

Valley Views

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President's Note

By Suzanne Offutt, PVAS President

As we close 2018, shifting this year from present reality to past tense, we come around to the annual appeal from Potomac Valley Audubon for your continued financial support. We hope that you have followed the continued growth of this organization by reading the newsletters and emails; participating in monthly programs; attending special events; sharing in a birding or nature walk; hiking trails on one of our four preserves; taking a special class like the Master Naturalist program; planting a butterfly garden; participating in a bird census; attending a summer camp; volunteering for a workday at one of the preserves; purchasing birdseed... or by celebrating in fellowship with others who share in your pleasure and reverence for the out of doors. These are some of the diverse and multi-layered experiences that Audubon offers across our communities. And so, we come to you asking for your help in sustaining these efforts through your contributions during our annual appeal.

With changes in the tax code for 2018, fewer households will be able to take deductions for charitable contributions unless one itemizes deductions. The elimination of deductions for charitable giving is expected to be offset by the increase in the standard deduction. However, this change could affect non-profit organizations like PVAS, which hopes for your continued affirmations of confidence in our work through your generous financial contributions.

An additional tax change that could be useful to many of our members is a change that could affect the Required Minimum Distributions from IRAs. If a member is aged 70½ or older, and is participating in an IRA with an RMD, you can direct all or a portion of that distribution to PVAS or another non-profit without incurring a tax liability for that distribution. It's a beneficial way to deduct your taxes and increase your contribution to PVAS. We hope that many of you will meet with your own financial advisors to put this benefit in place for you and for PVAS.

Just as you steward your own resources, we hope that you will share with PVAS. For while we busy ourselves with short range work like monthly programs, field trips, and natural history programs, we are really sowing seeds of future action and stewardship of the unquantifiable natural resources of our communities, our states, and our world. We are participating in the education of youth and future leaders we work with today.

I am closing my appeal to you for your annual gift with a

quote from Wallace Stegner, "Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed... We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in."

Please join PVAS in doing our part to sustain wild places and for educating ourselves and future generations in the conservation and preservation of our precious natural resources.

Welcome AmeriCorps

PVAS would like to welcome Matt Wuertzer and October Greenfield to the PVAS team. They are serving as AmeriCorps environmental educator volunteers for the next year.

Matt is recent graduate of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry with a degree in Environmental Biology. While at SUNY Matt worked as a Teaching Assistant for several courses, including Entomology and Natural Resources in American History. This past summer he worked as a camp counselor at Peconic Dunes 4-H camp in Long Island, NY, teaching biology and environmentalism. In his free time Matt enjoys hiking and exploring the trails and rivers in the area, as well as collecting and displaying insects.

October attended South Dakota State University for her B.S. and M.S. degrees in Wildlife & Fisheries Science. Throughout her college education, she worked on a variety of raptor-related research projects, including Red-Tailed Hawks and Northern Saw-Whet Owls in South Dakota, and Peregrine Falcons, American Kestrels, and Barn Owls in Virginia. She has done bird banding for a variety of species, including songbirds, raptors, and woodpeckers. She also has completed internships at wildlife rehabilitation centers in Washington and Oregon. Her M.S. thesis was on grassland bird habitat in South Dakota. October is passionate about wildlife photography and using photography as an educational tool.

Matt and October are very excited to work with our community's youth, inspiring passion for nature. They have each already started teaching the fourth-grade Watershed program, general school programs, homeschool programs, and Wee Naturalist pre-K programs. This summer, they will help run summer camp. We hope you get a chance to meet October and Matt, and when you do, be sure to give them a big PVAS welcome!

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

Winter Birding

By Wil Hershberger

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is in a great location for birding any time of the year. Birding during the winter months can be especially difficult in some areas farther to the north. Fewer birds and only a handful of species remain in these northern latitudes during the coldest months. We are blessed to have a mixture of northern and southern species that over-winter in our area, making winter birding more pleasing and more rewarding.

The “hot spots” for finding birds from late November through February are the following:

The C&O canal near Shepherdstown, WV. As long as the Potomac River isn't frozen completely over, there will be ducks of several species enjoying any open water available to them. The trees and shrubs along the river will also host many species of songbirds that are looking for berries, nuts, insect egg masses, etc.

The Shenandoah River from Millville to Bloomery is also a great location for finding ducks in any open water, and songbirds in the trees and shrubs along the edges.

Shannondale Springs WMA from the boat ramp to the open fields is a great place to look and listen for Winter Wren and Hermit Thrushes during the winter months. Again, any open water on the Shenandoah River will host a number of species of ducks.

Cool Spring Preserve is also a good place to listen and look for Winter Wren, especially along the northern portion of Linda's Loop next to Bullskin Run.

Stauffer's Marsh can be a great place for observing ducks of several species as well as sparrows and other songbirds that over-winter in the seed-rich rank vegetation along the trails.

Here there are several species of woodpeckers to search for as well.

Yankauer Nature Preserve is a good place for finding Hermit Thrushes and songbirds during the winter. From late January on, look for nesting Great Horned Owls.

Eidolon Nature Preserve is a great place to go and listen to the quiet of winter. There is very little human-generated noise here and you can hear the winter wind in the trees and the quiet calls of winter flocks as they move through the forest. This area is in the heart of the hybrid zone for chickadees, and any chickadee seen here should be listed as a hybrid. It is great fun to listen to these hybrid chickadee songs and calls on a quiet winter's day.

For the sparrow enthusiast, **Harper's Ferry** can be a great location for a winter walk. Schoolhouse Ridge

(north and south) and Bolivar Heights Battlefield are very attractive to sparrows during the winter months.

This link will take you to the eBird bar chart for birds that are found in our area during the winter months:
<https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2018&bmo=12&emo=2&r=US-WV-003,US-WV-037,US-WV-065>



Photos of Yellow Rumped Warblers © Wil Hershberger



Sunny Meadows Birdseed Sale

Purchase birdseed and other bird-related products from Sunny Meadows
 on the first Saturday of each month
 from December through March
 and PVAS will receive 10% of the proceeds.

PVAS Events

PVAS Makes Opposition Statement to Rockwool

PVAS sent a letter stating its position on the Rockwool Plant proposed for Jefferson County to elected officials at the state, county, and town levels, as well as the Jefferson County Development Authority. After being approved by the PVAS Board of Directors, the following statement was released on Oct. 16, 2018:

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS) has served Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan Counties in West Virginia since its founding in 1982 as a chapter of the National Audubon Society. We currently have 828 household members; 301 of those households are located in Jefferson County. Our mission is “preserving, restoring, and enjoying the natural world through education and action.” The organization provides leadership in environmental, conservation, and natural history concerns in our region. We manage four nature preserves in the Eastern Panhandle totaling over 500 acres; provide science education to over 8,000 school children annually; serve children in our community through our nature camp programs; and offer adult programs focused on natural history. We participate in efforts to save natural habitat locally and in other areas of WV, and provide assistance to citizens in monitoring conservation actions in our community.

Rockwool would set a dangerous and unnecessary precedent for air pollution and water pollution in Jefferson County. Placement of a heavy industry and a new major source of air emissions of pollutants in the heart of Jefferson County goes against our mission. We want to see air quality and habitat preserved so that the residents of the county, particularly children, can enjoy the outdoors in a healthy environment, not one that is characterized by potentially dangerous levels of carcinogens and other hazardous pollutants.

Our main concerns stem from the following:

- 1. Threats to Air Quality:** PVAS encourages people to be outdoors. The addition of emissions from Rockwool to air quality in Jefferson County poses a threat to all residents but particularly to the most vulnerable in society—the children, the elderly, and those with compromised respiratory systems.
- 2. Threats to Water Quality:** PVAS is concerned that atmospheric deposition of pollutants originating at Rockwool will contaminate streams and wetlands. We are further concerned about the viability of onsite wastewater settling ponds. West Virginia does not have a good record of regulating slurry ponds at mountaintop removal sites where leakage from ponds has poisoned local aquifers, wells, and streams.
- 3. Threats to Streams, Wetlands, and Rare Marl Marshes:** The health of streams, wetlands, and marl marshes, and the valuable habitat they support, is dependent on the elevation of the water table. Rockwool proposes to withdraw 125 thousand gallons of water per day at first and up to 500 thousand gallons of water per day in the future. The internal underground drainage systems in karst areas like we have in Jefferson County are very sensitive to extraction. Removing this much water from the aquifers can have very serious and unpredictable adverse consequences. Lowering of water tables can affect the hydrologic equilibrium of local streams as well as wetlands, including rare marl marshes, at substantial distances from the point of extraction. The potential impact is loss of critical wetland and riparian habitat for threatened and endangered species of plants and other forms of wildlife.

Adult Programs

PVAS loves winter! The ushering in of cold, crisp weather creates a welcome stillness in the outdoors and an appreciation for the warmth that the indoors can offer. There is so much to be celebrated in the outdoors and indoors alike.

We are grateful for the busy fall we had, excitedly learning how to band owls, gazing off cliffs at soaring birds of prey, connecting self to nature through expressive activities at Ecopsychology workshops, and much more.

Now, as we set our sights on winter programming, we anticipate all that PVAS has to offer. We continue our monthly bird walks at the popular USGS Fish Health Lab as well as the “Third Wednesdays” at Cool Spring Preserve.

These walks give you a great opportunity to see winter waterfowl, Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Wrens, Red-Shouldered Hawks, and lots of woodpeckers, including Northern Flicker, Red-Bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker. There is even hope for sightings of Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Rusty Blackbird,

Swamp Sparrow, and Red-Breasted Nuthatch.

Join a long-honored tradition of counting birds on the C&O Canal during the January 19th Winter Bird Survey, or participate in our Christmas Bird Counts on December 15 in Charles Town, or January 5 in Inwood. We also look forward to our tradition of Winter Tree IDs, and perhaps a First Day Hike to start off the New Year on the right foot.

If the winter weather has you opting for the comfort of indoors, Cool Spring Preserve is the place to be. Various Natural History Workshops offer something for everyone. Learn about the joys of field journaling with an introduction or in-depth class; the ancient, universal art form of mandalas; or how John James Audubon drew his birds of America in “Drawn from Nature.”

To find out more about these and other programs, check the calendar insert, Month-at-a-Glance, included in this issue of *Valley Views*. You can also 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 Diana Mullis?

Diana Mullis is a founding member of PVAS, and has been integral to the organization ever since. She's held every position on the Board except Treasurer. On top of those roles, she helped start the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Chapter; organized the Bird Seed Sale for 36 years; is our volunteer wildlife rescue coordinator, taking calls day and night; served on the Events Committee since its inception in 2005; and is ready to bake and decorate a cake for any PVAS occasion, including annual meetings, birthdays, events, or other special occasions. She is generous with her time and many talents, and is cool, collected, and kind, no matter what comes her way. A more loyal PVAS member would be difficult to find. When you see her next, join us in giving her a heart-felt THANK YOU for her years of volunteer service.

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



Family and Youth Programs

Watershed Programs

This fall, we taught our fourth-grade watershed program to a total of 157 fourth graders from C.W. Shipley Elementary, Ranson Elementary, and North Jefferson Elementary. The program ended with watershed field trips held at Cool Spring Preserve. Here the students learned about the macroinvertebrates that live in Bullskin Run; tested the pH, dissolved oxygen levels and temperature of the water; and did a nature hike to explore the ecosystem around the preserve. These hands-on, outdoor field experiences are the highlight of our program for instructors and students alike. We love when we are able to hold field experiences at one of our preserves, as students often leave with an interest to bring their families back.



This spring, we will be offering the watershed program to seven more schools, bringing us to capacity for the number of watershed programs that we are able to offer each season.

We are always in need of volunteers to help lead students in activities at our watershed fieldtrips. If you think you might be interested in volunteering on a field trip, contact JiJi Russell, our Program Administrator, at admin@potomacaudubon.org.

Other Youth Programs

PVAS offers homeschool and pre-school programs at Cool Spring



Preserve twice a month, and will continue to offer them through the end of May. Each program consists of a different nature theme. This fall, our Monarch Migration program was one of

our most popular programs. Even though the day of the program was a bit overcast with scattered showers, we still managed to catch and tag nine Monarchs. Our AmeriCorps volunteers Matt and October are currently planning spring homeschool programs related to each of their backgrounds and interests. Matt will be leading an insect program, and October will be leading a program about birds. Other homeschool program topics will include animal tracking, skulls and bones and pollination.

Additionally, we are bringing monthly school programs on various nature topics to first and second graders at Wee Disciples School in Kearneysville and St. Joseph School in Martinsburg. We have a few schools scheduled to visit Yankauer, Stauffer's Marsh, and Cool Spring for nature field trips as well.

Camp Programs

Camp Scholarship Program Supports Area Youth

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society will offer scholarships for day camps and overnight camps taking place during the summer of 2019. Selected camps offer programs for children ages three through 18. Special consideration will be given to applicants with financial need and/or academic excellence in the natural sciences, but all applicants are welcome.

Watch the PVAS Web site in early 2019 for camp details and application forms. There will also be updates in *Valley Views*.

If you know a child who would benefit from a camp experience, please encourage that family to apply for a scholarship. Scholarships will be available for the many daytime Audubon Discovery Camp options offered by PVAS, and for the more adventurous and experienced, a few one-week and two-week overnight camps. Last summer, PVAS sent more than two-dozen campers for an experience of a lifetime!

Scholarships helped 19 enthusiastic children attend PVAS Audubon Discovery Camp programs. Camp programs most requested were Camp Survivor, Native Ways, and Nature Explorers. The children, ages five through 12, resided in Jefferson, Morgan, and Berkeley Counties in West Virginia, and in Washington County in Maryland.

PVAS also awarded scholarships to the Mountain Institute's Experience Learning, the Burgundy Center for Wildlife Studies, and the West Virginia Junior Conservation Camp. Through a generous donation, PVAS also sent two families to the National Audubon Society Family Camp at Hog Island, Maine.

This year's PVAS Camp Scholarship Committee includes Mary Duke, Mary Lynn Robinson, Kathryn Henry, Ellen Murphy, and Mary Etta Boesl. Committee members look forward to helping as many children as possible attend nature camps this coming summer. For additional information, contact Camp Scholarship Committee chair Mary Etta Boesl at meboesl@yahoo.com.



Summer Camp Preview

2019 marks the 17th year of the Audubon Discovery Camp. Our popular day camps are held at both Yankauer Nature Preserve and Cool Spring Preserve from June through July, providing camp experiences to preschoolers through high schoolers. Amy Moore and the AmeriCorps team are currently developing the camp session themes, which will be announced by January 1st. Registration will open on February 1st.

Birding News and Events

Christmas Bird Counts

The Christmas Bird Count is one of the finest examples of citizen science, where local efforts can have global impacts. *"In citizen science, the public participates voluntarily in the scientific process, addressing real-world problems."* (<https://www.citizenscience.gov/>)

PVAS's local-area counts are part of a massive, historic 119-year-old citizen science project: a volunteer-based Christmas Bird Count that has been conducted throughout the western hemisphere every year since 1900 under the auspices of the National Audubon Society. The purpose is to monitor the status and distribution of early-winter bird populations.

Count volunteers join teams that go out in the field and follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. Experienced and novice birders are always welcome to join these teams. Novice volunteers will be teamed with those who have more experience. Or, people who live within the circle areas can simply count the birds they see at their feeders during the day and submit a record of their sightings to PVAS. The December 14 Charles Town count, will encompass a circle that is centered near Charles Town and stretches from the Shannondale area at the east to near Middleway at the west. The circle for the January 3

Inwood count, is centered near Shanghai in Berkeley County, and includes the west side of Martinsburg and Inwood to the east, and the Stotler's Crossroads/Greenwood section of Morgan County to the west.

To get more information about participating, either as a field team member or by recording birds at home feeders, go to the PVAS website. All those who participate as a field team member must register beforehand with PVAS. To register, or to get additional information, contact Bob Dean at bobdean52@gmail.com or 304-754-3042.

The data collected from each year's Christmas Bird Count are folded into what is now the longest-running database in ornithology, representing over 100 years of continuous information. This database is used to help spot trends in bird populations, which in turn can help identify shifts in environmental conditions. In the Eastern Panhandle, the Charles Town count has been held every year since 1952, and the Inwood count has been held every year since 1953. The data from previous year's counts are available online through the National Audubon Society website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/#>. Once there, click on "Historical" and "Results by Count". To view data from the Eastern Panhandle counts, enter their official four-letter Count Codes, WVCT and WVIN, in the appropriate field.

Notes from the Preserves

In the Preserves

By KC Walters

Fall was a whirlwind of fun and hard work in the preserves. It was so exciting to see so many projects finally take shape.

At Yankauer, volunteers Mary and Peter Palmer, Lou Scavnicky, and Gary Sylvester, spent two days installing a drainpipe around the perimeter of the pavilion. This new drainpipe will prevent the sheds and pavilion from flooding in heavy rains. The project also led to the accomplishment of several necessary side projects. Super machine operator, Mary, graciously took the time to haul all the fill dirt from the drainage ditch to the outdoor classroom, creating a flat play area for children. Peter used the extra gravel from the project to make a driveway from the parking lot to the sheds. This driveway has made it immensely easier for PVAS staff to pick up and drop off program materials.

Lou and Gary led the charge to create a defense around our wellhead and restrict access to the new driveway.

PVAS cannot thank this team enough for their dedication and volunteerism.

The Stauffer's Marsh pollinator meadow has finally been seeded. After five years of planning, clearing, and preparation, the meadow has entered the final stages of restoration. It took a team effort throughout the whole process. B&R Mowing and Landscaping of Martinsburg served as our contractor for bush hogging and disking the field. They then picked up, operated and returned a GreenRite seeder, generously loaned to us by The Woods

Resort, for the seeding procedure. Volunteer Steve Hartmann worked with the contractor every step of the way. He ensured that the mowing began in the center of the field to allow wildlife time to escape the meadow, and flagged off valuable patches of native species to make sure they were not mowed. He then supervised the disking, and removed rocks from the field. On seeding day, Steve divided the field and seed supplies into small sections to guarantee seed coverage throughout the entire meadow. He even followed the tractor and seeder up and down the field, continually checking and mixing the seed for even distribution. This project would not have come to fruition without the vision and passion Steve has for Stauffer's Marsh. KC is putting together a list of all the species seeded at Stauffer's Marsh, so that visitors can be on the lookout next spring for these beautiful meadow plants.

Eidolon finally has a new sign. Volunteer Steve Hartmann made this sign last winter, and a great group of workday volunteers helped to put it up. Now the preserve will be easier for new visitors to find.

Rains this summer caused several locations on Linda's Loop to become exceedingly muddy. During the October workday, Gary Sylvester brought his tractor to Cool Spring and hauled mulch down the trail to remedy the worst mud holes. Land Manager KC also dug a trench and built bridges to make the trail more passable. On the same day, Gary and KC were also able to install the Cool Spring Nature Center sign. Overall, it was a busy and productive workday, despite having few volunteers.

In other exciting news, solar power is coming soon to Cool Spring Preserve. With funding from the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation, this fall PVAS was able to hire Milestone Solar to install a grid-tied, 24-panel Panasonic solar PV system to power the Cool Spring facility. The system will be up and running by December 31. Soon, we hope to have a monitoring system set up inside the Nature Center so visitors can see the system at work.

Winter is almost upon us, but the great work at the preserves isn't going to stop. KC has received several requests this year for weekend volunteer workdays. Beginning in January 2019, your wish will be granted: each month, KC will be hosting a Saturday workday at one of the preserves. Stay abreast of upcoming workdays by reading the Month-at-a-glance calendars, checking the events page on the website, and watching for Facebook posts. Registering for workdays on our website or sending an email to katelyn@potomacaudubon.org helps KC to better plan the workday activities.



Potomac Valley Master Naturalists

Potomac Valley Master Naturalist Program

The Potomac Valley Audubon's Master Naturalist Program, one of PVAS's most popular adult programs, is currently accepting applications for its 2019 class year. Our thirteenth Master Naturalist class will begin in March 2019. Students in the course receive 62 classroom/field hours on a variety of natural history topics including birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles, terrestrial habitats, aquatic habitats, ecology, and nature interpretation, as well as various electives. Students must also complete 30 hours of volunteer service before being certified as West Virginia Master Naturalists. We have over 120 active members in our chapter.

Whether they have a doctorate in a field of natural science (some of our members do!) or are just interested in nature, our Master Naturalists have one thing in common: an interest in the natural history of West Virginia. Each class seems to form a special bond among its members, and participants enjoy learning in a casual, but challenging way. There are no tests, just opportunities for adults to learn from experts in the field. Most members also find ways to deepen their knowledge on favorite topics.

The 2019 program will begin in March, and classes will continue one Saturday a month through October. Some students complete the coursework and volunteer hours in one year while others spread the experience over a couple years.

Classes are held primarily at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, Cool Spring Preserve in Jefferson County, and Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Springs.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or talking with a certified Master Naturalist, join us for our Open House on Wednesday, January 9, at 6 p.m., at Hospice of the Panhandle. Applications for next year's class are currently being accepted and can be found online at the PVAS website (www.PotomacAudubon.org/masternat).

Conservation

Top 5: Backyard Brush Piles for Winter Wildlife

By KC Walters

For many of us, fall means leaves and sticks everywhere, but nowhere to put them. I personally don't know anyone who enjoys spending their Saturday raking leaves, struggling to stuff them all into trash bags and lugging the heavy bags to the curbside. It makes me sneeze just thinking about it.

What if there was a greener and less time-consuming method to dealing with your yard debris? Great news! There is a solution: a brush pile. Not only does this save you time and energy, but the wildlife will also greatly appreciate it all winter long. Brush piles do not have to be large and intrusive, just a simple pile tucked into a back corner of your yard is sufficient. And remember, all that debris will break down and compost, meaning it won't be around forever, and may even provide you with good soil for your garden next spring.

Here are the top five critters that will benefit this winter from your backyard brush pile.

1. **Birds.** We wouldn't be an Audubon Society if we didn't name birds first. A brush pile can be a true paradise for many birds. Small birds use brush piles for shelter on cold winter nights. They may dive into a pile to quickly hide from predators. In the spring, some bird species may build a nest and raise their young in the brush pile. As the pile composts, many insect species will inhabit the pile, providing food for the birds.
2. **Small Mammals.** Squirrels, rabbits, and chipmunks, oh my! Small mammals love a brush pile for warmth and safety.
3. **Reptiles and Amphibians.** Brush piles tend to hold moisture, making them a haven for snakes, lizards, toads and frogs. Additionally, the insects found in brush piles can provide tasty little snacks for reptiles and amphibians.
4. **Insects.** Ever wonder where butterflies and moths go all winter? Some overwinter in brush piles. If you have a brush pile in your yard, you may even get a peak of some beautiful butterflies on warmer winter days.
5. **You.** What could be better than looking out your back window on a grey winter day and getting to watch all these little creatures darting in and out of the brush pile? You'll be amazed at what you get to see and enjoy when you take just a few quiet minutes and observe your own backyard brush pile.

Want more advice on creating backyard habitats such as brush piles? Contact KC at katelyn@potomacaudubon.org to learn more about PVAS's Certified Wildlife Habitat program and sign up today.



AmeriCorps environmental educators Matt Wuertzer and October Greenfield create a brush pile at Cool Spring

Conservation

Chimney Swift Tower at Cool Spring

By KC Walters

PVAS remains committed to building the chimney swift roosting tower at Shepherd University to restore critical habitat for a threatened bird species, but it appears the process is going to take a little longer than we had initially thought.

Taking on the task of constructing a tower like this with a life expectancy of 100 years has been a daunting challenge for us. With very few models to emulate, we have found that our initial design, while proven effective elsewhere, is extraordinarily expensive to build. Constructed of bricks, the tower will require a great deal of hand labor that drives up the price significantly. Therefore, we are exploring options to redesign the tower in a more economical way.

We are continuing to fundraise as we seek to balance the economics of the project with the critical conservation need. PVAS is committed to the project but we also are dedicated to using our donors' funds efficiently. We appreciate your patience as we work through this delay in the process.

In the meantime, we hope you will come check out the new chimney swift nesting tower erected at Cool Spring Preserve. Boy scout Logan Hine reached out to PVAS over the summer looking for conservation-oriented projects to qualify for his Eagle Scout badge and Hornaday Award. He became very excited about our goal to build a chimney swift roosting tower on Shepherd's campus and wanted to find a way to support the project. Logan decided that building a nesting tower at Cool Spring that people could

visit would allow them to learn more about chimney swifts and get excited about the larger roosting tower.

In preparation for the tower build, he read the book, *Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds*, by chimney swift experts Paul and George Kyle, and reached out to experts around the country for advice. He also conducted a chimney swift count in Shepherdstown during A Swift Night Out with local chimney swift aficionado and PVAS member, Nancy Kirschbaum. Logan even set up a table during the American Conservation Film Festival to share his newfound knowledge about chimney swifts.

With the help of his fellow Maugansville Troop 64 boy scouts and troop leaders, Logan was able to construct the tower in three workdays, completing it on November 3. All the lumber and building materials were donated by Oliver Holmes Inc. Other sponsors of the project included Lowes, Rentals Unlimited, Michael E. Nehring, Esq., and Kim and Duane Hines.

The new tower is located behind the Cool Spring Nature Center, near the barn. It will soon be equipped with a camera to monitor the usage of the tower. With luck, we will have nesting swifts in the tower next spring. A big thank you to Logan for his commitment and support of our chimney swift conservation efforts.

Photos show Logan Hine (top) in front of the tower, and, below, Logan and his fellow scouts and leaders from Maugansville Troop 64



Conservation

Monarch Discovery Days

By Sandy Sagalkin, Joette Borzik and Tracy McCleaf

This is the third year that The Monarch Alliance celebrated the month of September as “Monarch Discovery Days.” This is the time that monarch butterflies migrate through our area on their way to the Mexican sanctuaries, the winter home of the monarch butterfly. This year has been a blockbuster year for monarchs, maybe the best year in at least a decade. Because of climate change, it may be a long while before we again have such a successful year. We are hoping for five hectares of monarchs wintering in the sanctuaries in Mexico, double last year.

We began Monarch Discovery Days a week early this year. Mike Sullivan, Vice-President of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS), inquired if Sandy would speak about monarchs to an interested group in the Steamboat Run subdivision of Shepherdstown in late August. We talked about monarchs at the native meadow in the subdivision, and as monarchs go into “sexual diapause” in mid-August, Sandy brought along some butterfly nets to catch and tag. In September, these “diapause” monarchs joined the migration. We had 10 participants, and had the most fun running after the butterflies with nets.



Photo of the pavilion at Briggs courtesy of William Telfair

On September 15, Joette Borzik organized another monarch event in conjunction with Briggs Animal Adoption Center’s (BAAC) 70th Anniversary Open House celebration. With a building full of educational booths, including free native plants, compliments of Kathy Bilton’s garden, bird and butterfly walks, tours of the facility, and free food compliments of the BAAC, we had a great time. Monarch tagging, led by Tracy McCleaf, included 12 monarchs, some reared, but most wild. The monarch waystation, in flower beds adjacent to 3 acres of native flowers at the Center, made for a great location to find butterflies. In addition to monarchs, a Viceroy butterfly was netted and studied before being released. The children were full of energy as they ran screaming through the field trying to catch ANY species of butterfly.



On Saturday, September 22, in Jefferson County, WV, at the historic Claymont Mansion property, Tracy McCleaf led a monarch tagging event in conjunction with a PVAS public bird walk led by Chuck Parker. The weather was not conducive to monarchs, but the group had a great time anyway. One of the highlights was having everyone see a Yellow-billed Cuckoo up close.

On September 29, Sandy was in Frederick County, MD, conducting a tagging demonstration at Catoctin Creek Nature Center on the half hour. All of the monarchs were in four rearing cages, although most had been captured with nets in the wild. Over 40 children watched the demonstrations.

The children learned about the migration, and how the northerly migration begins in mid-March at the Mexican sanctuaries, and ends with the southerly migratory generation beginning in early August in southern Canada. The migration continues southwest through the United States, and by the end of October, the migration starts entering the sanctuaries in Mexico. It is still one of the great mysteries in science how these monarchs, separated by four generations from those leaving Mexico in the spring, know exactly where to go. After each monarch was tagged, it was gently placed on a child’s hand. When the monarch leaves the child’s hand, it is truly a magical moment.

Also on September 29, at Stauffer’s Marsh Nature Preserve in Berkeley County, WV, Steve Hartman was tagging monarchs. The group saw numerous monarchs, tagged six, and had 12 monarchs elude their butterfly nets. Steve continued to tag monarchs the following week, while habitat restoration work was being conducted at the marsh.

On Sunday, September 30, Sandy held our final tagging event at the Antietam National Battlefield. He had about 25 participants, half of them children. Chris Tawney, the biologist at the battlefield, instructed us to head for the “White Snakeroot” in the park, where he had found an abundance of monarchs a few days earlier. We made our way there and saw at least 100 monarchs, and tagged 20. We had kids, and adults acting like kids, chasing monarchs all over Otto Farm, the area that is now part of the Final Attack Trail. After one and a half hours, we ended with 20 monarchs tagged.

We owe a huge THANK YOU to the numerous volunteers who supported all of the educational monarch events this year. It truly “takes a village” pulling it all together. There are too many people to name here, but please know that without your help, none of this would have been possible.

Finding A Practical and Effective Solution for Carbon Emissions

By Neal Barkus, Panhandle Progressive

Can we talk? We need to stop wasting time and come up with a way to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions – now. The recent U.N. report on climate change should scare us into action if nothing else has. Earth’s surface temperatures are virtually certain to rise at accelerating rates between now and 2050, with many serious heat-related consequences, including the disruption of agriculture, wildfires and sea level rise. These will threaten world economic and political stability. This is no hoax. Existential threat would be a better term.

Many of the best minds today believe that the solution lies in putting the right price on the production of carbon-based fuels. Carbon producers like the coal industry create “externalities” – costs that are not part of the price of the coal paid by consumers. Chief among these are the environmental effects of the greenhouse gasses emitted when coal is burned. These costs are foisted onto the public in general.

Finding the right higher price for carbon would make carbon-based fuels less attractive than cleaner sources of energy, such as wind and solar. The right price for carbon would also encourage the development of energy efficient machinery and processes. Individual consumers would make better energy choices.

For those who believe the conservative ideology that free markets can solve all of our problems, here is a wakeup call. Free markets have totally failed us in pricing carbon. This is because neither the seller nor the buyer of carbon has an incentive to take externalities into account in the price. Nearly everyone outside the Trump Administration – liberals and conservatives alike – believe that government must intervene. The question is how. There are two candidates for the job.

Cap and Trade

One system, called cap and trade, is currently in use in a group of New England states and California. Government’s role in a cap and trade system is to determine how much total carbon it will permit to be dumped into the atmosphere each year. Government also sells permits to emitters up to the carbon limit and then supervises a secondary market.

Imagine that government decides it will tolerate 5 billion tons of carbon dioxide in year one. It divides this amount into 1,000,000 permits worth 5,000 tons each. The permits could be auctioned, generating revenue. Some carbon emitters might be priced out of an auction, so they could go onto the secondary market to purchase pollution rights from emitters who, through technological improvements, do not need the right to emit all 5,000 tons authorized by their permit.

In year two the overall amount government will tolerate might be reduced to 4.5 million tons. Each of the 1,000,000 permits in year two would authorize 4,500 tons, less pollution than the year before. The price of these would be much higher than the year before at auction and also on the secondary market. The financial pressure on emitters to find ways to reduce their own carbon

emissions would be intense. The carbon limit would steadily be reduced year to year until the goal is met.

The criticisms of cap and trade are several. First, emitters chafe at the government setting overall emission limits and call this “command and control,” a buzz-phrase for top down regulation. Actually these limits would be politically negotiated and might not be set low enough to avoid climate disaster. Second, if the overall limits are too low some emitters would be forced out of business, harming the economy. Third, and most important, cap and trade does not involve a mechanism to soften the impact of higher energy prices on consumers. While environmentalists will favor the certainty that emissions would be reduced at predictable rate down to the level that will avoid climate disaster, this system would be subject to intense political pressure from emitters and consumers, and would be politically unstable.

A Carbon Tax

The other method for solving the problem is a carbon tax. Under this method, government would decide the appropriate price for discouraging carbon emissions and then impose an escalating tax until that price is reached. This seems to be as much “command and control” as setting the carbon limit in a cap and trade system, but surprisingly conservatives seem to like the carbon tax better.

But on November 6 voters in Washington state rejected a proposal to impose a “pollution fee” on emitters in that state. This fee would have operated exactly like a carbon tax. Revenues from the tax would have been devoted to solving climate-related problems, protecting the state’s environment or aiding communities affected by climate change or by the fee itself.

A Carbon Dividend

Another type of carbon tax proposal was made in 2017 by a group called the Climate Leadership Council (CLC), consisting of the heads of large energy companies and Republican heavy-hitters like James Baker, George Schultz and Janet Yellin. Their plan is called The Carbon Dividend.

This plan involves a tax on carbon-based fuel producers determined by the carbon content of the fuels, but it works out to an average of \$43 per ton of carbon dioxide. The tax would increase three to five percent per year. The financial impact would be passed on to consumers; indeed, the scheme won’t work unless the costs are passed on because part of the design is to get consumers to economize and make the right energy choices.

Revenues under the Carbon Dividend plan would not be devoted to developing alternative energy or softening the blow on communities affected by the tax like Southern West Virginia would be. Instead they would be distributed to the public in a “dividend” paid monthly or quarterly through the Social Security Administration. The CLC estimates the dividend will be as much as \$2,000 per year for a family of four and is intended to offset

Advocacy

Carbon Solution, continued from previous page

the higher cost of goods caused by the tax.

The CLC further estimates that two-thirds of American families would be financial winners because the increased cost of energy for them would be less than \$2,000. This is because only higher income families consume enough to outweigh the dividend.

Why, you ask, would big oil companies be interested in a program that reduces the consumption of their products? One answer is that these companies are afraid of future lawsuits blaming them for the effects of climate change. The Carbon Dividend plan would involve some sort of litigation immunity much like the settlement with tobacco companies. Perhaps a more important reason is that the plan involves a grand trade-off whereby current regulations on carbon dioxide emissions would be eliminated as “unnecessary.”

Obviously, there are details within the Carbon Dividend plan that will be unpalatable to the environmental community. But keep in mind how quickly we must act. It will be politically necessary to have leading Republicans and much of industry on board if we hope to do anything beyond arguing about what should be done.

I for one am willing to allow conservatives to have their “revenue neutral” solution wherein the government doesn’t get the proceeds from the carbon tax to spend on ways I would like -- so long as the plan reduces carbon emissions. On this point the CLC says that the Carbon Dividend plan will reduce emissions by 32% compared to 2005, meaning the U.S. would exceed the upper end of the Paris Accords which called for a reduction of 26-28%.

To me the real beauty of the Carbon Dividend plan is that it addresses the psychological resistance people have to acting in their own best interest on the climate issue. The threat of global warming lacks immediacy to most people. It is difficult to convince them to endure costs now that will benefit others in fifty years. The dividend provides immediate benefits for behavior that is required to secure a much larger, though long-term benefit. It would make political support for adoption much more likely and help to insulate the plan from amendment through later legislation. Because of this the Carbon Dividend might be the practical and effective solution we are looking for.

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This Race is for the Birds

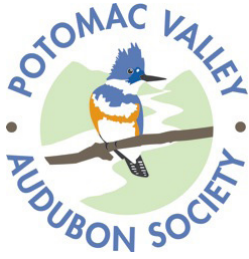
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The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. Programs are free and open to the public. For additional information about PVAS or its programs and activities, please contact any of the board members listed here or see <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>. PVAS serves the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and neighboring Washington County, Maryland.

All Officers, Board Members, and Staff can be contacted at 681-252-1387.

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