

Valley Views

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Director's Report

by Kristin Alexander, PVAS Executive Director

Every year I send our Annual Report to the printer right around Thanksgiving. It's a great time to reflect on the many things for which I am thankful, both personally and professionally. I couldn't ask to work with a more generous, thoughtful and dedicated group of people across the board: staff, Board members, volunteers, supporters, and partners. Over the last year, with the support of this amazing community, PVAS has:

- Served over 8,000 program participants – 300 more than last year. (And 1,000 of those took place at our new home at Cool Spring Preserve!)
- Held 40 volunteer events to manage our 512 acres of preserved green space.
- Hired a full-time Program Director to oversee youth and adult programs.
- Sponsored an advocacy forum to help community members more effectively address environmental and conservation issues in West Virginia.

And those are just some highlights. Many other accomplishments will be touted in the 2017 PVAS Annual Report. It provides a great summary of what PVAS has accomplished this year thanks to the support of you, our members, volunteers, and donors - and I hope you'll take the time to read it and share in the celebration of our joint accomplishments. I am so thankful for your support.

We will also send a letter with the annual report, asking you to support PVAS with a tax-deductible donation. The coming year of 2018 will be at least as busy as 2017. Donations from members and friends like you will help us match grants, support program staff, and cover everyday expenses like insurance and supplies that grants rarely cover. Your support provides the financial foundation that every non-profit needs to survive and thrive.

Thank you in advance for your support in 2018! We look forward to another great year.



Meet Kimberly Baldwin, Program Director

PVAS is pleased to welcome Kimberly Baldwin as our new Program Director. She joined the team on October 16, and has hit the ground running: observing programs, teaching classes, attending meetings and fundraisers, meeting people, and exploring the preserves. See her article on page three for more on her excitement about being part of the PVAS community.

In this position, Kimberly is responsible for overseeing both youth and adult programs, from summer camp, birding trips, and school programs, to our lecture series. Her job will be to think about the “big picture” and make sure PVAS programs and educational efforts are aligned with our mission and organizational goals, as well as to promote and grow PVAS's varied program offerings.

Originally from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Kimberly studied Biology and Marine Biology at Bloomsburg University and worked at marine education centers on the east and west coasts. From there, she moved to Mexico, where she was a professional guide for whale watching and birding excursions, and taught high school biology, history, and math. As part of her teaching responsibilities, she organized science workshops for teachers and students emphasizing the natural sciences. She later returned to the U.S., where she received her Masters of Education at the College of New Jersey. Her travel bug soon took her abroad again to teach elementary school in Pago Pago, American

Samoa, before returning to Mexico to become a fourth grade teacher in a bilingual classroom. For the last thirteen years, Kimberly has taught AP Environmental Science, Marine Biology, Chemistry and Algebra at Costa Rica International Academy.

We are thrilled to have Kimberly join the PVAS team. Her strong science and teaching background will enrich and further strengthen PVAS programs. Please welcome her when you see her! She can be reached at Kimberly@PotomacAudubon.org.

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

White-breasted Nuthatches – A Cure for the Winter Doldrums

By Wil Hershberger

December can bring on the doldrums – the light is fading as the sun gets lower and lower in the southern sky, days are getting shorter, and the birds are not singing as they did during the spring and summer. However, if you have feeders – especially suet feeders – available at your house, you can while away the hours watching the antics of our resident White-breasted Nuthatches. These birds are more easily seen during the cold days of winter, when the leaves are resting on the ground and returning their nutrients to the soil for the trees to use again in spring. You can also hear the soft calls of the nuthatches more easily, as there are fewer voices to compete for your attention.

White-breasted Nuthatches are found throughout North America and into southern Canada. There are seven subspecies that are recognized, most in the central and Pacific states. According to the most recent molecular-level studies, White-breasted Nuthatches are more closely related to creepers, wrens, and gnatcatchers.

The species is a cavity nester, using old woodpecker holes and natural cavities that they find in deciduous woodlands. The female constructs the nest using bark chips, animal hairs, and other natural and man-made fibers. While pairs maintain their bonds throughout the year, there is a visible and audible increase in pair interactions in late winter. Apparently, in our area, nesting begins in late March through early April. Females lay around six white eggs that are spotted with reddish patches. Eggs hatch in about twelve days and the young, which are fed by both parents, fledge in a little over three weeks.

White-breasted Nuthatches have a wide range of behaviors that you can watch for throughout the year. These behaviors are more easily seen in the winter when several birds are interacting at feeders. First, you'll note that this species typically walk down the trunks of trees looking for hidden insects and egg masses within the cracks and crevices of the bark of the tree. They will often rest motionless in this head-down posture looking around for predators or intruders that have wandered into that individual's territory. As the intruder gets closer, watch for the territorial male to spread his tail over his back facing the other bird. Females will also give this display during the nesting season. If the male or territorial bird is further provoked, he or she will then lower and spread their wings and may flick their wings at the interloper. Once the feathers of the territorial bird's back start to rise, a physical fight is close at hand. You will often see brief threat displays like this as one bird displaces another at a feeder. Bonded pairs are typically tolerant of their mates, but intruders are dealt with swiftly. These displays are often focused on other species that are at the feeders, such as Goldfinches, Purple Finches, and Tufted Titmice.

Winter is one of my favorite times of year to be in the woods. The song and calls of White-breasted Nuthatches are easier to hear this time of year and you can follow the birds more easily as they interact. When a pair is interacting, they give quiet "ink" calls back and forth (you can even hear their toenails scrapping on the bark): <http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/107225>. Pairs will also make very quiet calls while foraging, perhaps to stay in touch with each other (here too you can hear their toenails on the bark of the tree, and the birds using their bills to hammer overwintering insects out of their hideouts): <http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/77262>. The song of the male is a series of rapidly given "hank" or "han" calls: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/77256>. There is nothing quite so soothing as listening to these songs and calls on a cold winter's day when a light snow is falling and the woods are otherwise quiet and hushed.

I hope that you will offer some suet at your feeders for our wintering birds this season. You will be rewarded with countless hours of antics and interactions – and, if you venture outside, a host of calls to decode and follow. And if, by chance, there is a windless day when a light snow is falling, go out and listen; a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches may be interacting as they forage in your woodlot – a sound that will surely scare the winter doldrums away.



White-breasted Nuthatches photos © Wil Hershberger. Clockwise from top: Male threat display; foraging upright; foraging on log; typical posture.

PVAS Events

PVAS Covers All Ages! - From the New Program Director

By Kimberly Baldwin

Prior to being hired, I knew from the detailed job description for Program Director that PVAS is an active organization. But what I knew then was just the tip of the iceberg. Ours is a quick-growing, far-reaching organization that advocates for nature in so many important ways. I am amazed. What follows are my impressions based on my first three weeks as Program Director.

There are pre-kindergarten and kindergarten groups who know more about bats or animal skins than the average adult, thanks to Program Specialist Ellen Murphy's visits to schools. I have not seen a person so adored by that age group since Mr. Rogers! I have worked with Ellen and both first- and second-grade groups visiting Yankauer Preserve, where wonderful volunteers help Ellen lead activities among the trees. Young children also benefit from PVAS backpacks that can be checked out from local public libraries, containing lessons and materials that encourage children to read about and explore nature with their families.

Fourth graders are particularly well served by PVAS. Executive Director Kristin Alexander has put together a comprehensive five-class lesson on watershed science and protection with fabulous activities for each school meeting, ending in a field excursion to a stream or river. Our two motivated AmeriCorps volunteers, Emily Noël and Garrett Wren, teach this watershed program under Land and Watershed Program Manager Bridget Tinsley's guidance. Our goal is to have multiple-opportunity contact with fourth graders from as many schools as possible in the three counties of the Panhandle. In my first three weeks alone, I have assisted fifteen fourth-grade groups.

When not digging in the stream for invertebrates, Cool Spring Preserve Manager Amy Moore is running a growing homeschool program. Through this and other activities, she teaches preschoolers through college-aged students with an infectious enthusiasm. PVAS even provides employment opportunities for college students.

Adult groups can take advantage of art and nature classes, bird walks, guest lectures, banding activities, and trail maintenance opportunities, to name a few. For the brave, there is the intensive Master Naturalist course, which produces graduates with exceptional knowledge about local flora and fauna. We have many talented adult volunteers of all ages who are eager to assist us in educating student groups, and they are able to convey the feeling of joy in nature. I saw a young boy who was afraid to touch a coneflower, but, through the patient coaching of an adult volunteer, he was happily able to overcome his reservations.

Best of all, PVAS is a group dedicated to the care of four nature preserves, making sure visitors have parking areas, maintained trails, and bathrooms for their comfort and for the joy that comes with experiencing nature. I am thrilled to be part of this program and excited to hike these trails myself, with my new co-worker friends and the wonderful people of all ages I have met so far in PVAS.

No Hibernation for Adult Programs This Winter

While our fall was filled with prowling for owls, gazing at hawks, and sketching live raptors, we now look ahead to a wide variety of winter adult programs.

The Art Inspired by Nature gathering was held at the end of November. Based on the ideas generated from the gathering, we hope to warm the space at Cool Spring Preserve with nature-inspired workshops that connect various forms of art to nature. Look for more event information posted on the calendar in upcoming months.

While the days may be turning cold and dark, we will keep the light on at Hospice's Education Center on Wednesday, January 10. PVAS's Monthly Program will feature Christian Thomas, a native of Shepherdstown who works as a Geospatial Analyst at SkyTruth, analyzing data and conducting research on a wide range of environmental issues and incidents around the world. Prior to Christian's presentation, the Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee will host their Third Annual Open House for prospective Master Naturalists.

While watching the birds from your warm kitchen window over a hot cup of coffee can be a nice start to your morning, don't be afraid to "go the extra step" this winter and join our fearless bird walk leaders. First up: Jim Farley is leading a Winter Bird Walk and Driving Tour on January 9.

To find out more about these and other programs, check the calendar insert, *Month-at-a-Glance*, included in this issue of *Valley Views*, subscribe to our biweekly *Heads-Up PVAS!* e-newsletter, and check our website (www.potomacaudubon.org) regularly. We are adding programs and events all the time, so checking the website on a regular basis is the best way to keep up to date.

Volunteer Spotlight**Have You Met Peter Smith?**

Have you ever wondered why PVAS is in the papers all the time? The answer, in a name, is Peter Smith. Peter has been PVAS's publicity volunteer since 2004, when he moved to Shepherdstown. He also served as PVAS President from 2007-2012. Under Peter's presidency, PVAS acquired three additional properties. Peter spearheaded all of the administrative and legal responsibilities of each while continuing to cover publicity. He is a skilled researcher and thoughtful planner, and gets things done quietly and methodically. His dedication and helpful spirit are truly remarkable, and he has significantly broadened the reach of PVAS, allowing us to provide programs for many more youth and adults.

All of our PVAS volunteers are great! If you know someone who deserves a shout out, please contact Bridget Tinsley at bridget@potomacaudubon.org.

**Conservation****Walking the AT with PVAS**

by Susan Brookreson

Founding member, past President, and active volunteer Susan Brookreson recently completed the Appalachian Trail after several years of section hikes. At the conclusion of the hike, she gave PVAS a generous donation with a note: "Thank you PVAS for enhancing my Appalachian Trail hike, completed September 2017." Here, she shares more about her hike and how PVAS enriched her experience.

My section hike of the 2,189.9 miles of the Appalachian Trail began in 2002, when I joined my daughter in the Smoky Mountains during her thru hike (which is an attempt to complete the AT in one year or less). I continued by hiking sections near me with family and day-hiking sections on my own. My longest continuous hike was in 2007: twenty days on the trail in Pennsylvania. I had answered an ad from a woman hiker looking for other women who wanted to hike the state of Pennsylvania (229.6 miles). Most of the five women who ended up hiking together are still hiking partners or friends to this day.

As I look back on this wonderful outdoor adventure, I have much to thank PVAS for. My hiking companions would sometimes groan when I said things like, "Check out this Indian pipe!" or "Wow, look at the Lady's slippers!", or "That's an Ovenbird saying teacher, teacher, teacher!" (I'm a teacher by profession, so I learned that call early on). My Master Naturalist training even made me point out slime molds, with appreciation. Eventually my companions were won over and started asking me to name what they were now noticing for themselves. I have an especially fond memory of being in a shelter on a beautiful moonlit night and being asked what type of owl was making such a wonderful racket (Barred Owls, of course).

During my 35 years as a PVAS member, I have attended countless informative PVAS monthly meetings, bird bandings, and bird walks with experts, and gone on unforgettable field trips. Thank you, PVAS, for making my walk in the woods such a bountiful gift that I could share with others.



Old School and Twisted Knickers (trail names) top Mt Katahdin in Maine

Conservation

Top 5: Winter Bird Feeders

Winter birding is made easier with the addition of bird feeders in your backyard. Remember that bird feeders can also cause harm to birds if they are not thoughtfully positioned and regularly sanitized. Bird feeders should be placed away from easy predator access and away from windows into which birds may collide. With a variety of feeders you can attract a wonderful array of avian visitors to your yard.

5 Great Winter Bird Feeders:

1. Suet feeders will attract titmice, chickadees, wrens, nuthatches and woodpeckers. They can be easily bought or made at home, filled with purchased or homemade suet.
2. Thistle feeders attract smaller finches, especially goldfinches.
3. Tube feeders can be used with a variety of seed mixes. These feeders attract juncos, sparrows, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and goldfinches.
4. Tray or ground feeders are the easiest to refill and clean. For larger ground birds, try adding rose hips, acorns, hackberries, crabapples, sorghum and native grass seed to encourage doves, bobwhite quail, sparrows, juncos and turkeys to visit. Tray feeders for smaller birds should be placed high off the ground to avoid predator attacks.
5. Natural forage is the most efficient and sustainable way to provide food for overwintering birds. Hold off on fall pruning and yardwork so that birds have forage and food over the winter. Planting and maintaining native species of trees, grass, thistle, shrubs, and other forbs provide food and habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Nature Notes: Hunting Access on Nature Preserves

Hunting is a long-standing recreation and tradition for many people in our community. This anticipated season can require great physical and emotional strength in addition to a lot of strategy and patience. Deer hunting, the most popular and common pursuit, is also a crucial component of maintaining healthy ecosystems in our region. With no natural predators and available quality habitat, a deer herd can increase 30-40% per year, according to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. This population growth can threaten other native wildlife and plant populations, as deer are vigorous grazers and can harm healthy forest understory growth, reducing the overall cover and forage for other wildlife.

Eidolon is the only PVAS preserve that allows public hunting. From November 20 through December 26 deer hunters with a valid WV State hunting license are welcome to hunt at Eidolon, except for Sundays, when state law prohibits hunting.

To ensure the safety of hikers, a schedule is posted that declares the dates and times for no hunter and/or no hiker access. Throughout hunting season, at Eidolon and beyond, all hikers are advised to wear blaze orange for visibility and general safety.

2017 Eidolon Hunting and Hiking Schedule	
Monday, November 20, through Saturday, November 25	First week of firearm season for buck deer; trails closed to hikers every day
Sunday, November 26	No hunting
Monday, November 27, through Friday, December 1	Trails open to hikers 10am-3pm only
Saturday, December 2	Last day of firearm season for buck deer; trails closed to hikers all day
Sunday, December 3, through Wednesday, December 13	No hunting
Thursday, December 14, through Saturday, December 16	First antlerless deer hunting season; trails closed to hikers every day
Sunday, December 17, through Sunday, December 24	No hunting
Tuesday, December 26, through Wednesday, December 27	Second antlerless deer hunting season; trails closed to hikers every day

Conservation

Citizen Science in Action: Christmas Bird Count

What could be better than spending time outdoors among friends while voluntarily contributing to environmental science? For many PVAS members and friends, this combination is a favored pursuit. As citizen science projects become increasingly popular and accessible, so too do our understanding of the natural world and our ability to steward it. PVAS strives to provide educational opportunities that are enriching for participants and valuable conservation efforts.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing international citizen science project that has existed for longer than the National Audubon Society. Participants work within a designated perimeter to count every individual bird and species they see or hear during the day. This information is combined with data collected throughout the Western Hemisphere in order to reveal overall numbers and trends for bird species and populations.

This year will be the 118th CBC, and PVAS is proud to host this important event in our community. Jefferson County's count will be held on December 16, 2017, and Berkeley County's count will be held on January 5, 2018. Everyone is welcome to this free event. Interested participants may learn more and register on the PVAS website. Bob Dean is the local CBC coordinator and will register and train interested participants. For those who prefer birding with larger groups or experienced guides, Joette Borzik will be hosting two separate CBC walks on December 16 at Claymont Mansion from 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and at Cool Spring Preserve in the afternoon (time TBA).

This citizen science project is one of the most important and well-known Audubon events of the year. The more eyes and ears we have on the ground, the higher quality our data collection will be. We hope that you will consider joining us for this unique experience. All events are open to the public, and Master Naturalists will receive volunteer credit hours.



Big Issues, Local Action: Armchair Activism Reignited

By Suzanne Offutt, Vice President, PVAS Board of Directors

Following the guidance in a recent PVAS membership survey, we are renewing our efforts for advocacy in environmental issues on the local, state, and national levels. To that end, we will be utilizing the resources of National Audubon, the WV Environmental Council, and local initiatives to afford our members the chance to express their views on environmental issues that affect our participation in and enjoyment of the natural world. The most important steps we can take are to keep informed of environmental issues and to take action in communicating with our elected officials and policy makers.

We will put a link on PVAS's website that you can access in order to get more information about significant issues. We will also send out email blasts when an issue emerges as one needing action. Please look for those communications in the future.

Here is your opportunity for some urgent action. The Environmental Protection Agency is holding public meetings on the proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan in Charleston on November 28 and 29. If you can't make the trip to Charleston, consider writing letters to the EPA or even asking for additional hearings in more convenient locations.

The Clean Power Plan, first adopted in August 3, 2015, was aimed at combating anthropogenic climate change (aka global warming). A Senate "Resolution Of Disapproval" introduced by WV Senator, Shelly Moore Capito, and a lawsuit filed by a number of states including WV, hobbled this initiative. Under the current administration, the EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, repealed the plan in October 2017, citing harm to coal industry profits and loss of jobs in communities with coal-fired power plants.

Here are some talking points to support reinstatement of the CPP:

The EPA estimates the CPP will reduce the pollutants that contribute to smog and soot by 25%, and the reduction will lead to net climate and health benefits of an estimated \$25 billion to \$45 billion per year in 2030. EPA projects that the plan will save the average American family \$85 per year in energy bills in 2030 and will save enough energy to power 30 million homes and save consumers \$155 billion from 2020-2030. The plan would create 30% more renewable energy generation in 2030 and help lower the costs of renewable energy. It would also create hundreds of thousands of jobs, according to a report from the Natural Resources Defense Council.

You can go to the EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/stationary-sources-air-pollution/clean-power-plan-proposed-repeal-how-comment> to submit comments on the Clean Power Project. Comments are due by December 15.

The Preserves

Winter Birding Hotspot – Stauffer’s Marsh

By Wil Hershberger

Nestled in the cradle of Back Creek Valley, Stauffer’s Marsh offers great birding year ‘round. Winter can be a rewarding experience for birders of any experience level. A combination of wetlands, open water, woodlands, brushy thickets, and open grassland/brush lands provides the visitor to Stauffer’s Marsh plenty of habitats to explore.

A winter’s walk from the parking lot along the main path, surrounded by the winter-withered skeletons of autumn’s lush growth of forbs, can often reveal a lingering Common Yellowthroat, plenty of Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, American Goldfinches, White-throated Sparrows, and others. If you’re really lucky, an over-wintering Eastern Towhee or Gray Catbird might surprise the careful birder. Watch for Yellow-rumped Warblers in the trees and tall shrubs on either side of the path. A few wintering Red-winged Blackbirds may be heard chattering from the edge of the wetlands. Common Grackles and an occasional Horned Lark may be seen and/or heard flying over. You may even see one of the local Bald Eagles soaring over the open areas of the preserve, searching for the day’s sustenance.

Nearing the water’s edge, a careful approach may reveal a number of ducks nervously lounging on the lake. Mallards, American Black Ducks, Green-winged Teal, an occasional Gadwall, Hooded Mergansers, and possibly a Ring-necked Duck – and of course plenty of Canada Geese – will all be within view. Standing still for a few minutes, a quiet observer may even see a Muskrat working the edge of the reeds and cattails. Also, this is perhaps the best location at the preserve to scan for a Swamp Sparrow that may be spending the winter here.

Continuing along the trail into the woods, listen and watch for Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and the occasional Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Woodpeckers will also be plentiful here: Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, and Pileated woodpeckers, as well as Northern Flickers and a rare visit from a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, are all possible. Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice will be distributed in small flocks moving through the forest with White-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers, in search of their daily meals. This area is one of the best places on the preserve to look for Brown Creepers hustling their way up the trunks of trees looking for hidden treasures of insect eggs and over-wintering insects camouflaged within the crevices of the bark. Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows will be foraging along the edge of the woods, darting from the grasses to low limbs in the endless watch for predators and food.

The Connector Trail leads northeast through the woods to the open fields of the north section of the preserve. Here Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Cardinals, Field Sparrows, occasionally White-crowned Sparrows, and small flocks of American Tree Sparrows may be found. House Finches can often be seen and heard from this area as well as the more rarely seen Eastern Meadowlark. Depending on the status of the brush and forbs in the fields, you might encounter flocks of Goldfinches and a number of Downy Woodpeckers gleaning seeds and insects from these standing pantries. Listen for the high-pitched calls of flocks of Cedar Waxwings as they move around the preserve. They are often easily overlooked – a quiet flock can be concealed in the tops of the trees right next to you and only reveal themselves as you pass and flush them into the air.

As you return toward the parking lot, scan the trees along Back Creek Valley road for the resident Red-shouldered Hawks. They often perch in the trees near the house just north of the preserve. Also, scan the Sycamores around the parking lot for the tattered remains of last year’s Baltimore Oriole nests. If your walk is concluding at the end of the day, once the light fades you might hear the faint, quavering calls of Eastern Screech Owls echoing from the wooded creek bed to the east, or from the hillside across the road.

Despite the lack of frogs, toads, singing insects, and a plethora of other avian species found here during the summer months, a winter’s sojourn at Stauffer’s Marsh can be a rewarding and “birdy” experience for the quiet, careful observer.

Cool Spring Preserve Going Solar

Something new is coming to Cool Spring Preserve: solar power! In late October, the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation (ASF) awarded PVAS a \$24,700 grant to construct a 24-panel, 7,200-kilowatt solar array at Cool Spring Preserve. Grant funding was secured after completing a three-step application process with ASF, a regional nonprofit that promotes the advancement of “environmental values to lead our energy future.”

The solar array is projected to cover a significant portion of the preserve’s annual electric costs, making it a great financial asset for PVAS. Going solar is also a key component of PVAS’s “green campus” plans for Cool Spring. As many PVAS members and friends know, the main building at Cool Spring Preserve is one of the most energy efficient structures in West Virginia. By transitioning to solar power, the building will be in striking distance of “net zero” energy status, further increasing the preserve’s environmental sustainability for years to come. PVAS also hopes to host more programs at Cool Spring Preserve focused on alternative energy sources, green building practices, and sustainable living. This solar array will certainly serve as an invaluable teaching resource for those programs.

Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Master Naturalists Celebrate 2017 and Look Ahead to 2018

The Potomac Valley Audubon’s Master Naturalist program is gearing up for our twelfth year of offering the West Virginia Master Naturalist course. This is one of our most popular adult programs, with an active Coordinating Committee and over 100 adults certified or active in the program.

What is a Master Naturalist, and why are they so valuable to PVAS and the greater community? Volunteers are the backbone of PVAS. We rely on our volunteers in all aspects of our programming. The Master Naturalist program enriches and builds upon the skills that many of our volunteers already possess. Captain Lou Scavnicky feels that he is “able to share learned information and knowledge with local schools” and hopes that “our contribution will make an impact on individuals, making them more aware of and appreciative of their natural surroundings, better stewards of the land, and more responsible citizens.”

The Master Naturalist program also creates a community. Mary Beth Ross, after volunteering with the Watershed Field Trips and Wildflower Walks, says, “I enrolled in the MN classes, where I met many like-minded individuals that I would not have otherwise met. I learned something about a wide range of topics: birds, mammals, wildflowers, geography of the Eastern Panhandle, etc. The classes also introduced me to the greater PVAS organization, in which I am now able to enjoy monthly meetings, bird walks, and Monarch butterfly counts.”

Students in the Master Naturalist program receive 64 hours of training on a variety of natural history topics in both classroom and field/lab environments. To obtain certification, students have four years to complete all classes and two years to complete 30 hours of volunteer work. Many of our members volunteer at WV State Parks, in citizen science projects and for PVAS programs. For example, Lynne Wiseman enjoys volunteering at PVAS’s preserves, leading bird walks, teaching Birding 101, and serving on the Master Naturalist Coordinating Committee.

At its annual meeting in October, the program celebrated thirteen new Master Naturalists who had completed certification requirements, 27 recertifying Master Naturalists, and eleven Master Naturalists who had each contributed over 100 hours of service in 2017. Five Master Naturalists were given a five-year award and three were given a ten-year award. Clearly, the Master Naturalist program has a strong foundation in the past and will continue growing even stronger into the future.

PVAS looks forward to the upcoming year and engaging with the new class of eager naturalists. The application period for the 2018 program is now open. Applications and scholarship information can be downloaded at: potomacaudubon.org/masternat.

If you would like to meet some of our Master Naturalists and hear about the program, please join us at our Open House on Wednesday, January 10, at 6 p.m. at the Education Center, Hospice of the Panhandle. Register at <http://www.potomacaudubon.org/event-2720938>. We are happy to answer your questions via email or phone as well. Contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.



New Master Naturalists, back row l-r: Dale Kirchner, Kristan Phillips, Richard Lowman, Steve Sensabaugh; front row l-r: Carol Winckler, Dorothy Mozden, Susan Loonsk, Denise Domain, Zapporah Ellis.



Above, PVMN Coordinating Committee members, from left: Flo Wilbik, Lynne Wiseman, Dr. Pamela Ellis, (kneeling) Cathy Purchis, Karlin Sink, Clark Dixon, Amy Evrard, Charlotte Fremaux, Mary Lynn Robinson, and Paul Breitenbach.



Five-year Award recipients, from left, Jennifer Jones, Lou Scavnicky, Joette Borzik, and Mary Lynn Robinson.



Chairman’s Century Award recipients, from left: Clark Dixon, Dale Kirchner, Lou Scavnicky, Karlin Sink, Joette Borzik, Flo Wilbik, Mary Lynn Robinson, Ellen Murphy, Charlotte Fremaux, Lynne Wiseman, and Paul Breitenbach.

Camp Programs

Summer Camp Program Expands

This past summer marked PVAS’s fifteenth year running our Audubon Discovery Camp, and it was the first year to be hosted at both Cool Spring Preserve and Yankauer Nature Preserve. The sessions at Cool Spring were so popular and successful that PVAS will now offer seven weeks of camp sessions simultaneously, at both sites, from June 4 to July 20, 2018. Classic and popular themes such as Camp Survivor will return, and we will introduce some new themes as well.

In 2017, two-hundred seventy campers benefited from the nature camp experience. Some of the campers had never been in the woods or played in the mud before. By offering more Discovery Camp sessions, we hope to offer even more of our area’s youth this opportunity to connect with nature.

Unfortunately, there are families that cannot afford to send their children to summer camp. Last year, with the help of PVAS direct donations and through our birdseed sale, we were able to send seventeen deserving children to Discovery Camp. If you would like to sponsor a child to attend camp, please contact Ellen Murphy at Ellen@potomacaudubon.org.

Camp sessions for next summer will be announced in January, and registration will open on March 1.

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:

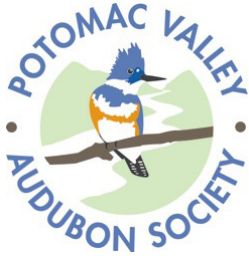
Some people prefer National Audubon Society membership, which includes a subscription to the Society’s Audubon magazine. To become a National member, go to the Society’s website at www.audubon.org and click on “join.” If you join National Audubon and reside in Berkeley, Jefferson or Morgan counties in 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.

More from the Master Naturalists’ Annual Meeting in October:

MNs enjoy a delicious pot-luck luncheon.



Ten-year Awardee, Ellen Murphy



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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)

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