

Valley Views

Volume 42, Issue 3

Summer 2024

President's Note

By Mike Sullivan, PVAS President



We have a lot to be thankful for at PVAS as summer begins. Our school programs are reaching more and more children each year. The enrollment at our summer camp programs at Cool Spring and Yankauer is bigger than ever. Children and families are getting outdoors and learning about nature under the many programs PVAS offers every week. The amount of land that we protect in our preserves is steadily expanding. PVAS's advocacy on conservation issues having an impact. We are getting the message out about pollinators, and what to plant, and what not to plant. Our wonderful staff continue to impress with their ingenuity, creativity, and hard work. As I see it, we are definitely making our mark in the community, and we are clearly meeting our mission. That is, *We are people dedicated to preserving, restoring and enjoying the natural world through education and action.*

There is also a lot to look forward to as summer begins. I'll highlight two upcoming activities.

PVAS is holding its **annual election** this month to fill open positions on the Board of Directors. We are so grateful to members who agree to serve on the board. The oversight and governance they provide enables PVAS to steer a mission-oriented course that is mindful of community issues and needs. The election this year is special because we need to fill a handful of open positions including leadership positions. All dues-paying members in good standing will receive a ballot electronically at the end of June – one vote per household. As you will see, the candidates on the ballot are outstanding individuals who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to PVAS. We'll appreciate your consideration of the candidates and your vote.

Our **annual Membership & Founders Day dinner** will be held at Yankauer Nature Preserve at 6 p.m. on Saturday July 13th. We look forward to this event for many reasons. First, we thank and salute the exceptional people who make PVAS tick. This includes our remarkable pool of volunteers, who show up rain or shine at scheduled events and activities. *Thanks!* It also includes our talented and dedicated staff, who make good things

happen every day. *Way to go!* Next, we thank our members and donors, who make it possible for PVAS to implement its programs. *We sincerely appreciate your generosity and trust in PVAS!* We also look forward to this event to honor our founders and leaders who have supported and nurtured PVAS for nearly 40 years. The Current Board of Directors exemplifies the leadership that is required for an organization like PVAS. This board and previous boards have set PVAS on the positive trajectory that it now enjoys. Let's also remember the original founders too, and give a special shout out to Jean Neely, who got the PVAS ball rolling in the mid-1980s.

This is the last President's Message I will prepare, as my term ends on August 31, 2024. On a personal note, it has truly been a pleasure to be President of this wonderful organization. I have enjoyed my many interactions with staff and members on a wide variety of interesting and occasionally challenging issues. In particular, I am very pleased to have been able to work on a number of special projects that were personally satisfying: projects that I found to be energizing and fulfilling. Chief among them were the acquisition of the Cool Spring Preserve; the development of several governance policies that have become necessary as PVAS grew; and the implementation of health and retirement benefits for staff.

I close with a rhetorical question: where else would one be able to meet and associate with so many like-minded individuals who are concerned about conservation and science education? *Thank you for your kind support over the years.*

Your Vote is Needed!

It's time to vote for future board members!
You'll be receiving an e-mail with a link to the electronic vote and bios of candidates
will be on our webpage: www.potomacaudubon.org/about/board/
If you prefer voting by mail, you may request a ballot by e-mailing Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org,
OR calling 681-252-1387.

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

The Eastern Kingbird - *Tyrannus tyrannus*

By Wil Hershberger, Nature Images & Sounds, LLC

The handsome Eastern Kingbird's scientific name is *Tyrannus tyrannus* – king of the kings. This name might seem a little extreme until you look carefully at the behavior of this species. Eastern Kingbirds are extraordinarily defensive of their territories and nests. There are many reports of Eastern Kingbirds landing on the backs of Red-tailed Hawks (and other aerial predators) and pecking at the intruder's head in order to drive them out of the territory and away from the nest. This behavior is indeed worthy of the moniker, tyrant.

Eastern Kingbirds are slightly smaller than an American Robin and slimmer. They are dark gray on the upper portions from head to tail, white underneath, and the tip of the tail appears to have been dipped in white paint – certainly, a handsome combination. This species is found in open, pastoral habitats where they hawk after their insect prey on the wing. They are often seen sitting on barbed wire fences, cedars along fence lines, and leafless branches of trees in open fields. From these open perches, they have an expectational view of their habitat in search of prey.



Photo © Wil Hershberger

Nests are placed in trees in open habitats, with some evidence indicating that the male may be responsible for selecting the site. The large nest is built by the female and is composed of twigs, stems, and grasses, with the interior lined with finer, softer materials. The female can take two weeks to finish these large and robust nests. She'll then lay 3-4 cream to white eggs heavily marked at the large end with dark reddish-brown spots. The female alone incubates the eggs for the 14-17 days required for them to hatch. She alone broods the hatchlings for ten days and no more. Both parents feed the young during this exceptionally rapid growth phase. At around 16-17 days post-hatching, the young leave the nest but are still dependent on the parents for food for an additional two weeks.

The song of the Eastern Kingbird is sung only by the male, only after the females return to the breeding area, at dawn or less so in the evening. This regularly repeated phrase sounds to some like the sorting of an electrical line (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534398>). These dawn songs are often overlooked due to their odd, mechanical quality. In our area, the Antietam National Battlefield along Smoketown Road near The Cornfield Avenue is a great location to listen for this amazing dawn performance. Sometimes, males will display as they sing, flying along and rising up in flight as he sings each phrase (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534495>).

When communicating with each other, both sexes make calls. These calls are short and variable (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534501>, <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534460>, <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/534478>).

In our area, Eastern Kingbird populations are doing well. However, as farmlands revert to forests or are converted to housing, the essential open habitat required by this species will disappear. This species is also totally reliant on insects for food for themselves and their young. Without healthy populations of insects, these birds will decline in numbers. Allowing fence rows to grow up with an occasional Eastern Red Cedar for nesting sites will benefit this and other species.

I hope you'll look for these amazing tyrants on your next drive or walk through open habitats. Look for the white-tipped tail, a tell-tale field mark from some distance. Listen for the electrical short-sounding calls. And if you're out in the early morning, listen for the fantastic dawn song of repeated phrases.

In Memoriam

We are sad to share that long-time PVAS member and friend, Grant Smith, passed away on April 6th. Grant has long been an advocate for preserving open space here in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. As such, he joined the Board of The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle in 2001, later becoming its President, and worked to secure conservation easements on properties all over West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. He was instrumental in saving many acres of land, including sites associated with Civil War battlefields and other historic properties. Under his leader-

ship, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle now holds or co-holds 50 conservation easements that protect more than 4,800 acres.

In 2021, he was awarded a Conservation Award from Two Rivers Giving Circle, recognizing his commitment to Conservation and the impact his service has had on the community. Grant was a constant advocate and partner in PVAS's land conservation efforts. He will be truly missed. For more information on Grant and his impressive life, his full obituary can be found at <https://www.eackles-spencerfuneralhome.com/obituary/rufus-smith>.



PVAS Events

Spring Reflections

By Sonja Melander, Associate Director of Education

Recently, I celebrated my one-year anniversary with PVAS. I arrived in 2023 on the cusp between school field trip season and summer camp. I was wowed by the breadth and quality of the programs at the time. I was wowed by the beauty of our nature preserves. A year later, I am still wowed by both of these things, but that feeling has been augmented by a deepened understanding and appreciation of the components and cycles in the ecosystems of both our natural environment and the Potomac Valley Audubon Society.

As always, I am deeply grateful to the volunteers who host a variety of events that connect our community to the world around them. One participant from the botany workshop at the beginning of the spring ephemeral wildflower season shared: *"I loved the class. It was just the right amount of information to get me started identifying wildflowers (and plants in general)."* Another person on one of the later Wildflower Walks shared: *"The walk was wondrous and magical. I had never seen that many spring ephemerals in one place! The guide was immensely knowledgeable."* Another participant, at a Nature Journaling event, expressed that *"It was great to be at the marsh, and I wouldn't even have considered going if not for the journaling session. Deana is a wonderful leader."* These volunteers have been giving people opportunities to connect with nature, together and on their own. They have been creating collective "magical" moments of awe and wonder. One person said: *"Thank you for making me feel so welcome."*

These meaningful moments shared with us by participants reminds me of the lessons of the spring ephemeral wildflowers themselves: how important and impactful short periods of time can truly be. This is true for the early pollinators, who rely on the pollen, nectar, and fleshy seeds provided by these spring blooms, which come and go in just a matter of weeks. This is true for the people who attend our volunteer-led nature program who leave the program feeling informed, feeling a sense of belonging, and feeling new or refreshed inspiration to go outside and connect with nature.

These short-lived, impactful moments are present in all areas of our programming. Field trips, which are such a short moment in the lives of students, can have such an impact. They can transform fear to fun, like the students who arrive at field trips fearing bugs but leave with memories of fun. They can ignite curiosity, helping children to discover new interests like birding. They can inspire environmental action. Field trips are significant in these and so many other ways, short-lived though they may be! I am proud to support our team of educators that led 41 field trips (and MANY more accompanying classroom visits!) during the 2023-2024 school year: Amy Thomas, Autumn York, Charlotte Boncella, Holly French, Laurel Schwartz, Liz Janelle, Sam Ellis, and Will O'Boyle.

Each day I take a walk around Cool Spring Preserve - for exercise and to stay connected to nature. Although on these walks,

I do my best to be as observant as possible, I couldn't help but be surprised recently at how fast the trees leafed out and how quickly they transitioned from a yellowish-green to a deeper emerald. I thought, "But when did that happen?" Similarly, at the cusp of the school year and summer programs, I find myself surprised at how fast our programmatic changes happen!

This week we are welcoming aboard our new AmeriCorps Service Members, who will serve as camp counselors this summer. We welcome Grace Worth, who shared with us that she is excited to teach about bugs - small, living creatures, so important to our ecosystems, with their own lives and bodies that are to be cared for and cherished. We welcome Griffin Niamatali, who will be bringing back to us his experiences as both a camper and a counselor; last year, one camp family shared with us that *"Mr. Griffin was a favorite!"* We welcome Theo Madison, whose deep connection to Yankauer Nature Preserve, his studies and community involvement in environmental topics, and his experiences as a Counselor-in-Training at a variety of camps will undoubtedly serve to round out another wonderful set of summer camp counselors! We also welcome back Liz Janelle, who will be serving as the Camp Director for Cool Spring Preserve!

As we move from spring to summer, we are aiming to better support volunteers in developing their confidence and skills to share nature with others - through docent and walk host trainings. I am grateful and excited for the energy and support of those in our community - our docents, field trip volunteers, Potomac Valley Master Naturalists, and those who walk through the door of the Case Nature Center, who just found us and share their delight at having done so.



2024 Summer Team: AmeriCorps Service Members and PVAS Staff:
Top, left to right: Will O'Boyle, Grace Worth, Sam Ellis, Theo Madison, Griffin Niamatali, Autumn York.
Bottom, left to right: Charlotte Boncella, Amy Thomas, Laurel Schwartz, Liz Janelle, Holly French

PVAS Events

Summer Appeal

By Kristin Alexander

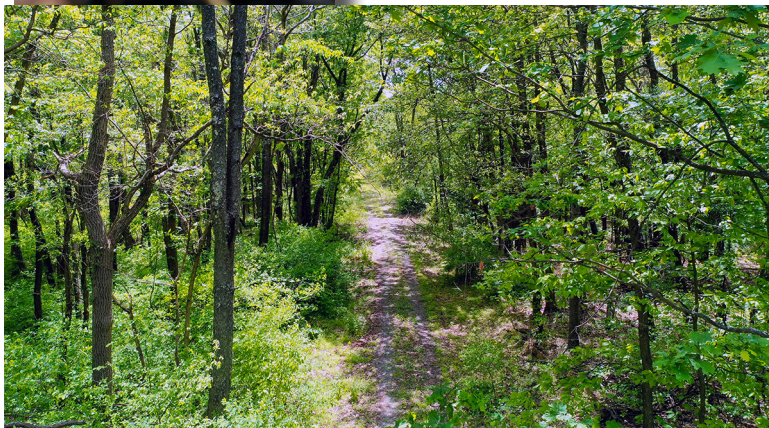
PVAS has completed significant conservation achievements recently: purchasing Linda Case’s property to preserve the most sensitive portion of the marsh, building a “green roof” at Case Nature Center, the accessible trail at Stauffer’s Marsh (and improving the accessible trail at Yankauer), expanding the parking lot at Eidolon (not quite complete, but close!). All of this is on top of the “normal” maintenance of the preserves for wildlife habitat and for hiking, botanizing, photography, quietude, birding, and other outdoor pursuits.



These projects take behind-the-scenes planning and coordination. Finding grants and other funding sources, working with partner organizations and volunteers, requesting proposals and quotes from contractors, and finally, the coordination of the projects themselves. These efforts take an extraordinarily long time, and we rely on donations to cover the majority of this staff expense. And sometimes



having the capital to make critical or time-sensitive projects move forward is essential, as with the Linda Case property purchase.



This year’s “Summer Appeal” will be hitting mailboxes soon. This year, all donations from this campaign will support the management of our nature preserves. Access to these special places is ALWAYS free, but the management of them is not. We’re hoping you’ll be able to support our efforts in managing these places for people and wildlife to keep them beneficial, accessible, and safe for everyone. So, please watch for a special mailing with details of how you can help us be the best land managers we can be!

Thanks so much in advance for your support.

Membership & Founders Day Picnic

This year’s Membership & Founders Day Picnic will be held July 13 at 6:00 p.m. at the Yankauer Nature Preserve, located in Berkeley County. You’re invited to join your fellow members, PVAS Board and staff for the annual event, this year held on the Saturday closest to Founders Day (July 10th).

You’ll have the opportunity to meet new board members, thank board members who are stepping off the board, thank board members who are staying ON the board, meet new and existing staff, and of course, interact with your fellow PVAS members who you may not have seen in a while – or have never met before!

We’ll be serving up Gary and Diane Sylvester’s pulled pork and beans, and volunteers will provide vegetarian options, sides and desserts. This is a FREE event for our members - one of several perks you receive as a PVAS member that is made possible in large part to our amazing team of volunteers who generously provide the food. We hope you’ll join us for a delicious meal, fellowship, and celebrating another year of positive impact.



PVAS Events

24th Annual "This Race is for the Birds!"

By Ellen Kinzer, Fundraising and Communications Manager

We could not have asked for better weather on race day this year! The sun was shining, a breeze was drifting over the hills of Broomgrass Farm Community, and the trails were as dry as we could have asked for on a spring day. After the last few years of rain or threatening high winds, we were all delighted for a calm weather day.

The 5K and 10K races were once again professionally timed by 5 Runners Racing Timing Company. They even provided all the participants with split times, so participants could compare the first half of their race to the second. Than and Mary Ann Hitt set the right tone by singing *Country Roads* just before the start of the race, and KC Walters made sure everyone had the information they needed before they set off. Our photographers, both volunteers and staff, captured runners and walkers out on the course, and got a shot of every person as they crossed the finish line! Check out the hundreds of photos here: <https://shorturl.at/7QWNM>

While many of our participants are runners and joggers, walkers are always invited! Ellen Murphy, who leads our Wellness Walks each month, gathered her group together to walk the trails! With birds and flowers to see along the trails of this private community, it's a once a year treat to be able to explore these fields and forests!

As this is one of our biggest events of the year, we cannot pull it off without the help of volunteers! We had folks out mowing and ensuring the trails were safe and visible and dou-



4th of July Parade Invitation

Celebrate Independence Day with PVAS by marching in the Shepherdstown 4th of July Parade! Find us along Church Street any time after 10:30 a.m. If you have trouble finding us, ask one of the parade coordinators for help. Bring your binoculars, PVAS or camp t-shirt, a favorite stuffed animal to represent the critters we strive to protect or anything else you feel best represents PVAS!

You can also attend the parade and cheer us on from the sidelines! The parade proceeds down German Street from Church to Princess Streets. We hope to see you there!

ble-checking the distance of the trails before the race. On race day, we had all jobs covered with seasoned volunteers running check-in and same-day registration tables, providing snacks and water for the participants, and making sure everyone had a place to park. KC Walters and Katelyn Godfrey put in hours of work in late winter and early spring to make sure the course was in tip-top shape! It is a full team effort to pull off this event.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, supportive sponsors (see below for the list of all X!) and 177 participants from 13 states and Washington, DC, this race was a success! Through donations, sponsorships, and race registrations, over \$20,000 was raised to support PVAS's programs and ongoing conservation initiatives. Click here to see the race results: <https://shorturl.at/LrQrx>



Presenting Level


Platinum Level

John & Patty Bachner Thank You to the Staff of Hospice of the Panhandle

Gold Level

    Jean Neely

Silver Level

Audiology Inc Michael P. Sullivan LLC
 Au Pair in America Milestone Solar Consultants LLC
 Chick-fil-A Martinsburg Onsite Inspection Services
 Community Garden Market Panhandle Periodontics
 Davis Design Progressive Printing
 Erb N' Woods, LLC River & Trail Outfitters
 Fogle Accounting and Consulting PLLC The Press Room
 German Street Coffee and Candlery Trees 101

Bronze Level

AC&T Good Vibes Sound Therapy
 Anne R Basham, D.D.S. Greensburg Bed & Biscuit
 Cornerstone Lawn Services Moderne Homemaker
 Devil's Due Distillery Pill & Pill PLLC

PVAS Events

Birds, Blossoms, and Brunch: A Spring Fundraiser Celebration

We had a delightful spring fundraiser at Sundogs Bed and Breakfast in Shepherdstown, WV in May. Over 100 people attended!

We are so grateful to Peggy Bowers and David Plummer for opening their beautiful home and B&B's gardens, porches, and patios to us, and for their cooking talents as well! The many food preparers were so generous and kind to share their culinary prowess. The flower arrangements of Windward by Lost Acre, using Sundogs flowers, were a lovely touch to the beautiful setting and spread.



A special thank you goes to our bird and blossom walk guides Carol Winkler, Nancy and Elliot Kirschbaum, Peggy Bowers, and Bob Schwartz. They shared their knowledge



Photos © Laurel Schwartz

and passion with guests as they explored the grounds together. And thank you to Sunny Meadows Garden Center for contributing a beautiful hanging flower basket for our raffle prize. How fortunate PVAS is to be surrounded by such talented, generous, kind people!

All in all, the event raised over \$12,000 that will be used to support PVAS's programs and preserves. Thank you!

Board Elections

With the Summer Season comes the election of PVAS Board Members! The new fiscal and leadership year begins September 1, so in preparation, we must cast our votes for board members.

There is quite a bit of turnover this year, so lots of new people to introduce! Below is a quick summary of our candidates:

Next year, we'll need a new President and Vice President! We are delighted to share that you'll find Sandy Brown and Theresa Trainor on the ballot for these roles, respectively. Sandy has been involved with PVAS since she moved to the area in 2013, specifically by becoming a WV Master Naturalist, taking Birding 101, working with the 4th grade Watershed program, This Race is for the Birds!, and more. Theresa Trainor has a strong Organizational Development background. She has worked for the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Personnel Management, and most recently, USFWS's National Conservation Training Center, where she recently retired from her role as Deputy Director. These two are going to bring years of leadership and conservation expertise to our Board!

New "At Large" Members on the ballot will include Peggy Bowers (who you may recall hosted PVAS's fundraiser

at Sundogs B&B along with her husband David Plummer), a horticulturalist whose dedication to planting for pollinators and habitat restoration is undeniable. Mike Rock of Harper's Ferry is an author and economist, most recently retired from Bryn Mawr College. Locally, he's involved with Harper's Ferry Water Commission and Safe Waters Harper's Ferry. The third At-Large Candidate is still being "courted" at the timing of this article, so you'll have to go to the website to read this "mystery candidate's" bio, as well as detailed biographies of ALL our candidates this year! I know you'll be impressed.

Other candidates, also on the ballot, and who have agreed to serve an additional term include Patti Mulkeen-Corley (Secretary, 3rd term), Janet Ady (2nd term), Carolyn Thomas (3rd term), Jim Cummins (3rd term overall, but 1st term as At-Large).

You will be receiving an email with a survey by the end of June with complete biographies of all candidates and the ballot you'll use to vote. If you prefer voting by mail, you may request a ballot by e-mailing Kristin@PotomacAudubon.org OR calling 681-252-1387.

We rely on and appreciate our members participation! (And what a great slate of officers you get to vote in!)

Family and Youth Programs

Youth Programs School Year in Review

By Amy Thomas, Lead Teacher and Naturalist, and Laurel Schwartz, Watershed Coordinator

What a school year it has been in the world of PVAS youth education! Roughly 4,100 students participated in one of our PreK-6th-grade youth programs, 30 preschool wee naturalists came to a nature program at either Cool Spring or Yankauer Preserves, and 432 children and adults came out to one of our monthly “Turtle Time” programs at Cool Spring Preserve between August 2023 and May 2024.

It has been so rewarding to serve our local community through our educational programs, both in the schools and at our nature preserves. This year, PVAS has hosted 41 school-group field trips. Our Watershed Program for 4th graders made up the largest portion of our field trips, but Pre-K visited Yankauer for their “Friends of the Forest” field trip, and 2nd graders explored the forest at Yankauer for their “Friends of the Forest” field trip. Another 2nd grade group came to Cool Spring to learn all about birds. Our goal for these field trips is to immerse children in a natural environment. The field trips differ in their theme and learning goals, but the most important aspect they all share is the time dedicated to nature exploration. Quite frequently, we hear expressions such as “I’ve never been on a hike before” or “I’ve never been in a creek.” These sort of formative nature experiences can shape the values of young minds. Our hope is that children exposed to our programs will develop deep connections to nature and become environmental citizens both in youth and adulthood.



We love reflecting back on our favorite memories and quotes from students and teachers. At a bird-themed field trip at Cool Spring Preserve, one student got particularly engaged with birding. He was pointing out birds that he saw in his binoculars long after other children’s attention went elsewhere. His teacher later told one of the instructors that she has never seen this student get this excited about anything other than video games. At a watershed field trip, a student exclaimed to one member of the PVAS education team “I want to do your job for the rest of my life!” When searching for critters in the stream at Poor House Farm Park, one student said “I never knew there was so much life besides fish in the water.” These moments remind us just how meaningful these nature experiences are to the children that we serve.



Photos © Laurel Schwartz

15 buffer zone trees and shrubs at Poor House Farm Park on Watershed Program field trips. We also hosted a tree-planting workday at Cool Spring Preserve!

All of these field trips would not have been possible without our team of eight environmental educators, countless volunteers, and program funders: The Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District, the City of Martinsburg, and the Berkeley County Public Service Stormwater District. Together, we have truly created meaningful nature experiences for thousands of children this year alone.

We also never know what kinds of concepts will stick with children. For example, we taught the Wee Naturalist pre-schools a Lichen song that we adapted from the song “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” that goes, “Lichen, Lichen on a tree, made of fungi and algae.” At the next program a month later, one parent said that her children now sing it on every hike that they go on when they find lichen. How cute is that?!

Another rewarding component of our 4th grade Watershed Program this year has been participating in environmental action projects with children. Learning about environmental issues, such as pollution and water quality degradation can often make students feel overwhelmed or at a loss for solutions. While it is important to teach about these topics, we do our best to end our programs on a positive note, offering tangible actions that classes can take to address these issues in a way that is achievable for them. Tree plantings are one such memorable example of an action project. This year, we planted

Notes from the Preserves

Birdathon at Yankauer Nature Preserve

Katelyn Godfrey and Lily Davis, Land Conservation AmeriCorps Service Members

During the month of May, PVAS held its annual Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon at Yankauer Nature Preserve. For those who may not be familiar with it, Birdathon is a fun and friendly competition that rotates its location among our four nature preserves, and challenges birders to identify as many species of bird, and as many birds of a species, as possible.

Participants are encouraged to create teams of up to four people and get creative choosing an avian-themed group name. Then teams choose a consecutive 24-hour period of time between May 1st and May 31st to visit the preserve and begin their Birdathon search. To aid citizen science initiatives, participants are encouraged to report their findings on eBird, in addition to emailing them to KC Walters, our Associate Director of Conservation and Operations. This year, in total, the teams observed 134 birds of 47 species.

Once results were tallied, this year's winning group, the Wrenagades (Carol Winckler and Lynn Wiseman - for the third year in a row) received a handcrafted bird box, created and signed by Bob Dean.

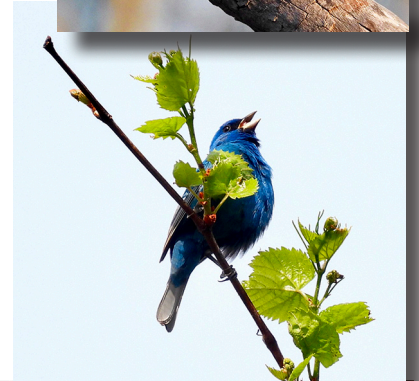
Additionally, in celebration of Birdathon, we launched "Warbler May Madness" on social media to allow everyone to join in on the fun, virtually. To begin, four different pairs of warblers faced off, and folks voted for their favorite to determine which warbler would advance to the next week. By the final week, the Prairie Warbler had emerged as the winning warbler. With its distinguishing black eyeline and under-eye semicircle, bright yellow body, and sweet song, it is clear how it won the majority of votes.

While our Prairie Warbler winner eluded us, we were able to participate in Birdathon ourselves, and also to hear many other birds. During normal trail maintenance and upkeep at the Yankauer property, we are fortunate to be able to do a little birding as we fulfill regular tasks at the nature preserve. In performing these routine duties, our team ensures that the preserves are accessible and clean for visitors and wildlife alike.

The recent late-spring cool mornings offered a wonderful opportunity for us to clean and check up on the most popular trail on the preserve, Kingfisher Trail. This 1.1-mile trail loops around much of the eastern side of the Yankauer property. With its beautiful overlook of the Potomac River, it is no wonder so many of our visitors and volunteers feel such a connection to Yankauer, and the natural features it provides. Kingfisher Trail also offers a wide range of unique native plant species, including the much-loved Paw Paw, Twinleaf, and Mayapple, along with many others.

With the help of the Merlin Bird ID App, we were able to identify many of the bird species that reside at Yankauer. The most prevalent species we heard were the Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Northern Cardinal, Scarlet Tanager, Carolina Wren, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. We also spotted a few Downy Woodpeckers closer to the river overlook.

Our participation in this year's Birdathon was a great test of our own birding knowledge, along with a great interactive learning experience! We had a lot of fun picking out the different bird calls and adding data to the great resource that Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird Identification app provides. For any range of experience – novice to expert – this year's Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon was an amazing way to connect with the beautiful wildlife Yankauer has to offer!



Birdathon photos, clockwise from top right: Prairie Warbler; female Eastern Bluebird; Field Sparrow; Warbling Vireo; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Great Crested Flycatcher; Brown Thrasher. All photos © Carol Winckler. Carol and Lynn Wiseman (Team Wrenagades) were 2024 Birdathon winners.

Conservation

BIG NEWS!

By Kristin Alexander, Executive Director

A big win for conservation occurred on Monday, April 15th when PVAS purchased Cool Spring Farm from Linda Case. This 18-acre parcel contains the most fragile and ecologically significant portion of Cool Spring Marsh, with large springs that keep Bullskin Run cold, wetlands that provide habitat for rare plants and birds, and an upland field that is critical for turtle nesting habitat. The purchase also includes the historic Patent House, Cool Spring Farm house, and the workshop next to the creek.



The only reason PVAS was able to purchase the property was the generosity of Linda Case, who made us a deal we couldn't refuse. PVAS will sell the 6-acre residential portion of the property in the near future to recoup PVAS's financial investment. The remaining 12 acres will be added to the Cool Spring Preserve, where it will be protected in perpetuity.



A huge thank you goes to Linda Case for her continued generosity and commitment to protecting Cool Spring Marsh. This acquisition would never have been possible without her incredible selflessness, and we are deeply grateful. NONE of what we know as Cool Spring Preserve would have been possible without her. Making the purchase of this new, precious acreage attainable is another example of her vision, generosity, and commitment to protecting the marsh.

Another reason we were able to purchase the property was a loan from Partnership Community Capital, a 501(c)(3) organization and a certified Community Development Financial Institution that "lends to small businesses and non-profits so they can grow their operations, increase profitability, create employment opportunities, and have a positive environmental and community impact." This group was wonderful to work with and truly believed in the conservation value of this purchase.



The purchase was also possible thanks to donations from our members and friends that have allowed PVAS to have a special "Conservation Opportunity Fund," so we have the resources to jump on these sorts of unique and critical opportunities to conserve precious habitat. This fund is directed by our Board and can be released by a board vote. This fund allowed us to have the earnest money on hand and provide a down payment, lessening the amount we needed to borrow (and allowing us to be more appealing to our lender!)

As of this newsletter, PVAS will have put the residential portion of the property on the market. If you're interested in learning more, give me a ring or drop me a note! We're confident the property will move quickly. It's a magical place set in the middle of a nature preserve!

Advocacy

We thought you, our members, would like to see the following letter/comments, submitted to the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan (2045) for the final public meeting on May 13th. Many thanks to Board Member Than Hitt for preparing the comments for the Board's consideration and approval.

13 May 2024

Luke Seigfried, County Planner
116 East Washington Street, Suite 200
Charles Town, WV 25414

Dear Mr. Seigfried,

On behalf of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS), we appreciate the opportunity to provide the following comments for the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan 2045 (Plan) update. PVAS serves Jefferson County and the region with a mission to preserve, restore, and enjoy the natural world through education and action. Our membership includes over 300 people, many of whom have engaged in the Plan update process.

We support conservation of natural areas for people and wildlife, and we appreciate the importance of county planning and zoning for this purpose. The PVAS maintains a network of nature preserves in the region including Cool Spring Nature Preserve in Jefferson County, and we can attest to the many public benefits such areas offer. However, we also recognize that conservation planning requires a landscape perspective, and that isolated nature preserves by themselves are unlikely to serve the needs of Jefferson County residents as we continue to grow.

We therefore support the emphasis on parks and open space conservation that has been a repeated theme in many public comments for the 2045 update in prior meetings. We also share the concern raised by public comment in prior meetings regarding the rapid loss of open space and farmland to industrial and residential development in Jefferson County. We therefore offer the following specific recommendations:

1. **Incorporate Conservation Districts for land use planning in Jefferson County.** We are fortunate that the West Virginia Conservation Agency supports agricultural enhancement and conservation in the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District, but we believe that the County should formally incorporate such conservation planning in the 2045 update. We are concerned that many areas zoned for Rural/Agriculture in the Envision 2035 plan have since been rezoned for development by the Board of Zoning Appeals, and we believe that formalizing a Conservation District zoning designation could avoid such ad-hoc planning while providing economic incentives for conservation moving forward. Additional resources are available from the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts: <https://www.wvacd.org>.
2. **Incorporate water conservation in land use planning.** Although public water supply management is the purview of City and County administrators outside the Office of Planning and Zoning, the land use decisions stemming from the 2045 update nonetheless will affect public water security and supply. For instance, drought conditions last summer forced municipal water managers in the county to resort to secondary water supply options, and increasing demands for water from industrial and residential development may exacerbate the problem. To our knowledge, the most recent assessment of groundwater availability in the county was conducted in 2012 (ASI report), and development pressures have greatly increased since that time. We recommend updating that analysis to account for current and anticipated development pressures on water resources in the county. Such an update could be facilitated by the Jefferson County Water Advisory Board. We also note that historic preservation and water resource conservation often is mutually beneficial in this region because the original farms typically were located near streams and springs.
3. **Quantify economic benefits of conservation in the 2024 update.** Parks and natural areas are highly valued by Jefferson County residents, as highlighted by many public comments towards this end in the 2045 update process to-date. Moreover, additional development pressures will only increase the importance of conservation planning moving forward. We therefore recommend that economic benefits of natural areas and conservation be incorporated in the 2045 update.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please feel free to contact us for additional information.

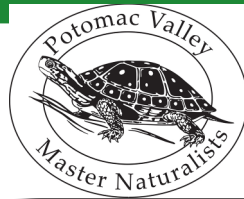
Sincerely,

Kristin Alexander
Executive Director

Michael Sullivan
President, Board of Directors

Nathaniel Hitt, PhD
Member, Board of Directors

PVMN

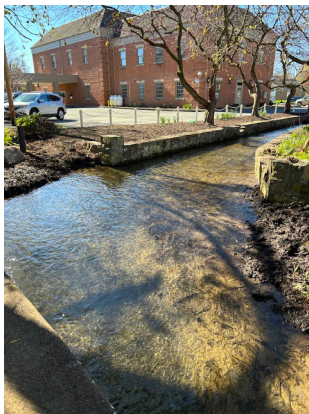


Spring Cleaning at Town Run

By Evelyn Gettys

On April 6, several PVAS members and master naturalists gathered with other volunteers on a cold, blustery Saturday morning to assist in removing invasives from the Town Run.

This is an ongoing project to clean up the water and the watershed of Town Run that starts near Morgan Grove Park and goes through Shepherdstown and empties into the Potomac. Shepherdstown will be using Town Run as a source of drinking water. The first steps are to remove as many invasive plants as possible from the Town Run, then plant natives to reinforce the streams bank. This project will be ongoing.



It is amazing to witness the transformation that can happen in one day. Invasive iris, parrot feather, and other plants have been in the run for a number of years, choking the water's pathway and causing flooding in some areas. As the team worked, you could see the difference in the water flow. It is a very rewarding feeling to see the change in the run.

Future activities are scheduled the second Saturday of the month from 9:00 -1:00 through September. We meet at Morgan Grove Park at the pavilion, and it is helpful to bring shovels if you have them and shoes that you do not mind getting muddy. Master Naturists can earn volunteer hours for this activity.

GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP!

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

- 10% member discount on program fees, facility rentals, and birthday parties.
- A subscription to our quarterly newsletter, *Valley Views*, and twice monthly e-newsletter, *Heads Up, PVAS!*
- Free or reduced admission to participating nature centers/museums.
- Discounts to participating **local businesses**.

Gift Membership Form

To purchase a gift membership, send in the form below with an enclosed check. Dues are \$50/household, (covering membership for everyone in your household for one year), \$35/teacher or \$20/full-time adult student (benefits apply to member only). Make the check out to "PVAS." For more details on membership, go to: www.potomacaudubon.org/support/become-a-member/.

Your Name: _____

Recipient's Name: _____

Recipient's Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip code: _____

Recipient's E-mail: _____

Recipient's Phone (optional): _____

Please note if you'd like us to mail your gift membership directly to the recipient of your choice, or to you. If you'd like us to mail it directly to the recipient, also note when you would like it to be mailed.

Clip and mail this form to:

Membership Chair, PVAS
PO Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443



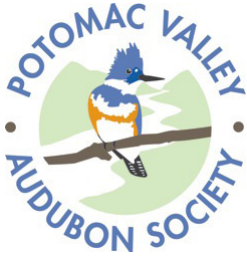
Thank you for your support!

About the National Audubon Society

National Audubon has a membership program that is separate from PVAS. 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 an affiliate of PVAS, but not a full PVAS member. Affiliates will have access to our communications, and invitations to our events. However, all National Audubon dues go to the National Audubon Society and are not shared with PVAS. We heartily invite you to become a dues-paying member of both organizations.

PVMN Hosts WVMN State Conference

Join Potomac Valley Master Naturalists at Cacapon State Park in Berkeley Spring, WV, for the West Virginia Master Naturalists State Conference on July 18-21. This annual conference is a great time to get together with other Master Naturalist Chapters and learn from a variety of presenters. This year, talks will focus on topics such as beavers, wetland restoration, prescribed burns and habitat restoration, native seed collection, bat chat, bird walks, and more! Keynote address will be by Nancy Lawson, author of *The Humane Gardener*. Tickets start at \$115 for entry to all days of the conference.



Potomac Valley Audubon Society
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MAIL TO:

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May (excluding December). 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.

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

- President: Mike Sullivan (2024)
- Past President: Jim Cummins (2024)
- Secretary: Patti Mulkeen-Corley (2024)
- Treasurer: Dana Fogle (2025)
- Board Members-at-Large: Janet Ady (2024)
- Susan Brookreson (2024)
- Pete Mulford (2025)
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- Kristan Phillips (2024)
- Sally Reynolds (2024)
- Mary Lynn Robinson (2025)
- Carolyn Thomas (2024)
- Keith Unger (2025)
- Than Hitt (2025)
- Emerita Board Member:** Jean Neely*

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- Assoc. Dir. Conservation & Ops: KC Walters (304-283-7319) Katelyn@PotomacAudubon.org
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- PVAS Wildlife Rescue Coord: Diana Mullis (304-754-3753) dianamullis7@gmail.com
- Valley Views* editor/publisher:
 Charlotte Fremaux (301-404-8639) newsletter@potomacaudubon.org

PVAS BOARD
 PVAS Board meetings take place the first Thursday of every other month (September through May, except December). Meetings are open to all PVAS members. Please contact the President if you would like to attend.