans to map Eidolon's trails, and we are working with an architect who is donating his time to help us develop plans for rehabilitating an old stone cabin on the property that can be used as a shelter.

Over time, working with the Morgan County community, we hope to be able to provide educational programming at Eidolon as well.

We will keep you posted as new developments occur.

PVAS Promotes New School Programs

Since 2003, PVAS has been offering Berkeley and Jefferson County schools an environmental education program for fourth graders.

This fourth-grade program spans 16 weeks and is focused on watershed protection issues. It includes classroom instruction as well

as field trips. Some 500 children from five schools participated in this program this year.

Now, PVAS is getting ready to ask Berkeley and Jefferson County schools to take advantage of similar programs we have developed for all the remaining K-6 grades.

All of these programs have been developed and field tested over the past three years in partnership with Berkeley and Jefferson County teachers through courses offered by West Virginia University.

All the programs utilize PVAS's Yankauer Nature Preserve as a field laboratory and include pre- and post-visit classroom activities to enhance and reinforce the field experience.

And all the programs are based on measurable learning and performance objectives.

The effort to present these programs to the schools is being coordinated by new PVAS board member Georgia Jeppesen, who is an education specialist at the National Conservation Training Center.

In the future, we hope to offer these programs to schools in Morgan County and Washington County, Maryland, as well.

New Land and Facilities Committee Forming

As part of its reorganization, PVAS is in the process of creating a new Land and Facilities Management Committee.

This panel will be responsible for advising the PVAS board on all matters relating to the administration and operation of the Yankauer Nature Preserve and the new Eidolon Nature Preserve.

It will include both PVAS board members and volunteers who have extensive experience with land and facilities management issues.

- Land and Facilities continues on page 2, bottom column 1

Fields Trips

September 2—Natural history walk at Blue Ridge Center

September 23—Birding walk at Blue Ridge Center

- see the article on page 4

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

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Hello, everyone:

This is my first column as PVAS's president, and I want to start by thanking my predecessor, Diana Mullis. By now, Diana has done just about every PVAS job there is and done all of them well. All of us appreciate her dedication to the chapter; I especially appreciate how helpful she's been in educating me about the duties of the presidency.

This is an exciting time to be involved with PVAS. Just look at the rich variety of stories in this issue of this newsletter: it's a reflection of the fact that we've entered into a new period of change and growth and we're engaged in a lot of new and different things.

In just the last six months we've made significant physical improvements at our Yankauer Nature Preserve and initiated several new programs, including a nature photography group for adults that has proven to be more popular than we ever could have imagined and an innovative nature photography camp for teenagers that is regarded as a model for the nation.

These accomplishments alone would be more than enough to satisfy many Audubon chapters but we've done more than that. So far this year, we've also:

- finalized a set of grade K-6 environmental education programs that can be used by local schools, and started planning an effort to market those programs to school administrators;
- begun preparations for managing a second Nature Conservancy property, the Eidolon Nature Preserve in Morgan County;
- completed and adopted a comprehensive plan for reorganizing the chapter's management structure, and begun implementing that plan.

These three areas—our school programs, Eidolon, and our reorganization—will be no doubt be among our most important priorities in the months ahead. These areas will require a lot of work but if we handle them well the rewards will be significant.

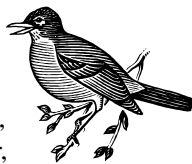
If we can persuade local schools to utilize our K-6 programs, we will be able to greatly expand our service to the community. Successful management of Eidolon will accomplish the same end and also extend our geographical reach. Successful implementation of our reorganization will put us on a sound management footing for the years ahead.

We've recruited a new group of highly capable board members and volunteers to help us move forward but there are still plenty of tasks (some small, some big, some short, some long) that need to be done. So if you'd like to help, too, please let me know. Even if you only have a little bit of time you can spare, I'm sure we can find ways to put you to work.

-Land and Facilities continued from page 1

A preliminary meeting of potential committee members is being planned for sometime in September.

The effort to pull this meeting together is being coordinated by new PVAS board member Clark Dixon, who is a retired National Park Service administrator.



Meeting Planned on Master Naturalist Program

Work continues on launching Master Naturalist Program training under PVAS's auspices.

Former PVAS president Katherine Henry is organizing an initial meeting of state officials and local individuals who are interested in helping PVAS initiate and manage this program in the Eastern Panhandle.

This meeting is tentatively set for September 18.

Katherine is working with Rose Sullivan, who coordinates this program statewide for the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

Ms. Sullivan spoke to PVAS members about the program at our November 2005 monthly meeting.

Patterned after the 33-year-old Master Gardener Program, the Master Naturalist Program allows individuals to increase their knowledge of the natural world and encourages them to put that knowledge to work by assisting their communities.

Participants receive extensive classroom and field training in a broad range of topics in the fields of natural history and environmental education.

Once certified, these individuals help their communities in various ways, such as constructing and maintaining nature trails, assisting scientists with research, and giving presentations to school children and other groups.

New Photo Camp a Big Success

PVAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center, and the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge teamed up this summer to create an innovative digital nature photography day camp for area teenagers.

The camp was held July 31 through August 4 and included four days of field and lab training on the NCTC campus in Shepherdstown and a one-day field trip to the Patuxent Refuge in Laurel, Maryland.

Enrollment was capped to only nine students, so those who participated received very intensive, hands-on instruction. The students, aged 13 to 18, also had full access to NCTC's state-of-the-art computer laboratory.

The instructors were Bill Wallen, a National Wildlife Refuge System volunteer and Nikon-sponsored photographer, and Matt Poole, an NCTC training specialist who is one of the founders of our Potomac Valley Nature Photographers group.

Bill, who lives in Woodbridge, Virginia, dedicated an entire week of his annual vacation to help teach the camp. Matt also took a week of vacation to participate.

Invaluable support for the camp was also received from several corporate sponsors, including Nikon, which loaned cameras to all the students free of charge, and Wimberly, Inc, a Winchester, Virginia, firm that loaned tripods and tripod heads.

- Photo Camp continues on page 5

News From Yankauer

Audubon Discovery Camp Report

One hundred thirty-five camper slots were filled at this summer's Audubon Discovery Camp at Yankauer, and ten families participated



Bob and Ruth Ann Dean get ready to "owl prow" at the campout

in this year's family campout! We were fortunate enough to have Danny Carter return as camp director, and his wife, Michelle Carter, helped with camp registrations and other administrative matters. Two intern/instructors were hired to work with campers: Paz Parrondo and Sam Padgett. Both did a fabulous job and received

accolades from campers and parents all summer long. Congratulations and thank you to our summer staff! The summer positions were generously sponsored by Linda Case, Henry and Faye Davenport, Maggie Drennen, Stan and Judy Jones, and the Martinsburg Rotary Club. Thank you!

Thank You, Camp Scholarship Sponsors!

In addition to our birdseed sale revenue sending children from the PVAS service area to camp on scholarships, several generous donors helped provide additional opportunities for children to attend our Audubon Discovery Camp. Our sincere thanks goes to the following for sending a total of six additional children to camp: Susan Benjamin, Frank Hill, Nancy Kirschbaum, and Donn Marshall. PVAS was able to send 12 children to camp on scholarship in total: 10 to Audubon Discovery Camp at Yankauer and 2 to Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies.

Music in the Cedars

For the third year in a row, concerts were held each Tuesday evening in August from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. This year's concerts included "The Unfortunate Rakes," performing Celtic jigs, reels, and waltzes; "Allegheny Uprising," performing originals and folk favorites with an old time Appalachian influence; "The Dilettantes," playing well-known



"The Unfortunate Rakes" performing on August 1

acoustic folk songs; Cam Millar performed jazz on his trombone with an accompanist; and singer and guitarist Steve Cifala performed at the final concert on August 29. The concerts were extremely well attended this summer, and they continue to be very popular community events that bring in both familiar and new faces. An enormous thank you goes to all of the musicians. The donation of their time and talent makes these concerts possible!

Potomac Valley Nature Photographers (PVNP)

PVNP hosted their first professional one-day workshop on Saturday, August 19. Tony Sweet, recently selected by Nikon as a "Legend Behind the Lens," came to share his techniques, experience, and advice. The seminar included sessions on composition, creative techniques, equipment, and digital workflow tips and techniques. Tony showed his beautiful images and shared the creative and technical stories behind them throughout the day. At the conclusion of the workshop, Mr. Sweet critiqued images that were submitted by event attendees. In September, members of PVNP will be able to judge each other's submitted works and select photos to be displayed as part of the Potomac Arts Festival held by PVAS in November at NCTC.

Day of Caring

This year's Day of Caring will be held on September 12 at the Yankauer Nature Preserve. This is a day that many employers allow their staff to volunteer for various non-profits in the community. We often have about 40 volunteers at the preserve mulching and trimming trails, cleaning the parking lot, pulling invasive species, and enjoying giving back to their community. If you'd like to volunteer this year, call Alice Barkus who is generously coordinating this year's event. You can reach her at



876-8520 or abarkus@hughes.net. We hope you can join us!

Potomac Arts Festival

The Potomac Arts Festival is progressing quite well under the expert guidance of coordinators Sandy Sponaule and Mary Dubay. Forty-two juried artists will be exhibiting and selling their nature-inspired art at this year's event, to be held once again at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center. Mark your calendars for November 3-5 to make sure you can attend! We are currently looking for sponsors for this year's Festival. If you or someone you know might be interested in being a sponsor, please visit www.potomacaudubon.org/artfestival to learn about sponsor levels and benefits. We are also looking for Festival volunteers. If you are interested in sponsoring or volunteering at this 2nd Annual Potomac Arts Festival, please contact Sandy at 304-876-8321 or Sandy@PlatinumPublicRelations.com.



Fall Fund Drives Getting Underway

The United Way of the Eastern Panhandle and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) will kick off their annual fundraising campaigns this month.

Their campaigns will last through December 15.

PVAS receives substantial funding from United Way and CFC each year and encourages its members to give generously to their campaigns. You can designate PVAS as the recipient of some or all of your donation if you choose.

CFC is, of course, the mechanism for federal employees to contribute to their local United Way. PVAS members who are federal employees can designate PVAS to receive all or part of their CFC contribution by entering PVAS's CFC number (5222) on the CFC form that they file with their employing agency.

If you have any questions about this, please contact Kristin Alexander at pvasmail@aol.com or 304-676-3397.

Race for the Birds Postponed

PVAS's annual "This Race is for the Birds!" run/walk event, which traditionally has been held at the National Conservation Training Center in or around October, will not be held this fall.

Instead, the event is being shifted to next spring, to avoid conflict with our Potomac Arts Festival, which is being held at NCTC November 3-5 (see separate article on this).

An exact date for the spring, 2007 "This Race is for the Birds!" event will be announced later. Please watch this newsletter and the PVAS website for that announcement.

September Field Trips Set

PVAS members are invited to join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for two field trips in September.

The first trip, which is set for Saturday, September 2, will be a general natural history walk at the beautiful, 900-acre Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in nearby Loudoun County, Virginia.

The walk will provide a good opportunity to view early-migrating birds, butterflies, and late-summer wildflowers in the company of a highly respected expert: it will be led by Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History.

The Blue Ridge Center is located on Harpers Ferry Road (Route 671) a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers.

The walking group will meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Route 671 at 9:30 a.m. Ample space for parking is available there.

Those who wish to join this walk must pre-register. To pre-register, or to get more information, contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org

The second trip, also sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, will be a birdwatching walk at the same Blue Ridge Center

on Saturday, September 23.

Participants in this walk will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station. No pre-registration is required for this event. Contact Mr. Coleman for more information.

September Meeting Will Focus on Horseshoe Crabs

Our September monthly meeting will focus on something new and different: horseshoe crabs.



The meeting will be held on September 13. As usual, it will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the U.S. Geological Survey's Leetown Science Center at 11649 Leetown Road (County Route 1), Kearneysville.

The speaker will be Dr. David Smith, a biological statistician at the Leetown Center's Aquatic Ecology Branch.

Dr. Smith specializes in the population ecology of declining aquatic species, and his laboratory at Leetown has been studying horseshoe crabs for the past eight years to assess their population in Delaware Bay.

His talk will provide an overview of the horseshoe crab, its human uses, and its interactions with other species, especially migratory shorebirds. He will also discuss the challenges of understanding the status and trends of marine animals.

For more information about this event contact Peter Smith at 304-876-1139 or pvsmit@frontiernet.net.

New Naturalists' Web Site

Eastern Panhandle resident and naturalist Cheryl Jennings has started a new Web-based discussion group called the Eastern Panhandle WV Naturalist Group.

The group's Web site can be found at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wvpanhandlenaturalists/>.

It is intended as a place for communicating and sharing information regarding topics of interest to Naturalists in the Eastern Panhandle.

Cheryl says the site will cover a broad range of Natural History topics including plants, mammals, fungi, insects, and geology.

She hopes participants will use it to communicate and share not only substantive information but also information about upcoming events, and trips.

So far, the group has 29 members.

PVAS members who would like to sign up are encouraged to do so.

-Photo Camp continued from page 2

PVAS greatly appreciates the generous efforts of all the individuals, firms, and government offices that made the camp possible.



The picture at above shows all the camp participants. They are as follows:

First Row, left to right: Mike Potter, Harper's Ferry; Skylar Benedict, Berkeley County; Jason Smith, Shepherdstown; Joseph Niks, Hedgesville; Jacob Van Vliet, Harpers Ferry.

Second Row, left to right: Matt Poole; PVAS's Kristin Alexander; Matthew Sunday, Kearneysville; Allison Smith, Harper's Ferry; Chelsi Horbaker, Mercersburg, Pennsylvania; Alyssa Boucher, Harper's Ferry; Bill Wallen.

By all reports, the camp was a great success in spite of the challenging weather the participants had to endure (the week the camp was held turned out to be the hottest week of the summer). The students didn't just learn about the fundamentals of digital nature photography and image editing, they also gained a greater understanding of nature and a greater appreciation for the conservation ethic—which was, of course, one of our major goals in designing this project.

And the students aren't done yet. The photographs they took at the Patuxent Preserve will later be shared with a variety of audiences (including the public) through a photographic print exhibit at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Visitor Center in Laurel, Maryland, and at NCTC during our Potomac Arts Festival. And the students will also deliver a photographic slide presentation that tells "The Story of Patuxent" to a variety of local audiences.

We hope to hold the camp again next year, but it should be noted that this was not just a local event: NCTC regards the camp as an important, new educational model and will be encouraging other Fish and Wildlife facilities and conservation education organizations nationwide to replicate it.

Congratulations to Bruni Haydl for Long-tailed Skipper Butterfly Sighting

The jury is out as to whether it's a West Virginia record; but, if not, it's certainly a very rare occurrence. Bruni documented a sighting in 2005 and had a previously undocumented sighting about nine years ago. Congratulations, Bruni!

● RED DOT ALERT

If a red dot appears on your mailing label, your membership may have expired and this could be your last issue of Valley Views. Take action to renew your Dual membership or Local membership.

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

We now offer two kinds of memberships:

1. PVAS Local Membership

Here's what you get:

- Access to a wide variety of PVAS programs and events for adults and children.
- Discounts for selected chapter activities, like children's summer camps.
- A subscription to PVAS's newsletter and e-mail alerts about events and programs of special interest.
- ALL your dues stay here to support local PVAS efforts!

To become a local member: Enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Please make check out to "PVAS." This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year.

2. Dual Membership with National Audubon

You get all the benefits of PVAS membership plus membership in the National Audubon Society, which includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. If you select this option, almost all of your dues will go to National Audubon. To obtain a dual membership, enclose a check for \$20 if you are joining NAS for the first time (\$15 for seniors and students) or \$35 to renew an existing NAS membership. Make check out to "National Audubon Society."

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: (optional): _____

Membership Type (check one):

PVAS Local Membership _____

(For PVAS local membership, check the box following if you do NOT want PVAS to share your contact information with National Audubon: _____)

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I'd like to get *Valley Views* by e-mail _____ US mail _____ (check one)

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Thank you for your support!





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A proud partner of the United Way of Berkeley and Morgan Counties, United Way of Jefferson County, and the Combined Federal Campaign.



MAIL TO:

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The *Potomac Valley Audubon Society* meets at 7:30 p.m. 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 her or see <http://potomacaudubon.org>. *PVAS* serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

PVASBOARD
 The *PVAS*Board meets the first Wednesday of the month (Sept.-June). Meeting location will be announced prior to meetings. These meetings are open to all *PVAS*members.

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- President: Peter Smith 304 876-1139 psmith@frontiernet.net
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