

President's Note

by Michael Sullivan, PVAS President

Our organization is off to a good start as we begin a new year. Thanks to the generosity of members and others, we are able to expand our programs and address some of the findings, suggestions, and observations that were brought to our attention through the member survey we conducted at the beginning of 2016. In fact, we used the results of the survey (reported in the April 2016 issue of Valley Views) as the focus of a Board of Directors retreat in May to update our strategic plan. I'll provide a short report on the status and progress we have made on five specific goals and objectives developed at the retreat.

Expand Educational Programming: This is going well. We have made great progress across all of our educational program areas since last summer, and we expect the expansion to continue.

Broaden Inclusiveness within Member Base and Programs: This important matter is something that the board will address in 2017 from a programmatic standpoint. However, all of us can help by taking the extra step to invite people from minority and underrepresented communities to participate in the wide variety of activities we offer.

Increase Environmental Advocacy/Action and Activism/Influence: The board is considering ways to convey member interest and concern about habitat and other environmental issues to elected officials and the public at-large. Look for new avenues for this during the first half 2017.

Establish a Headquarters Office for PVAS and a Nature Center: We established a headquarters office for PVAS at the Cool Spring Preserve at the end of 2016. We are growing into this wonderful space, and thinking about establishing a nature center there in the near future.

Bolster Management and Use of Nature Preserves: This is also going very well. We hired a Land and Watershed Program Manager six months ago and have seen improved coordination of volunteer efforts and more organized outdoor activities at all of our preserves.

Our members and supporters provided us with good ideas. We value your input. Thank you.

Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Happy 2017! This is our first newsletter of the New Year and there is a lot to report! 2017 is shaping up to be another very active year.

In early December you received PVAS's Annual Report summarizing 2016 which was, admittedly, an exceptional and exciting year. Included with that report was a letter asking for your financial support in this time of opportunity and growth.

This "Annual Appeal" to our members and friends is what allows PVAS to offer the varied and excellent programs and services it provides and allows us to grow. Every year I am impressed and touched with the generosity of the PVAS community. We are steadily approaching our goal and we are grateful to all who support PVAS this way. THANK YOU!

If you missed the annual appeal letter but would like to contribute, it runs through the end of March. So it's not too late! A donation envelope is enclosed for your convenience if you are receiving this by mail.

For those reading this electronically, a plain old envelope will deliver your check just as well if you send it to PO Box 578, Shepherdstown, WV 25443. You can also donate by credit card at <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/support>.

Any way you choose to contribute is gratefully appreciated. No amount is too large or too small, and the donations are 100% tax deductible.

Your contribution supports PVAS's efforts to manage and provide access to over 500 acres of preserved green space; quality programs for youth and adults; conservation programs like the grassland birds initiative; citizen science and other volunteer activities.

The programs, preserves, and conservation efforts are geared to help connect people of all ages to the natural world. We can't charge nearly enough to cover the true costs of our education programs, and preserve access and our conservation programs are free! So we truly appreciate and rely on your generosity.

Thank you!

Brown Creeper, *Certhia americana*: Winter's Hidden Gem

By Wil Hershberger

One of the most inconspicuous songbirds to grace our area during the winter months is the Brown Creeper – a member of the bark-gleaning guild. Another member of this guild is the White-breasted Nuthatch which you have, no doubt, seen foraging on the trunks of trees moving carefully and diligently from top to bottom (head down), scoring the bark for insects, egg masses, and other hidden morsels. Brown Creepers also forage on tree trunks, working as carefully as the nuthatch, except creepers search from the bottom of the tree toward the top. In doing so, the creeper avoids direct competition with the nuthatch for the food resource, seeing what is hidden under the bark and in crevasses from a very different perspective (head up). Carefully look at a Brown Creeper and you will see that its tail feathers are long and stiff. Creepers use their tails, much like woodpeckers do, to support their bodies as they cling to and hitch their way up the sides of trees.

Brown Creepers will often come to suet feeders in search of energy to survive long, cold winter nights. You may see Brown Creepers often cleaning up spilled suet crumbs from the base, trunks, or limbs of trees where these feeders are hung. During our winter months, creepers are found in a variety of wooded habitats from young stands to old mature woodlands. Most of their foraging activities are focused on living trees. There are many subspecies of Brown Creeper across North America differing in plumage coloration and patterns. In our area we are graced with the subspecies *Certhia americana americana*, which is more tawny, buffier, paler, and sports a shorter bill than most of the other subspecies. Occasionally, you may find a very gray-looking creeper during winter birding. These may be *C. a. montana*, which would have migrated from some portion of the Rocky Mountains as far north as Alberta, Canada.



However, during our summer months, Brown Creepers prefer mature hardwood patches with a good number of standing large, dead trees. This unusual, well-camouflaged bird builds a most unique and well-hidden nest – a cone-like structure under the peeling bark of a dead or dying deciduous tree. While the female alone builds the nest, the male may bring nesting materials to the industrious female. These nests are composed of twigs and bark strips and lined with finer materials such as hairs, feathers, and even spider's egg case silk. These nests are never re-used, but the same tree may be used for several years as a nesting site. The female will lay 5-6 off-white, brown-speckled eggs that will hatch about two weeks after incubation starts. The nestlings fledge at about 17 days after hatching.

Northern Virginia and the highlands of the Appalachians in West Virginia are the farthest south Brown Creepers nest in the east. In our area there are few records of confirmed breeding, though there are some very credible accounts from the forests of Shannondale Springs Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Sleepy Creek WMA. While the female is building the nest and incubating the young, males spend their time defending their territories and singing. During late winter, before Brown Creepers migrate north, males will start to sing while still in our area. The beautiful, high-pitched, lilting song can be easily heard in early April during morning sojourns in either of the mentioned WMAs.

<https://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/84787>.

There are very few breeding Brown Creepers in West Virginia, possibly due to their need for mature stands of deciduous trees with a good number of dead or dying trees in the mix. If you live in a wooded area where there are mature and dead or dying trees, it would be best to leave some of those snags standing (as long as they are a safe distance from any structure or habitation). With proper woodland management, allowing forests to mature and age, we could provide summer homes for one of our hidden gems of winter – the Brown Creeper.

PVAS Events

February 8 Program Will Focus on Functionality in Garden Design

Our monthly program for February will feature a presentation entitled “Design Considerations: Functionality of Plants in a Garden.” The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 8 at the at the Hospice of the Panhandle facility in Kearneysville. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome to attend.

The speaker will be James Dillon, a certified Horticulturalist who owns and operates Native Havens LLC, a landscaping and gardening firm in Kearneysville. His presentation will emphasize the importance of considering plant functions as well as aesthetics in designing gardens, to ensure that the results are not only visually beautiful but resilient and beneficial to local birds and pollinating insects.

James has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from East Carolina University. He has been working as a horticulturalist for more than 13 years, most notably at the Delaware Center for Horticulture. His landscape and garden designs emphasize native plant selections, environmental benefits and low maintenance. He has designed several rain gardens in the region and enjoys volunteering for the Monarch Alliance, designing Monarch waystations.

The Hospice facility’s address is 330 Hospice Lane, Kearneysville. The Audubon events will be held in the main meeting room of the facility’s Main Office building. There is plenty of parking at the facility. For more information go to www.potomacaudubon.org or contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

Registration Opens for April 8 “Race for the Birds”

We’re now accepting online registrations for PVAS’s 16th annual “This Race is for the Birds!” event. The event will be held on Saturday, April 8, 2017 at the same location as last year: Wild Goose Farm, at 293 Shepherd Grade Road in Shepherdstown. The farm is just across the road from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services’ National Conservation Training Center, where the event used to be held. The Center is no longer able to host the event.

The 2017 event will include two professionally timed races: one 5 kilometers long, and another 10 kilometers long. There will also be a 1-mile “Fun Run” for children under 10 years of age. In addition, adults and families who wish to walk or jog the 5K course at their own pace may do so.

The 5 and 10K races will follow non-technical cross-country trails through the farm’s scenic fields, rolling hills and woods. The course will be suitable for all runners. The 5 and 10K races will begin at 9:00 a.m. The children’s Fun Run will be held at about 10:45 a.m. The children’s Fun Run will be free. The fees for the 5K and 10K races will be \$25 and \$30, respectively, for those who pre-register before March 25. Same-day registration will be \$5 more for both distances.

Registration for the 5K and 10K races will be capped at 400 for both, so same-day registration may not be available. To register, and for more information, go to the race website at www.raceforthebirds.org. Or contact Nan Johnson at 304-870-4414 or race4birds@potomacaudubon.org.

All proceeds will be used to support our programs for children, and all fees will be tax deductible.

Volunteer Spotlight

Have you met Philip Folk?

If not, we know you should because Phil is an extremely cheerful, curious, and good-natured fellow. He is a member of the Harpers Ferry International Order of Odd Fellows, and volunteers with numerous organizations throughout the panhandle, including PVAS. Phil is a geology enthusiast, accomplished photographer, as well as a Master Naturalist. He demonstrates his commitment to service and community by being a dedicated volunteer, a compassionate friend, and a reliable source of laughter. Phil has never met a stranger who did not quickly become his friend. PVAS appreciates Phil’s upbeat attitude, and his attendance at PVAS educational and volunteer events.

We know all of our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone who others should meet, please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.



Family and Youth Programs

Spring Youth Programs Offer Something For All Ages

Since the first of 2017, PVAS has been back in many schools, as we continue our year-long adventures with classes at Wee Disciples, Back Creek Valley Elementary, and St Joseph's School. In addition, the kindergarten classes at Ranson Elementary are taking advantage of grant funding to participate in several programs. PVAS doesn't just visit school classrooms, though: we're in other places as well! We'll be focusing on birds at an evening program at the Brunswick, MD library on February 7 (snow date February 14), just in time for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Later in April, we will be repeating our popular "Passport to Nature" program at libraries in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties.

Our monthly Wee Naturalist program for preschoolers and a caring adult has begun at Cool Spring Preserve, but future programs will alternate between there and Yankauer Nature Preserve. Programs this year are focusing on a read-aloud book to set the monthly theme. In February at Cool Spring, we'll be watching birds and learning how birds and cats don't get along. Then in March at Yankauer, we'll be listening to sounds in nature as we hike in the woods. In April, also at Yankauer, the program will feature an egg hunt with eggs painted to resemble wild bird eggs. This popular program will continue through the summer and into the fall.

We're excited to offer a Family Owl Prowl at Cool Spring on Sunday night, February 19. (The next day is a school holiday so you don't have to worry about getting to bed so early.) Bob Dean will be leading the night hike to "hoot up" some owls (at least we hope so!) and the program will also feature the read aloud book *Owl Moon*. Registration for that event is limited, so don't wait! You'll find it on the Events Calendar on the PVAS website.

PVAS is also developing a new regular program aimed at homeschool students. Most of these programs, at least for now, will be held at Cool Spring Preserve, but the expectation is that all of our nature preserves will host homeschool groups. Scout groups are also requesting information about our programs. All of these programs are being listed in the Events Calendar on the PVAS website www.PotomacAudubon.org.

If you know of a teacher or homeschool or scout group leader who is looking for the perfect program to get students outside, let them know that PVAS is ready to help! If you'd like more information about these programs, contact Ellen Murphy (Ellen@PotomacAudubon.org).



Alison Zak leads participants in "animal yoga."

Spring Library Programs

PVAS plans to host a youth program at the Shepherdstown Library on Presidents' Day, Monday February 20th.

Other upcoming library events for the spring include the week-long spring break program, in which read-aloud stories and accompanying craft projects occur at libraries throughout the eastern panhandle.

Check the PVAS website and Facebook page for more details about future library programs.

Spring Watershed Program

The popular PVAS Watershed program is being taught in 9 schools (52 classes) this spring. Four instructors have begun teaching in Jefferson, Berkeley, and Morgan County. Schools participating in the full-year program continue the curriculum by learning about water quality. Students rotate through stations and practice testing for pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and the presence of certain species of macroinvertebrates, aka 'creek critters'.

The connection between these water quality measures and the function of healthy watersheds is the take-home message for this hands-on lesson. Schools participating in the half-year program, and just getting started, will learn about the properties of water such as density and surface tension, while students conduct experiments in groups with their peers.



Camp Programs

Summer Day Camps

It's time to start thinking about summer camp! Our Audubon Discovery Camp includes sessions from **June 5 to July 28**. We will offer camps at both Yankauer Nature Preserve in Berkeley County and our new, very own Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County, WV.

Camps at Yankauer Nature Preserve

Camp Survivor | June 12 – 16 | July 17 - 21
Nature Detectives | June 26-30

Camps at Cool Spring Preserve

Camp Survivor | June 19-23
Mud Pies and Dragonflies | June 5-9 | July 10-14
Blast from the Past | June 26-30
Birds, Bugs, and Bats! And family overnight | July 5-7 (3 days)

Camps for Younger Campers

Nature Buddies | June 5-7 (3 days)
Out of the Nest | July 24-28

Camps for Teens and Pre-teens

Teen Photo Camp at Shepherd University (entering grades 9-12) | June 19-23
Outdoor Adventurer (entering grades 6-8) | June 19-23
Junior Staff (entering grades 7-12) | June 3 training plus a week working as Junior Staff

This year, for an additional fee, we will be offering before care from 7:30-9:00 am and after care from 3:00-5:30 pm for all sessions held at Cool Spring Preserve.

We are aware that school snow days often push schools to end later in June, and thus, may interfere with our June camps. We keep watch of the school calendars throughout the spring in order to make session cancellation decisions and will refund all registration fees if a session is cancelled. Additionally, campers in our first camp session have the option to choose to attend a partial week at a pro-rated cost.

Our day camp mascot this year is the box turtle, which will appear on the camp shirts. Shirts must be pre-ordered by May 15 and are \$10 each.

PVAS offers scholarships for all of our camp sessions as well as several camps run by partnering organizations. These include Junior Nature Camp at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, WV; Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies in Capon Bridge, WV; the West Virginia Teen Conservation Camp in Ripley, WV; the Student Climate and Conservation Congress (SC3) at NCTC; and Family Camp at National Audubon's Hog Island in Maine! If your child is ready to be away from home for one to two weeks, think about applying for one of these scholarships. Scholarship applications can be found on our website, www.PotomacAudubon.org. There is a separate application for Audubon Discovery Camp scholarships. Both applications are due in early April and require a short letter from the camper (parents can take dictation if their child hasn't learned to write yet!) and a letter of reference from a teacher or family friend.

Registration for all sessions begins on February 1. PVAS members may register at a lower fee (You can become a member at any time). Additionally, we are offering an **early registration discount** of \$10 off each session registration completed before March 15. We encourage you to register early to reserve a spot before sessions start filling up!



Camp Programs

Camp Scholarships Available!

Here's your opportunity! If you are a young person who would enjoy learning about nature at a summer camp, apply for a camp scholarship from PVAS. If you know someone else who would be interested, pass this information along!

Applications must be post-marked by Wednesday, **April 5, 2017!** Camps, locations, ages, and dates are listed below, but the PVAS web site, www.potomacaudubon.org, will soon post much more information, including exciting camp descriptions and links to camp web pages with great photos and other details.

Audubon Discovery Day Camp: PVAS' own local day camp; pre-school to grade 12 plus junior staff opportunities for grade 7 and older; a variety of week-long sessions in *June and July 2017*. Check PVAS web site.

Junior Nature Camp, Oglebay Institute: at Dallas Pike (near Wheeling), WV; ages 10-15; *July 16-22, or July 23-29, 2017*.

Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies: at Capon Bridge, WV; ages 11-15; *June 25-July 8; July 11-25; or August 2-15, 2017*.

West Virginia Junior Conservation Camp; at Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV; ages 11-14; *June 19-23, 2017*.

Mountain Stewards Summer Camp, MIDDLE SCHOOL Program, Spruce Knob, WV; entering grades 6-8; *June 11-15, June 18-23, July 2-7, and July 9-15, 2017. (Camp weeks vary in length.)*

Mountain Stewards Summer Camp, HIGH SCHOOL Program, Spruce Knob, WV; grades 9-12 (up to age 17); *June 11-17, June 18-23, June 25 - July 1, July 2-7, and July 9-15, 2017. (Camp weeks vary in length.)*

West Virginia Senior Conservation Camp: at Camp Caesar, Webster County, WV; Campers must be age 14 by January 1 and not past age 18 on June 1; *June 12 - 17, 2017*.

Student Climate & Conservation Congress (SC3): at the National Conservation and Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV; Rising grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); *June 25-July 1, 2017*.

Nature Photography Camp: offered by PVAS at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV; grades 9-12 (ages 14-18); *June 19-23, 2017*.

The PVAS web site at www.potomacaudubon.org will have scholarship application forms and additional info as it becomes available. You may also contact scholarship coordinator Kathryn Henry at 304-876-6681, or dhenry@myexcel.com. PVAS offers camp scholarships for eligible persons throughout our membership area – the WV Eastern Panhandle and Washington County, Maryland. Scholarships are generously supported by the PVAS fall bird seed sale, as well as other donors and community sources.



Birding News and Events

Join February 18 Bird Walk at Claymont

PVAS will sponsor a bird walk on the historic Claymont property outside Charles Town, WV on Saturday, February 18. The walk will begin at 9:00 a.m., and be led by local birding expert Joette Borzik. It is free and open to anyone with an interest, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome, but must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required. Easy registration is available on the PVAS website.

Field trip participants should plan to meet the trip leader at the gate to the Claymont entrance road. The entrance is located at 667 Huyett Road; it is marked by a street sign that says "Claymont Mansion."

The trip will last about three hours, and involve about three miles of moderate hiking, but participants may opt out at any time along the way. It should offer opportunities to see year-round resident birds, winter visitors, and possibly waterfowl. Participants should dress appropriately for the prevailing weather and bring drinking water and trail snacks if they want. Binoculars will be available for those who need them.

The Claymont property, which totals about 300 acres, includes the Claymont Mansion. The Mansion was built in 1820 by George Washington's grand-nephew, Bushrod Washington. It is the largest of the Washington family homes and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property has recently been entered into a conservation easement that will protect it from development in perpetuity.

For more information, go to the PVAS website or contact Joette at 240-440-4221 or pep4223@comcast.net.

Sign Up Now for February 19 "Family Owl Prowl"

PVAS is sponsoring a "Family Owl Prowl" at the Cool Spring Nature Preserve the evening of Sunday, February 19. The event will offer families with young children a fun opportunity to learn all about owls with one of the area's leading birding experts, Bob Dean.

It will begin at 6:00 p.m., indoors in the Nature Preserve's classroom, with a reading of the book *Owl Moon*, by Jane Yolen, and a discussion with Bob. Afterwards, Bob will lead participants on a walk through the Preserve to look for owls.

The walk will cover about a half-mile over gentle hills and uneven terrain. The evening will conclude with hot chocolate back inside the Preserve's classroom.

The event will be open on a first-come, first-served basis to all interested families but participation will be limited to just 10 families and pre-registration will be required. Register on the PVAS website. There will be a fee of \$8 per family.

The Cool Spring Preserve is located at 1469 Lloyd Road, about six miles southwest of Charles Town. For more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.



Birding 101 Set To Begin Its 31st Year

After 30 years, Birding 101 still draws an eager crowd. The course, scheduled to begin on Thursday, April 6, has already reached its full capacity.

The course holds classroom sessions on Thursday evenings, April 6, 13, 20 & 27 with field trips on the consecutive Saturdays (April 8, 15, 22 and 29). The classes are held at the National Conservation Training Center while the field trips are held at a variety of venues locations around the eastern panhandle.

Participants will learn everything from bird identification to birding techniques and resources to field etiquette. The instructions will focus on bird species that are found in the region.

Tuition for the full course package of four classroom sessions and four field trips (a total of 28 hours of instruction) is \$90 for PVAS members and \$110 for the general public.

If you are interested in Birding 101, please contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or visit our website at potomacaudubon.org.

Birding News and Events

2016-17 Christmas Bird Count Report

The weather that accompanied the Charles Town Christmas Bird Count on December 17, 2016 provided the backdrop for the lowest numbers of both species encountered and effort to encounter them since 1988. A freezing rain the night before the count left roads in hazardous condition until late in the morning. Hence, most of the 16 participants, who amassed a paltry total of 32.5 party/hours, didn't start counting until afternoon. The total of 62 species included no record high numbers, and only one unusual encounter: Nancy and Elliot Kirschbaum found an immature Golden Eagle. Some other good finds were singles of Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Horned Grebe, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Fox Sparrow. Also, some seasonally tough finds were made, including Pied-Billed Grebe, Horned Lark, Red-Breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Yellow-Rumped Warbler. Nice rewards for understanding the various habitat preferences and behaviors of our more uncommon winter visitors. Not surprisingly, there were some significant misses. No great-horned or barred owls were located, and a brown-headed cowbird was the lone representative of the blackbird family.

By contrast, the Inwood CBC, held on January 2, 2017, attracted 26 participants, who identified 68 species with 67 party/hours of effort. There was no loss of enthusiasm, despite the fog and drizzle that accompanied the intrepid birders throughout the day. Both Wild Turkey and Horned Grebe were found in record high numbers. Winter visitors such as Horned Lark, Red-Breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, and Purple Finch were all found in small numbers. A single Eastern Towhee, a common summer breeder, but uncommon winter resident, was found near Sleepy Creek Lake.

Absent from both counts were Red-headed Woodpecker and Eastern Phoebe; the former to be expected in years of good acorn production such as was 2016.

This Christmas Bird Count season, the business of finding birds was enjoyable and rewarding as always; though the conditions for doing so were far from ideal. So, cross your fingers and hope for better weather next season, while knowing that it could have been worse.

Submitted by Bob Dean, compiler.

Check Out the PVAS Birding Map

As you prepare for the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Ruth Ann Dean Birdathon and other upcoming birding activities, don't forget that PVAS's website can help!



A little known resource for birders and birder "wannabes" is found on our website: The PVAS Birding Trail Map!

Created by Wil Hershberger, this map of PVAS's service area allows you to click on a favorite birding hot spot, and get information on what birds you might see there depending on when you visit. It's a fantastic resource. Check it out!

http://potomacaudubon.org/pvas_birdmap



Notes from the Preserves

What's happening at the PVAS Nature Preserves?

The PVAS Nature Preserves have been busier than usual this mild winter. The trails have been frequented by hikers, bird walkers and PVAS guided educational trips. Winter is a rewarding time to visit the preserves as the open forest allows for good bird watching and wildlife viewing. This season is also a great for identification and removal of exotic invasive climbing plants, such as Japanese honeysuckle and oriental bittersweet.

On January 15, 2017, a MLK Jr. Day service event was held at Cool Spring Preserve. Nearly 30 volunteers arrived to learn how to identify non-native climbing vines, and worked to remove these undesirable plants. Climbing vines can threaten native habitat by girdling tree trunks, pulling down branches and competing for desirable resources. Another event focusing on identifying and removing invasive climbing vines will be held at Yankauer Nature Preserve on Friday, February 3, 2017 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Hot coffee, tea, cocoa, snacks and all necessary tools will be provided for those who attend! Master Naturalist re-certification hours are available for qualified Master Naturalists. For more information or to confirm your attendance please email Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

**Potomac Valley Master Naturalists****PVAS's Master Naturalist Program Begins its 11th Year**

With a new year ahead, our Master Naturalists are busy preparing for the start of the upcoming program. Two Open Houses were hosted by members of the Coordinating Committee as well as certified Master Naturalists. The first open house was held in Morgan County on November 16th while the second one was on January 11th just prior to PVAS's Monthly Program. The Open Houses are a way for people who are interested in the program to ask questions and learn more detailed information from certified master naturalists. Both events were well attended and generated much interest in the program.

Opening weekend for the 2017 year is scheduled for Saturday, April 1, and Sunday, April 2, at Cool Spring Preserve. Classes continue one Saturday each month through October at a variety of venues including the National Conservation Training Center and Cacapon State Park. The Master Naturalists are excited about the use of PVAS's Cool Spring Preserve as a venue for many of the Saturday classes; making use of the kitchen, classroom space as well as the outdoor seating and trails.

In addition to the 48 hours of Core Classes, there are 16 hours of electives offered. This year, the elective include Soils, Bats, Slime Molds, Geology, Nature Sketching and Invasive Species.

If you are interested in the Master Naturalist Program, please visit our website at potomacaudubon.org/masternat or email Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org.

Did You Know...?

This year's Master Naturalist Classes begin April 1st at the new PVAS facility at Cool Spring Preserve. Generally, the first two classes are held on both a Saturday and a Sunday in April, while the rest of the classes are held one Saturday per month from May to October.

There are 48 hours of Core classes and 16 hours of Elective classes. Not everyone is able to complete all the classes in one year so it is acceptable to start the program one year, and finish in the following year. Those who are determined to complete the program in one year can also attend classes at other WV Master Naturalist Chapters across the state (mnofwv.org) if they need to make up a class.

Master Naturalists are also required to perform 30 hours of volunteer work for certification. PVAS & PVMN provide lots of opportunities to accomplish those during the year. You can even start earning those prior to your classes (as soon as you are accepted into the program).

There are no tests, although a short presentation on a topic of your choice is now suggested at the end of the program, to be given at our Annual Meeting at the end of October.

To apply to the program, and for scholarship information please go to: http://www.potomacaudubon.org/MN_application.pdf.

Conservation

Chimney Swift Project Update

Planning is underway for the “Raise the Roost” campaign, which will support the provision of Chimney Swift habitat to replace Sara Cree Hall’s chimney, set to be demolished in May 2017. The construction deadline for the new roost is set for July 2017, to ensure that no roosting habitat is lost for a single migration season. Thousands of Chimney Swifts, a near threatened and federally protected species, are found in Shepherdstown annually in August and September during their southern migration. Project coordinator, Bridget Tinsley, has been connecting with Swift experts and conservation organizations across North America to inform them, and to coordinate the best plan of action.

It is anticipated that the “Raise the Roost” fundraising campaign will formally kick off in April, after construction plans have been approved, and all necessary materials are secured. PVAS is grateful for the partnership with Shepherd University who has contributed generous time and support for the project. Our partnerships and community members have demonstrated a strong conservation ethic and determination to ensure that the Swifts of Shepherdstown will always have reliable roosting sites to call home during their annual migration. For more information about the “Raise the Roost” campaign please visit www.potomacaudubon.org/chimneyswifts.



Join the 2017 Great Backyard Bird Count!

What can be done to reverse bird populations declines? How are birds responding to a changing climate? Are migration patterns static?

In an ongoing effort to answer these questions and more, ornithologists use information from citizen science projects to understand ever-changing population trends. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) you can contribute to a global count and promote better understanding of birds worldwide.

The GBBC is on February 17-20, 2017, and requires 3 simple tasks to participate:

1. Register online at gbbc.birdcount.org.
2. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days, between February 17-20.
3. Enter your observation data on the GBBC website.

People of all ages and experiences are welcome to participate. Count birds at one of our nature preserve, or from your living room window. Everyone is able to contribute to the GBBC! This is one of several annual birding citizen science projects that PVAS supports. Check the PVAS calendar to find more birding events including multiple monthly guided birding hikes and the Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon during May 2017. If you have questions regarding the Great Backyard Bird Count, or would like to share your observations or photos please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.



Native Plant Sale: Promoting Pollinators in the Panhandle

The Back Alley Garden Tour and Tea (BAGTT) will partner with PVAS again this year to host the 2nd annual Native Plant Sale in Shepherdstown, WV. The event will be on Saturday, May 20th from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., behind the Shepherdstown Public Library.

This plant sale will host numerous local native plant vendors, expert arborists, beekeepers, and horticulturists! This event is held during Gardenfest, May 20-21: a weekend of activities and demonstrations devoted to gardening. If you are a vendor who would like to sell at the event please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org. For more information and to stay updated please visit our website at www.potomacaudubon.org/Native-Plant-Sale.



5th Annual ACFF “Best of Fest” in Frederick February 3

The American Conservation Film Festival’s “Best of Fest” returns to the Weinberg Center for the Arts in Frederick, MD, for the fifth year, with an event including live music, beer tasting, three films, and discussion with filmmakers.

This year will feature one of the most popular films of the 2016 Festival, *The Babushkas of Chernobyl*, as well as the Student Filmmaker Award Winner, *Medieval Monsters*, and the Short Film Award Winner, *Pangolin*.

For more information go to: <http://conservationfilm.org/attend/acff-best-of-fest/>.



Promotional photos from the films are ©.

JOIN PVAS TODAY!

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

- Member discount to many PVAS programs and events.
- A subscription to *Valley Views*, the PVAS newsletter.
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers and/or their programs across the country.
- E-mail alerts about events and programs (upon request).
- An invitation to a PVAS Members annual gathering.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Details available at potomacaudubon.org/member

To become a local member, send in the form below and enclose a check for \$20 (\$15 for seniors and students). Make the check out to “PVAS.” This fee covers membership for everyone in your household for one year. For details, go to: <http://potomacaudubon.org/member>.

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Phone (optional): _____

E-mail: _____

To save postage costs, PVAS regularly sends its newsletter by e-mail. You can be assured that we do not share email addresses with anyone. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by U.S. mail check here: ___.

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS

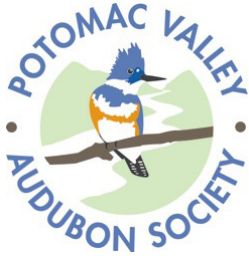
PO Box 578

Shepherdstown, WV 25443



If you’d rather join the National Audubon Society:

Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society’s Audubon magazine. 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 a member of PVAS and have access to our events, an e-mail copy of newsletter and e-mail alerts. However almost all of your dues payments will go to the National Audubon Society; only a small percentage will go to PVAS.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
 P O Box 578
 Shepherdstown, WV 25443
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A proud partner of the United Way of
 the Eastern Panhandle and the Com-
 bined Federal Campaign.
 CFC#29061



CFC#29061

MAIL TO:

February 2017

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper

Volume 35, Issue 5

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through April. 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.

PVAS BOARD
 PVAS Board meet-
 ings take place the
 first Thursday of
 the month (Sep-
 tember through
 June). Meetings
 are open to all
 PVAS members.
 Please contact
 the President or
 Vice President if
 you would like to
 attend.

PVAS Officers and Board Members (Year of term expiration in parentheses)

- President: Michael Sullivan (2018) msullivanwv@gmail.com
 Vice President (acting): Jane Vanderhook (2017)..... janehook@frontiernet.net
 Secretary: Diana Gavia (2018) jpikester@comcast.net
 Treasurer: Dan Cogswell (2017) daniel.cogswell@gmail.com
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 Tanner Haid (2018) Tanner.Haid@gmail.com
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