



# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
Winter 2015 Volume XX, Issue 4



The hen  
© Jim Clark

## Wild Turkeys

by Emily Cook

It's hard to believe that the now common Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) was once endangered. Today, it's not uncommon to see a single bird, or even an entire flock— also known as a rafter, gobble, or gang among other things – when out on a morning hike in the woods or unexpectedly strutting along the roadside on your morning commute. Wild Turkeys sometimes make the news when one frequents a local coffee shop, fast food restaurant or becomes attracted to a moving car.

In the early 20th century, the Wild Turkey population was so depleted due to hunting and habitat loss that there was concern for its extinction in North America. Today, after successfully implementing restoration programs there are close to eight million Wild Turkeys in the continental United States, with the majority inhabiting the eastern and southern states – including a healthy population right here in Loudoun County.

Turkeys were popular with Native Americans for both sustenance as well as for the birds' beautiful plumage, which was used to adorn the native's wardrobe and horses. After the arrival of English colonists, turkeys became a mainstay of the colonial diet. There was also a great deal of respect for this courageous, fierce bird. The story has been told many times that Benjamin Franklin argued in favor of the Wild Turkey serving as our national symbol on the great seal, although this is only partly true. The Bald Eagle had been selected for this distinct honor; however, its depiction, to Franklin, represented the head of a turkey, not a bald eagle, which he found preferable. After noting that eagles were commonly seen stealing prey caught by other predators, Franklin stated that "the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and ... a true original Native of America. He is ... a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on."

This respect was largely due to the fact that the Wild Turkey is not only a handsome bird, boasting iridescent dark plumage and a massive fan of a tail, but is also formidable and intelligent. Wild Turkeys are highly alert and intelligent, both in evading predators and in their hunting and foraging skills. They are very quick on their feet, running up to 25 miles per hour, the speed of an Olympic sprinter,

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# Message from our President

by Katherine Daniels

**W**inter has its highlights in nature, as do all seasons. At Loudoun Wildlife we look forward to our winter field trips to see the delightful birds overwintering in our area. We see Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers, Dark-eyed Juncos and other winter sparrows, as well as a colorful variety of northern waterfowl. Even from our homes, birds are easier to observe on leafless trees. We enjoy the small signs of the next season: the shrill calls of mating foxes on cold January nights, fuzzy eaglets hatching in February, the early blooms of skunk cabbage reaching up from the leaf litter and amphibians singing their ancient songs in vernal pools after a long winter underground. These are events that whisper promises of spring and nature's rebirth.

At Loudoun Wildlife we're spending our winter creating a new five-year strategic plan. We tabulated your answers to our survey and listened to your feedback on what is important to you as we go forward another five years with Loudoun Wildlife. We are also finalizing a budget for the year and identifying ways to fund the education, field trips, publications and many other things we do.

January also begins our new year of memberships that sustain us throughout 2016. Memberships and donations from you represent a large percentage of our operating budget. We start this year with a new structure that allows for more sustainable giving and donations, and we've added gift memberships, and memberships to honor or memorialize special people. Please join or renew if you haven't already.

On February 27, 2016, we're having our second annual Martinis Matter fundraiser at River Creek Club. This was a fun and fabulous event last year with drinks called "wild things," dozens of raffle prizes and silent auction items, live music and a live raptor meet and greet at the party. Please consider donating raffle items or becoming a sponsor for the event and make sure you don't miss this "wild" night!

As we make our new year's resolutions and look forward into 2016, I want to thank you, members, for making 2015 a fabulous 20th year for Loudoun Wildlife. You are Loudoun Wildlife.



Katherine Daniels Photo by Sharon Moffett

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The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) group of volunteers who share a common goal of protecting and perpetuating natural habitats for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board meets the second Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Nicole Hamilton. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's office number is 703-777-2575.

Loudoun Wildlife now has staffed office hours at Morven Park.

**OFFICE HOURS**  
9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturdays  
Carriage Museum, Morven Park  
17263 Southern Planter Lane  
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■ Wild Turkeys, continued

and can fly for short distances up to 50 miles per hour. A turkey is even capable of swimming if necessary, tucking its wings at its side, spreading its tail and paddling with its feet, similar to a duck. The reputation of being slow, both intellectually and athletically, is most likely the result of the evolution of the farm-raised turkey, which is bred to be heavy-breasted, and not necessarily intelligent. The unflattering reference of calling someone "a turkey" applies to the Wild Turkey's domesticated cousin, not the handsome bird of the forest and field.

In addition to its ample, thick plumage, the Wild Turkeys boast a large wattle and head that can change color from white to red to blue, depending upon the emotional state of the bird. Though female turkeys also have wattles, those on the male are much more prominent, and there is some evidence that males with the most brilliantly colored wattles hold more social standing and are able to attract females more easily than their scantily-wattled peers. The wattle is quite important during courtship. The male, or tom, performs an expertly choreographed ritual in his efforts to pique the interest of hens during mating. Puffing up his bountiful feathers, fanning his massive tail feathers and lowering his wings, the tom begins his impressive display as he slowly struts in front of the hens, rattling his plumage and making deep humming and chugging sounds. This exhibition is also intended to warn off other competitive males.

Another interesting feature of Wild Turkeys is the beard which is a tuft of modified feathers that look like bristles growing from the center of the breast. Typically only males grow beards but in some flocks up to 20 percent of females also grow beards. Beards may be used to age a tom as they grow longer as he matures. Occasionally, a tom grows multiple beards.

Being polygamous, one tom may have a harem of several hens. The hens lay one clutch of 10-15 off-white eggs with reddish brown spots, often laying their eggs in the same community nest. Hens build their nests on the ground, which is usually a shallow depression with little adornment under a bush or at the base of a tree. Eggs are incubated for approximately 25 to 30 days.

Hatchlings, known as poults, leave the nest shortly after hatching. Females feed hatchlings for the first few days after which they feed themselves by mimicking the hens. Toms are not involved in the raising of the young. Poults quickly learn to



*Tom display  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan*



*Foraging in the snow  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

search the ground for small seeds and roots and are brooded by the females only at night until they become fully independent and are full grown, which takes several months. They are able to fly for short distances after one to two weeks.

Hens and poults continue to travel together forming a large community of up to 200 birds or more. There is a distinct hierarchy, with a matriarch firmly in place among the females while the toms constantly fight and jostle for top position. Outside of breeding season, the males often travel in large flocks together.

Wild Turkeys are omnivorous. Their varied and expansive diet includes a wide variety of seeds, nuts, berries and grasses, a variety of insects, spiders and grubs as well as snails, frogs, crabs and snakes. They tend to roost in trees at night and prefer to forage on the ground during the early morning hours by scraping up the dirt to reveal roots and bulbs just beneath the surface. On walks through the woods, it is common to see turkey scratches on the forest floor, evidence of their constant search for food.

Despite being one of the larger and more formidable birds, turkeys face many predators, which is why traveling in large numbers is helpful in protecting the flock. Large mammals such as bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, eagles and humans pose the greatest risk to mature turkeys. Their nests are also extremely vulnerable, and both eggs and hatchlings can fall prey to owls, raccoons, skunks, and snakes.

Turkeys are particularly fond of acorns and our heavy oak forests are a perfect habitat for them. If you'd like to make your property more turkey friendly, plant vegetation that yields nuts or berries. If you are lucky enough to already have nut-bearing trees such as oak, hickory and walnut, or bushes that produce berries, you may already enjoy the sight of wild turkeys foraging in your yard.

The best time to see Wild Turkeys is early dawn when they are seeking food. By simply remaining quiet as you hike through the woods or along the edge of the tree line, you may see a few individuals, or an entire flock, of magnificent Wild Turkeys ambling along. In the evening, you may spot turkeys flying from tree to tree as they settle into their roost for the night. We are lucky to have a plentiful population of Wild Turkeys in Loudoun. Their exuberant gobbling and spectacular appearance make them treasured residents in our community.



## Monarch Butterflies – The Magic Continues

by Nicole Hamilton



*Monarch and Joe Pye Weed  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

As you read this, Monarch butterflies rest by the millions in Oyamel fir trees in a tiny mountain town outside of Mexico City. These butterflies lived in our gardens. They gobbled up milkweed as caterpillars and sipped nectar as adults. They sat on our fingers and danced through our lives and then, one day last fall, they looked to the southwest and flew.

The trip was long and we held our breath as Hurricane Patricia rolled through their migratory path. After a brief pause, they flew on. Finally, on November 4, via our friends at Journey North and Monarch watcher Estela Romero, we heard the news: "The massive arrival started at noontime today. Monarchs suddenly and clearly came from the north side of our town."

This winter, scientists will once again go to the Monarch sanctuaries and estimate the health and size of the populations. It may be a few more weeks before we have the official totals but Dr. Chip Taylor, Director of Monarch Watch, estimates based on last spring's weather conditions and milkweed growth, we may see a doubling of the population over last year. This would be great news but we have a long way to go in bringing back the Monarchs. The challenge is that there is only so much milkweed

growing and it is not clear there is enough to sustain the current population, let alone allow for it to increase. So what do we do? Plant! We plant our gardens with milkweed and other wildflowers, we talk to our friends about planting milkweed and continue our work restoring and creating milkweed habitat large and small.

2015 was the third year of our Monarch campaign in Loudoun. We reached over 2,000 people through our events. We sold over 5,500 milkweed plants and countless other native plants at our native plant sales. We donated 300 milkweed plants to 8 local schools and supported them in creating Monarch waystations.

We also built a partnership with VDOT. Through a series of meetings with VDOT leaders, including the commissioner, we shared the story of the plight of the Monarchs, provided recommendations and discussed the role VDOT could play in Monarch and pollinator recovery. This has been a very positive partnership.

VDOT has already changed their mowing standards to make sure that native wildflowers, including milkweed, will be protected in the future. They are also discussing ways to reduce herbicide applications. Shifting from turf management to wildflowers is also in the works. VDOT is looking into sources and types of native seed mixes and is testing seed germination rates and best methods for seed planting. As the appearance of our roadways transform, VDOT wants people to understand why so they are creating Monarch waystations/pollinator plots with education kiosks at all 43 rest stops over the next 5-6 years.

VDOT's large land area is a critical part of the Monarch recovery plan and pollinator health. It is wonderful to know that as Monarchs lift off from our gardens, they will find more milkweed and other native wildflowers along their journey. Every plant counts!



## A plant for all seasons: Eastern Teaberry (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

by Julie Borneman

What plant produces delicate flowers, provides fall color, supports wildlife, is evergreen and will even grow in dry shade? *Gaultheria procumbens* is a plant that can meet all these criteria while adding interest to the garden in all seasons. *G. procumbens* has many common names including Eastern Teaberry, Wintergreen and Checkerberry.

Eastern Teaberry is a woody low 3 to 5 inch plant that spreads by rhizomes. Small white to pink flowers from June to August lend a delicate look to the summer garden. Fruit and seed production starts in summer and continues until fall. Oval, shiny, dark, green leaves turn reddish as temperatures drop. Leaves are fragrant and remain green in winter. Individual plants are typically found in the wild, but in the right conditions can form small colonies and create a very handsome groundcover.

While Eastern Teaberry is not frequently found in the Piedmont region, it grows well here in the right conditions. It prefers shade to part shade, or dappled sunlight, dry to moist soils, and will even tolerate poor soil. In the wild it can often be found growing beneath evergreen trees. In the garden this ability makes it a nice companion plant for otherwise tricky areas.



Eastern Teaberry  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

Eastern Teaberry is easy to grow as it has no significant pest or disease problems. Mildew and leaf spot can crop up, but are generally cosmetic and cause no harm to the plant. Locating the plant in the proper place minimizes these problems.

Any baby boomers remember Clark's Teaberry flavored gum? *G. procumbens* has been used to flavor teas, candies, medicines as well as chewing gum. *G. procumbens* is the original source of wintergreen oil. Crushed leaves produce a very pleasing scent and cooking the leaves or berries will fill your house with a lovely aroma. Eastern Teaberry is also appealing to wildlife. Showy red fruits attract chipmunks, mice, and birds. Deer will browse on the foliage so young plants should be protected from critters until well established. Once established, it should be able to tolerate deer browse.

Given the right conditions *Gaultheria procumbens* can prove to be a hearty ground cover for challenging spots in the landscape. It has many uses and benefits for both humans and wildlife throughout the year.

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*Bluebird in winter  
Photo by Katherine Daniels*

## Bluebirds 2015

*by Karla Etten*

It was a bleak 2015 season for bluebirds in Loudoun County. Despite our concerted conservation efforts, our bluebird population is going through a natural cycle which includes population declines due to harsh weather including above average snowfall of recent winters. However, bluebird lovers take heart as we can aid their survival by promoting winter bluebird management activities. Winterizing our nest boxes for cold weather roosting will provide for considerable benefit to their survival. (For details visit [www.virginiabluebirds.org/about-bluebirds/winterizing-nest-boxes/](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org/about-bluebirds/winterizing-nest-boxes/)) Trails closer to dense housing communities can offer bluebird-friendly food and fresh water. In planning for the future, we can incorporate native plants that are beneficial to bluebirds and pollinators.

This past nesting season produced an incredibly robust number of tree swallows, which are equally protected

and welcome. However, to help our bluebird count recover during the 2016 nesting season, trail managers are looking at ways to help mitigate the competition for resources between our bluebirds and other cavity nester populations. One such measure is to promote the technique of pairing or setting up pairs of nest boxes within a 5-10 foot range in an attempt to reduce the bluebird-swallow competition. This effort may take 3-6 years to show fruition even if more moderate winters prevail. Keep your fingers crossed!

Next season, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will assist with the establishment of two new bluebird trails at 50West Winery in Aldie and at the new Brambleton active adult community, Birchwood at Brambleton. We are pleased to announce that both these trails will feature the highly-regarded Woolwine Two-Hole Mansion nest box, designed by Linda Violet of California. The two-hole design provides adult bluebirds with an advantage during a house sparrow attack. As Linda's website states, "bluebirds are better able to survive house sparrow attacks by escaping out the second hole and taking the battle outside the box where bluebirds are able to outcompete house sparrows." Incorporating the two-hole mansions near and around our more dense housing communities where house sparrows thrive is one of several measures being taken to help our bluebird population recover. These new boxes, being larger, will also serve as improved roost boxes during the winter months.

Both new trails will be comprised of 15 two-hole mansions and we welcome volunteers to assist with their monitoring. With all these planned measures, the efforts of volunteers are crucial to our bluebird population recovery, so please help if you can.



*Karla Etten, Bluebird Monitoring Coordinator*



## Native and Exotic Insect Invaders

by Emily Bzdyk

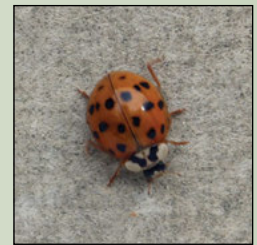
As the weather gets colder, there are several species of insects that are notorious for entering our homes. Many insects die in the fall, but some enter a hibernation phase called diapause. They find shelter and wait for more favorable conditions in the spring. Houses are cozy all winter long, and make a tempting hideout. Insects are small enough to squeeze unnoticed through holes. Species that congregate use pheromones to find each other and form groups, adding to the problem. We find these insects collecting in our rooms, buzzing around lights, and crawling along windowsills! The good news is that in most cases, the presence of these insects is merely an annoyance and poses no real threat. But sometimes their large numbers can be alarming, and some people can't help feeling overwhelmed by the "invasion."



Boxelder Bug (*Boisea trivittata*)

A few of the winter congregating species are native, having naturally occurred in this part of the world for a long time. An example is the Boxelder Bug (*Boisea trivittata*). These bugs are black and reddish orange and about 1.4 cm long. They are so named because they feed on maple seeds, particularly boxelder. Other insects that enter our houses are exotics or non-natives, which have been relatively recently introduced to our area. These insects often hail from Asia and adapt well to our similar climate. Species might find their way here on their own, or they are intentionally or accidentally introduced by us. Two species which you may be familiar with are the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug and the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle.

The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*) can have incredibly variable color and spot number, making it tricky to identify. It can be yellow, red, orange or black, and have anywhere from zero to 20 spots. In some varieties, markings on the pronotum (behind the head) that form a black M or W can be useful to identify it. These beetles have been repeatedly, intentionally introduced to control aphids starting in 1916. Since then, they have become invasive, and spread all over the country, sometimes outcompeting native species. We have native lady beetles that also hibernate for the winter in other parts of the country. The Convergent Lady Beetle (*Hippodamia convergens*) is a native species commonly found throughout North America. In the western United States it travels into the surrounding hills and mountains where it congregates in large numbers to hibernate for up to 9 months.



Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*)



Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*)

The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) is a large-bodied true bug. It grows up to 1.7 cm long with a mottled brown appearance and tan belly. It has brown and white banded antennae that differentiate it from similar native species. It was accidentally introduced recently, the first one collected in Pennsylvania in 1998. Since then it has spread across the nation, feeding on crop plants such as fruit trees and beans. As a pest they are a big problem, but most people don't notice them until they start moving into houses for the winter. They have created quite a stir! They are harmless, but if disturbed they emit a strong scent, which has been compared to cilantro, from glands along the underside of their bodies. Natural predators such as birds and wasps have begun adapting to the new plentiful food source and are feeding on stink bugs, but their numbers are still quite high.

The best way to control these insects is to seal your house. Check windows and screens for holes, check where pipes or wires enter the house, use door sweeps, and seal up cracks with caulk. Using pesticides is not advisable, because most are only effective if directly applied to an insect's body. Other chemicals that are long lasting are too detrimental to the environment. They kill all insects indiscriminately, including beneficial pollinators such as bees. When I see these invaders during the winter, I'm honestly just pleased to see a living insect! Winters can be long for an entomologist.



# Nooks and Crannies *A Place for Families*

by Sarah Steadman

**T**his feature is written by and for youth and families and aims to spotlight the special perspective of our young nature stewards with an eye for things unseen, residing in the Nooks and Crannies of our environment.

This month, our youth contributors answered our call for winter Haiku poetry submissions. Their words, penned in the brevity of 17 syllables, conjure lasting images of nature as she enters and explores the coldest season of the year.

**Want to try writing a traditional Haiku poem?** IT'S EASY...just count the syllables! Write a poem with 3 lines and a total of 17 syllables (word parts). It helps to READ the POEM ALOUD and COUNT the syllables.

**Like this:**

The warmth on my skin (the first line has 5 syllables)  
Fire falls beneath the trees (the second line has 7 syllables)  
The sun sets again (the last line has 5 syllables)

Doesn't this Haiku create a warm feeling and images of the hot, bright sun shining?

Now, read these Haiku written by youth right here in Loudoun County whose words will help you see the shimmer of snow and hear wildlife enjoying winter!



*White blanket covers food*  
Photo by Katherine Daniels

Huddled in thicket  
White blanket covers food, fur  
Dawn breaks, warm sunshine.

*Cameron Cowboy*  
5th Grade, Buffalo Trail Elementary School





*We build the snowmen  
Photo by Katherine Daniels*

The cold air is here  
Water seeps into my boots  
Snow tickles my feet

We build the snowmen  
Birds migrating to the South  
The cold air is nice

Frost shines on the dirt  
The breeze is cold and loving  
I close my eyelids

I look at the snow  
Snow falls upon the white ground  
The warmth of winter

*Kashvi Ramani, Ashburn  
4th Grade, Belmont Station Elementary School*

Monarchs, they touched us  
Orange leaves, black trees, white frost kiss  
Safe journey my friends.

*Nicole Cowboy  
6th Grade, Mercer Middle School*



*White frost kiss  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*



*Snap, freeze, rustle, pounce  
Photo by Katherine Daniels*

Snap, freeze, rustle, pounce  
High jump dive beneath white snow  
Red Fox feeds her young

*Nicole Cowboy  
6th Grade, Mercer Middle School*

**Have a wildlife perspective, poem, photo, or craft to share for our next issue of Nooks and Crannies?  
Loudoun's K-12 youth contributors can contact Sarah Steadman at [ssteadman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:ssteadman@loudounwildlife.org).**



# Announcements

## Landscape for Life, a six-session sustainable landscaping course

**Tuesday mornings, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. January 12 - February 16, 2016**

**Snow date: February 23**

**Crossroads United Methodist Church, Ashburn, VA**

**Cost: \$60**

Landscape for Life is a sustainable gardening course developed by the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and the US Botanic Garden. It is offered locally in partnership with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the Piedmont Environmental Council, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, and Watermark Woods Native Plants. It teaches us how we can transform our home landscapes and public places into healthy refuges that benefit not only birds, pollinators, and other wildlife, but also the community and the Chesapeake Bay. To register, email Nan McCarry at [landscapeforlifeclass@gmail.com](mailto:landscapeforlifeclass@gmail.com).

*Frozen*

*Photo by Donna Quinn*



## Volunteer Orientation and Opportunity Showcase



*A winter outing with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
Photo by Laura McGranaghan*

**Sunday, January 31, 2016, 1 p.m.  
Carriage Museum in Morven Park**

Would you like to make a difference?

Would you like to get involved but don't know where to begin?

Are you new to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy?

Do you want to learn more about the organization and what we do?



*Volunteering is fun!  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

Join us on January 31 for a one-hour introduction and overview of our plans for the future. Meet the board members and project coordinators to learn about volunteer opportunities utilizing your skills, interests and experience. Discover how you can become part of our mission to enhance the nature experience through education, publications, events, programs and projects!

Light refreshments will be served.



## Northwest Federal Credit Union: A Partner in Wildlife!

Last spring Northwest Federal Credit Union welcomed Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to its Community Partners Program and in doing so went to bat for wildlife in a big way! The Credit Union brought new members to the Loudoun Wildlife community, and as a result made it possible for us to offer numerous wildlife programs to the public and to complete habitat restoration projects benefiting our wild friends. Not only did the Credit Union support wildlife in 2015, but they brought their mission of helping members to succeed financially to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy family.

Did you know that as a Loudoun Wildlife member, you are eligible to become a member of the Credit Union? This means Loudoun Wildlife members can also benefit from many products and services offered by Northwest Federal.

In 2015 Northwest Federal Credit Union celebrated its 68th year of building relationships, communities, and futures. To continue that legacy, Loudoun Wildlife and the Credit Union will be teaming up on May 28, 2016, for a "Go Wild" Membership Event at the Credit Union's Leesburg office. We promise to keep you posted! In the meantime, you can check out Credit Union services by visiting [www.nwfcu.org](http://www.nwfcu.org) or the Leesburg branch office at 525 Trimble Plaza (off Battlefield Parkway).

### Come see us at Morven Park!

You'll be amazed at all there is to explore and do at Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's home base – Morven Park. Morven offers something new to discover each visit. This 1,000-acre historic gem in Leesburg highlights the Governor Davis Mansion and formal gardens, museums, equestrian fields and farmland. We invite you to take to the trails – including the Ridge Top Trail stewarded by Loudoun Wildlife – to enjoy the wonders and natural beauty of the ridge. And don't miss a visit to Turkey Hill to visit the forever home of the turkeys pardoned by the President. There's something for everyone at Morven Park!



*See you on the ridge!  
Photo by Katherine Daniels*



# Programs and Field Trips

Space is limited for many of these programs and field trips. Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot. For up-to-date information on our programs and to sign up, visit our web site at [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org).

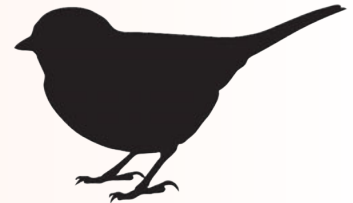
**Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board Meeting** — The Board typically meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. All Loudoun Wildlife members are welcome.

**\*Unless otherwise specified, contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org) with questions.**

**Searching for Birds of Prey** — Saturday, January 23, 1:30 p.m. until dark. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Liam and Laura McGranaghan, Joe Coleman and Liz Dennison on a winter raptor search. We will drive the back roads of Loudoun County with frequent stops to find and identify the many hawks, and an owl or two, who winter here. **Space is limited so please register early. Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Winter Explorers: A Beginner Photography Workshop for Kids and Families** — Saturday, January 30, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Location TBD. It's amazing what you can see when you are staring through the eye of a camera. Do you have a young photographer at home who wants to learn some tricks of the trade? Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and professional National Geographic wildlife photographer Jeff Mauritzen, who will guide us on a

## Birding Banshee



Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks for the monthly bird walk at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve south of Leesburg. Because of its rich and varied habitat, it is a birding hotspot. Bring binoculars if you have them.

**Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Second Saturdays: January 9, February 13, March 12, April 9, at 8:00 a.m**

winter scavenger hunt while teaching young photographers about perspective and how to best compose a photograph of some often-overlooked subjects in our natural world. Bring a camera that your child can easily use, like a point-and-shoot or smartphone/device camera...this is a beginner's class, so it's all about getting a good shot on an everyday camera. Student photos can be submitted for publication to the Loudoun Wildlife online blog. Space is limited to 15 children, ages 7+, with accompanying adult(s). No strollers or pets, please. Scouts are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Winter Waterfowl Tour East** — Saturday, January 30, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Bill Brown for an opportunity to tour local waterways to witness waterfowl in winter. We will begin at the Elizabeth Mills Riverfront Park on the Potomac, then drive to various waterways in eastern Loudoun County to identify species and discuss habits and habitats. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

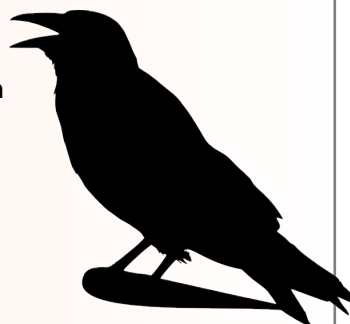
**Winter Waterfowl Tour West** — Sunday, February 7, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Joe Coleman for a unique opportunity to tour local waterways in western Loudoun and along the Shenandoah River to witness waterfowl in winter. We will drive to various waterways in western Loudoun County and Jefferson County, WV, to identify species and discuss habits and habitats. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring Program Kickoff** — Saturday, February 13, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., Morven Park. Karla Etten, coordinator of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's bluebird monitoring program, will provide an orientation on nestbox monitoring and the protocol used in Loudoun for collecting and reporting data. She

## Morven Park Nature Walks

Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a free family nature walk through the grounds of beautiful Morven Park. The walks will cover a wide variety of topics including native woodlands, wetlands, birds, seasonal changes, as well as a variety of other topics. Check our website for more details. If you own binoculars, please bring them.

**Registration required: Sign Up Online.**



**First Sundays (except January): February 7, March 6, April 3, at 8:00 a.m.**



will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails being monitored around Loudoun, and take us through a slide show about bluebirds, their nesting habits, habitat needs and preferred foods. Tips on gardening for bluebirds will be discussed as well as the use of natural cavities and nestboxes. A typical nestbox system with predator guards will be set up for demonstration. Those interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2016 season can sign up during the meeting. Those interested in monitoring a home nestbox or trail and providing data to Loudoun Wildlife can register their trails/boxes during the meeting as well. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Martinis Matter for Loudoun Wildlife, Saturday, February 27, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., River Creek Club (RCC)** — Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is the featured nonprofit for this fundraising event sponsored by RCC. Drink and raffle ticket sales along with a silent auction help raise funds for Loudoun Wildlife. Join us for this lively social event where you can have fun, win great prizes, enjoy live music and try the evening's signature martini, the Wild Thing! Special live wildlife guests for photos and viewing. Raffle tickets start at \$5, drink tickets \$10. Open to the public; admission is free. **For more details, visit [www.loudounwildlife.org/Event/Martinis\\_Matter.html](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Event/Martinis_Matter.html).**

**Woodcock Outing at the Institute Farm — Thursday, March 10, Time TBD.** Witness the incredible courtship display of the American woodcock, one of our most fascinating avian residents. On this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy outing, we will watch and listen for the woodcock's "peent" at the Institute Farm near Aldie. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact Emily Southgate at [ewbsouthgate@gmail.com](mailto:ewbsouthgate@gmail.com).**

**Vanishing Vernal Pools and the Amphibians That Use Them — Class: Thursday, March 10, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Morven Park; Field Trip: Saturday or Sunday, March 12 or 13, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Mike Hayslett of Virginia Vernal Pools for this popular workshop on vernal pools and other seasonal wetlands and their inhabitants. This hands-on adventure begins with a classroom session on Thursday evening followed by a full-day field session on the weekend (participants may pick either Saturday or Sunday for their field trip). During the field session, we will visit a variety of local vernal pools and other wetland habitats, encounter amphibians that may include spotted and Jefferson salamanders and wood frogs, and search for fairy shrimp. If conditions are right, participants will be invited to a special night outing. Cost: \$10 members, \$20 non-members. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact Nicole Hamilton at [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Amphibian Action at Night: A Family Adventure! — Friday, March 11, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m., Morven Park.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Mike Hayslett of Virginia Vernal Pools for an incredible wildlife discovery of seasonal wetlands and their inhabitants. This nighttime family adventure will visit vernal pools, teach about the forest habitat, and seek out salamanders, wood frogs and possibly eggs. We will listen to and identify frogs by calls and learn about their annual spring migration. This field trip takes place just before sunset and into the early night...the BEST time for spotting our amazing amphibians! Space is limited to 12 children ages 9–13, with accompanying adult(s). Scout groups are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**



## Birding the Blue Ridge Center

**J**oin Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on the monthly bird walk at the **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES)**, a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. The property includes diverse wildlife habitats, including meadows, streams and heavily forested slopes. Meet at the Education Center; bring binoculars if you have them. BRCES is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671); detailed directions at [www.brces.org](http://www.brces.org).

**Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Fourth Saturdays: January 23, February 27, March 26, at 8:00 a.m.**

**"We're Going Wild" Youth & Family Nature Walk Series: "Hide & Seek: Spring Discoveries" — Sunday, March 20, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and locally renowned naturalist Alonso Abugattas, Jr. (well known as the "Capital Naturalist" on Facebook) to explore the natural world through the wonder-filled eyes of children. This series of family nature walks invites families to explore the wide world of nature together, led by an expert in nature and fun! This month's walk will explore everything from wetlands and ponds to mixed hardwood forests in search of amphibians, signs of wildlife, first of season flowers and more. Space is limited to 12 children ages 7+, with accompanying adult(s). No strollers or pets. Scout groups are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Kickoff — Thursday, March 24, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Location TBD.** Interested in frogs, toads and salamanders? Amphibians are not only an important indicator of environmental health, they are great fun to watch, listen to and learn about. Become a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy amphibian monitor and learn about our monitoring protocol, gear needed and species that you will encounter. Then, we'll help you identify a location to monitor or establish a survey route. This is a great activity for adults and families. New monitors will receive the Amphibian Monitoring Handbook for recording and reporting data, CD of frog and toad calls, and photographic species identification guide. For this event we will do a brief indoor session followed by a field trip outdoors to listen for, spot and identify some amphibians. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

■ Continued on page 14



■ *Programs and Field Trips, continued*

**Gardening for Wildlife: Using Nature As Your Guide — Saturday, April 2, 2:00 p.m., Location TBD.** Charles Smith, a naturalist and ecologist with over 22 years of experience working in natural resource management, will share his knowledge of how ecosystems work to restore health to your backyard or larger natural areas. This Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy program will cover establishing goals for your project, inventorying the area around the restoration site, building on remaining natural areas, and developing a palette of locally native plant species that will support wildlife and provide ecosystem and aesthetic benefits. We will also discuss how to address challenges including poor soils, deer browse and invasive species. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Meet Your Stream Day — Sunday, April 3, 2:00 p.m., Location TBD.** Healthy streams and waterways are vital to the sustainment and growth of Loudoun County's native flora and fauna. The stream running through your neighborhood is vitally important to ensuring that our larger tributaries such as the Potomac River and Goose Creek remain healthy to sustain a diverse wildlife habitat. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for an informative presentation where you will learn to identify healthy streams and how you can positively impact stream quality. You will hear how citizen scientists monitor and assess quality by collecting and counting aquatic insects found in our streams. You will see live samples of aquatic insects collected from a nearby stream. You will see how restoring natural riparian buffers can transform a stream to a healthy vital waterway. And, if you are really interested in helping Loudoun's wildlife, you will have the opportunity sign up for a stream monitoring team in your neighborhood – so you can begin making a difference. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**



**Spring Wildflowers — Date TBD, 10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Balls Bluff.** Join John DeMary, well-known local naturalist and retired teacher, on a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy field trip to explore this beautiful, wooded riverside park for the early spring wildflowers that enrich the Potomac River Valley. We will also watch for early migrating birds. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Audubon at Home Ambassadors Orientation — Saturday, April 9, Time and Location TBD.** Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Audubon at Home Ambassadors Orientation is designed to familiarize new Ambassadors with the requirements and process for certifying schools, businesses and homeowners based on their environmentally friendly landscapes that support beneficial wildlife. Basic knowledge of native plants and sustainable gardening is helpful. To apply to be an Ambassador, contact Ann Garvey at [agarvey@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agarvey@loudounwildlife.org) or contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).

**“We’re Going Wild” Youth & Family Nature Walk Series: “Getting Your Feet Wet: Healthy Stream Habitats” — Sunday, April 17, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., Phillips Farm, Waterford.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and local naturalist Ashley Palmer to explore the natural world through the wonder-filled eyes of children. This series of family nature walks invites families to explore the wide world of nature together, led by an expert in nature and fun! This month's walk will explore healthy streams as we test water samples and get into the water to search and sweep for macro-invertebrates and other wildlife. The inhabitants of a stream can tell us SO much of the health of the water and habitat. Space is limited to 12 children ages 7+, with accompanying adult(s). No strollers or pets. Scout groups are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**



Jackie Unitis

## Volunteer Spotlight: Jackie Unitis

by Hannah Duffy

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's recent membership survey showed 35 percent of responders believed planning and supporting our events are the most rewarding volunteer activities. This month, we feature volunteer, Jackie Unitis, who has made a big difference helping with programs and events. As a conscientious citizen, Jackie recognized the importance of preserving Loudoun's wildlife and their habitats. She also recognized that what keeps an organization like Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy running is dedicated people handling business behind the scenes.

Jackie rolled up her sleeves in the Programs and Field Trips committee. She's played a key role setting up for programs and classes, assisting at our wildly popular raptor event, providing support at the 20th Anniversary Annual Meeting, and welcoming inquiries as a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy ambassador at fairs. After only one year of volunteering with Loudoun Wildlife, Jackie has utilized her passion for learning and nature to serve her community. Jackie's tremendous enthusiasm and dedication help make Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy programs and events well-organized, interesting, engaging, educational and fun. We are truly grateful for her efforts and her infectious energetic spirit.

If you are looking for rewarding ways to help, please fill out the volunteer form on our website or attend our upcoming Volunteer Orientation & Opportunity Showcase January 31, 2016. Details for our events can be found in the Programs and Field Trips section on page 10.



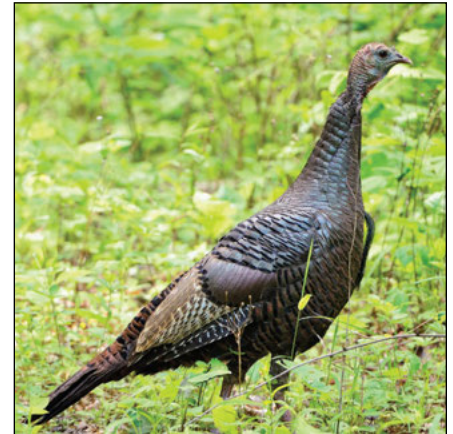
# Nourish your Wild Side!



Photo by Katherine Daniels



Photo by Katherine Daniels



© Jim Clark

## Join, Renew for 2016, Donate Today!

**Y**our support makes it possible for us to offer free nature programs that inspire and engage people in nature, lead citizen science projects that teach and provide data on wildlife and habitats of Loudoun, pay for plants and equipment to restore habitat, and develop robust positions needed to be your voice for wildlife.

### Join/Renew/Donate Today:

\$25    \$50    \$75    \$100    \_\_\_\_\_ Other Amount

Membership benefits (\$25 annual donation and higher) include: Habitat Herald mailed to you, Special Member Discounts at local businesses, Email announcement of programs/events, Annual meeting invitation.

Online: [www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm)

By Mail: Please check your information below, indicate any changes and return this form with your contribution to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, PO Box 2088, Purcellville, VA 20134.

Donations of \$100 or higher also receive special recognition and additional benefits: \$100 or more - Supporter, \$250 or more - Steward, \$500 or more - Advocate, \$1,000 plus - Leaders Circle. Check the website for details!

*Your donations are tax-deductable as allowable by law.*

*As early as the middle of February... [the males] strenuously pursue, and begin to gobble or to utter their notes of exultation... When a female utters a call-note, all the gobblers within hearing return the sound, rolling note after note with as much rapidity as if they intended to emit the first and last together... If the call of the female comes from the ground, all the males immediately fly towards the spot, and the moment they reach it, whether the hen be in sight or not, spread out and, erect their tails, draw the head back on the shoulders, depress their wings with a quivering motion and strut pompously about, emitting the same time a succession of puffs from lungs, and stopping now and then to listen and look; but whether they spy the female or not they continue to puff and strut, moving with as much celebrity as their ideas of ceremony seem to admit.*

**John James Audubon, Original Notes on the Habits of the Wild Turkey, 1824**



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
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## *Martinis Matter*

*a fundraising event benefiting  
Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy*

*River Creek Club  
Saturday, February 27, 5:00-8:00PM  
43800 Olympic Blvd, Leesburg*

*Join us for this lively social event where you can have fun,  
win great prizes, enjoy live music, and support Loudoun Wildlife!*

*Raffle tickets start at \$5*

*Open to the public: Admission free*

*Special live wildlife guests for photos and viewing*

*Signature martini of the night: The Wild Thing!  
Drink tickets \$10*