



# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
Spring 2016 Volume XXI, Issue 1



*Kentucky Warbler singing his spring song at Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship  
by Nicole Hamilton*

## The Spring of Birdsong

by Wil Hershberger

**F**or birds, the Winter Solstice is the First Day of Spring. How can that be? Well, listen! That's right, go outside and listen to the birds. Very few people have noticed that the birds wintering in our area start to sing on, or shortly after, the winter solstice. Apparently, the lengthening days are a cue to these birds that it will soon be time to select and defend a territory, and this requires that the males sing. It wasn't until I read the words of my good friend Don Kroodsma, clearly stating his appreciation of this phenomenon, that I really noticed what was happening.

In our area, the Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, American Robin, and

Carolina Wren are among those that exhibit this post-solstice singing, even though they will not be nesting for months. Within these non-migratory populations it must be important to keep up one's social status. The higher your status, the better nesting sites you can defend. Also, more females will want to be your partner. So, the males start their vocal athletics early and keep it up right through spring and early summer.

You have to listen for songs and not calls. Calls are given year-round and function within the social context of the lives of these birds. Flock contact and organization calls, predator alarms, and food calls, all fall into the category of calls. Songs are special, used by the

■ Continued on page 3

### In This Issue:

President's Message	2	Eastern Redbud	7	Announcements	11
Update on Habitat Restoration	4	Celebrating Bird Migration	8	Programs and Field Trips	12
Harvester Butterfly	5	LWC Birdathon	9	In Memory of Lorrie Bennett	15
American Bittern	5	Annual Christmas Bird Count	9	Volunteer Spotlight	15
Audubon at Home	6	Nooks and Crannies	10		



# Message from our President

by Katherine Daniels

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The first treaty was signed in 1916 between the United States and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada). This treaty, and the three others that followed it, are the keystones to our protecting birds that migrate across international borders. Migratory birds connect many people to nature. They add their array of beautiful colors and their sounds to our spring palate. They help with seed dispersal and pollination and are one of the best insect controls that we have. Migrating birds help us understand what is going on in the health of the natural world.

I think of the seven joys of birding when I think of migration. These pleasures are highlighted in the documentary *Birders: The Central Park Effect*. Why do people enjoy birding. Perhaps you can add your own reasons to this list, but it captures many things that I enjoy.

1) The beauty of the birds; 2) The pleasure of being in nature; 3) The joys of hunting and discovery, without bloodshed; 4) The joy of collecting, such as making a life list; 5) The joy of puzzle solving, as when making tough identifications; 6) The pleasure of scientific discovery as you observe new behaviors; and 7) The Unicorn Effect.

The Unicorn Effect describes that experience you have when you've only heard or read about a bird, then one day it is there in front of you in its full-feathered glory, like a mythical creature that stepped out of book, alive, and come into your life. There are few thrills quite like it! Happy Spring! Please join us in discovering your own joy of birding this Spring. We celebrate migratory birds at Loudoun Wildlife with a week of special walks, a fun competition called the "Birdathon" and a special program on warblers in May.



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.

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## Programs

Amphibian Monitoring  
Audubon at Home  
Bird Surveys  
Bluebird Monitoring  
Butterfly Count  
Conservation Advocacy  
Development  
Habitat Herald  
Habitat Restoration  
Membership  
Monarch Campaign  
Programs / Field Trips  
Stream Monitoring  
Volunteer Engagement  
Youth & Family Programs

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### ■ *The Spring of Birdsong, continued*

males to defend a territory, attract a mate, and to interact with neighboring males. The song of the Carolina Chickadee is fee-bee-fee-bay and not the chick-a-dee-dee-dee calls. The song of the Tufted Titmouse is Peter-Peter-Peter-Peter! American Robins of course carol a bright cheerily-cheerup-cheerily. The woodpeckers "sing" by drumming, slamming their bills into a branch, small limb, or unfortunately at times, an aluminum downspout or tin roof.

As winter gives way to spring, woodlands, fields and thickets seemingly explode with the songs of birds. From the relative quiet of winter, the presence of all these songs is a haven for the soul. At the beginning of each day the dawn chorus unfolds, an exuberant announcement that each male has survived the night – singing to let his mate and his neighbors know that he is still there and defending his territory. As the sun rises, this dawn chorus spreads ever farther west, like a tidal wave of song ushering in the new day. At any time of year there is a dawn chorus happening somewhere on the planet. Either in the Northern Hemisphere or the Southern, there is always a dawn chorus rushing westward before the sun.

*"Think, every morning when the sun peeps through  
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,  
How jubilant the happy birds renew  
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!  
And when you think of this, remember too  
'Tis always morning somewhere, and above  
The awakening continents; from shore to shore,  
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore."*

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

So why make all this sound? It seems these singers would be drawing undue attention to themselves from predators. While chemical signals are stealthy, they are subject to the wind and cannot travel very far. A visual display would really expose the signaler to predation. However, producing a sound allows the singer to either remain hidden or to be exposed, and the song will radiate out in all directions. Different environments require the singer to produce different types of sounds. Low pitched, long notes travel better in dense vegetation (Hermit Thrush, Canada Warbler, Northern Waterthrush). High pitched, short notes can be heard farther in open habitats (Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow). In order to be heard, different species have evolved different singing strategies for the habitats in which they live.



*Song Sparrow living up to its name*  
Photo by Wil Hershberger

Some songbirds learn the sounds that they produce from adults of the same species. These "learners" have an innate pattern of what the song should sound like, but they must learn the fine structure of the song by listening to adults singing and then how to produce those notes through a great deal of practice. Young songbirds babble just as human babies do. At some point they start to produce

notes that sound very adult-like, just as a human baby will start to say a word or two. Then the young birds will start to string these well-formed notes into song elements, just like short sentences. Then they stop practicing out loud and fall silent for the winter months. As spring arrives they resume practicing. A young male will compare what he is singing with the templates memorized from the males he heard the summer

before. Soon, he will be singing adult songs and establishing his own territory in the area where he was listening to other singing adult males that first summer. Our beloved Song Sparrow is a perfect example of a learner. Listen in late February for the first tenuous notes of last year's young males – the notes quaver and often run on in longer strains than a typical Song Sparrow song. These sounds are nothing like the beautiful songs of the adult male Song Sparrows that begin singing as winter recedes. By early March our young Song Sparrow is singing notes that sound very Song Sparrow-like, though the tempo and pattern isn't quite there yet. By late March our young male is now singing songs that are the proper length, structure, tempo and rate of delivery. Now he can start to establish and defend a territory and hopefully attract a mate to the patch of habitat he now calls home.

Other species of birds do not learn their songs from adults. Their songs are somehow encoded within their DNA, and they have a genetic predisposition to produce the songs of their species. If you were to take a very young, just hatched male of one of these species from its nest and raise it in isolation, it would eventually sing a very good rendition of that species' song. This has been done with Eastern Phoebe; these isolated males will sing the typical phoebe song even though they have never heard an adult sing while growing up.

Birdsong has had a tremendous impact on humans over the centuries. Thousands of poems have been written about the wondrous songs that some species sing. The notes and songs of birds have inspired many musical compositions. Many of us find solace while sitting quietly, in a tranquil place, surrounded by birdsong. I could not have expressed that feeling better myself than this by my dear friend Lang Elliott:

*"Be assured that a world of heightened appreciation awaits you if you go outdoors and embrace the music of the birds. But beware! You may end up like me, waiting impatiently for the snow and ice to melt, listening quietly for the first cheerful notes, and finally celebrating with joy those glorious days when spring has arrived and the birds are in full song."*

#### **Resources:**

- Donald Kroodsma, *The Singing Life of Birds* (Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, NY 2005)
- Lang Elliott, *Music of the Birds* (Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, NY 1999)



*American Toad contributing  
to the spring chorus*  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton



# Update on Habitat Restoration

by Moni Burke

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has been working on habitat restoration with a multi-dimensional approach to help manage and restore the natural habitats of Loudoun County. The Habitat Restoration team's goal is to provide Loudoun residents with habitat education, material, expert guidance, and on-the-ground habitat management and restoration. Much of our work is accomplished in partnership with other organizations and the assistance of volunteer residents.

In 2015, we worked to get the word out on native plants and getting the plants themselves into the hands of residents and stakeholders, consulting with property owners on increasing the ecological value of their properties and certifying properties as wildlife sanctuaries, installing monarch-centric habitats, consulting with local governments on habitat restoration projects, and planning restoration projects throughout the county for this year. Here is a snapshot of works completed and plans in progress. We hope you will join in!

## **Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary Certification Program**

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy partnered with the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia to implement this program in Loudoun County. Under the leadership of Ann Garvey since its inception in 2013, the program has certified over 2,000 acres within Loudoun County as wildlife sanctuaries. In 2015, 32 properties constituting more than 460 acres were certified. To obtain certification, property owners meet with a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy-Audubon at Home Ambassador who visits the property and provides guidance on increasing the property's ecological value. There is no property size requirement - it can be as small as a balcony, townhome, or single-family backyard, or as large as an HOA or business campus. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy also trains and prepares individuals to become Audubon at Home Ambassadors. If you are interested in getting your property evaluated for certification, or if you are interested in becoming an Audubon at Home Ambassador and attending the next Ambassador training scheduled for April 9, 2016, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Morven Park, please contact Ann Garvey: [agarvey@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agarvey@loudounwildlife.org).

## **Habitat Restoration Projects**

We are excited to partner with various organizations on these habitat restoration projects that are planned for 2016:

**Meadow Restoration at Algonkian Regional Park:** We are partnering with Algonkian Regional Park to work on an exciting multi-year meadow restoration. Work includes preparing the site, seeding, planting plugs and meadow maintenance. We are in the planning stage so no specific dates for implementation have been confirmed yet.

**Invasive Plant Removal at Morven Park:** We are partnering with Morven Park on maintaining the park's trails by removing aggressive invasive plants. We need adult volunteers who are familiar with invasives, such as garlic mustard, Japanese barberry, Japanese stilt grass, and mile-a-minute vine. The volunteers will act as team leaders to small groups of 8th grade students, helping



*Audubon at Home Ambassador reviewing ideas with a home owner  
Photo by Ann Garvey*

them to identify the invasive plants to remove. Events scheduled for April 21 and June 7, from 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Team Lead orientation is on March 29 10:00 a.m.-noon.

**Habitat Restoration at Morven Park:** We partnered with Morven Park on a grant application to manage and restore the park's trails by removing existing invasive plants and replanting with native plants. This is a large project and is dependent on the results of the grant. It may start in the summer/fall of 2016.

**Monarch Way Station at Morven Park:** We are working on a planting project to enhance the monarch way station at the Carriage Museum, Morven Park. We will be planting, mulching and sprucing up the bed. Date: TBD.

**If you are interested in volunteering for any of these projects, please contact Moni Burke at [mburke@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:mburke@loudounwildlife.org).**

## **Plant NoVA Natives Campaign**

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy partnered with the Plant NoVA Natives Campaign to promote the use of Northern Virginia native plants within Loudoun's landscapes and to increase their availability in retail nurseries. Sandy Lockhart and Sheila Ferguson, along with a team of volunteers, are spearheading this effort in Loudoun County. If you would like to learn more, please contact Sandy Lockhart at [inthewind2@gmail.com](mailto:inthewind2@gmail.com).

## **Plant Sales**

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy plant sales have enabled the planting of thousands of native plants, including milkweed, through the hands of Loudoun residents who integrated them into their plant pots, yards, gardens, woodlands and fields.

## **Bringing Back the Monarch Program**

Over 8,000 plants were planted in September 2015 at a new Monarch habitat in Dale City, Va. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy partnered with VDOT and Dominion Virginia Power, among others, to help keep bringing back the Monarchs.

**See Programs and Field Trip listing for 2016 dates and details on how and when you can participate in some of these positive influences on the habitats of our county.**



# The Fascinating Harvester Butterfly

by Emily Bzdyk



*Feniseca Tarquinius*  
by Emily Bzdyk

Butterflies are often the favorites of the insect world. Adults flit about, pollinating, sipping sweet nectar from flowers and dazzling us with their beautifully patterned wings and their caterpillars are peaceful leaf-eaters ... usually. There is one caterpillar in our midst that has a very different diet. The caterpillar of the Harvester butterfly, *Feniseca tarquinius*, is unique among all the eastern North American butterfly species – it is strictly carnivorous!

The adult female butterfly lays her pale green eggs in a colony of woolly aphids, or occasionally scale insects or tree hoppers. The tiny first instar caterpillars that hatch from the eggs are very small and may use silk threads to restrain their aphid prey in order to feed. The caterpillars are often found in groups, feeding on the same aphid colony together. They are slug-like and small, reaching a total length of just under 2 cm. They have a bright white, gray and yellow pattern and are covered in bristles.

To protect themselves from predation by ants, which tend the aphid colonies, caterpillars have adapted several strategies. Some construct a net that covers them as they consume the aphids, the surface of which is littered with the carcasses of their prey. In other instances they attach dead aphids directly to their own bodies. Sometimes the bristles on the caterpillar's back become covered with the leftover

waxy filaments (the "wool") produced by the woolly aphids they are eating. The caterpillar's bristles may even share some of the molecular structure of the woolly aphids. Sometimes, the ants tending the aphids are even tricked into tending and protecting the caterpillars.

By feeding on aphids, the caterpillar gets more concentrated nutrients and develops faster than other butterfly species. It takes only four instars (normally, caterpillars go through five) and a little over a week to complete the larval stage. Once the caterpillar is finished feeding, it finds a secure location on a nearby twig to form a chrysalis and overwinter in this stage. This pupae is said to look like a monkey or lizard face.

In the spring, the adult emerges. The dorsal wing surface is orange surrounded by a dark brown/black border. The ventral side, which you see when the butterfly has its wings closed, is a light reddish brown with darker brown spots outlined in white. The adults stay close to the caterpillar's food source, so they exist in small extremely localized populations. The male perches and waits for females to fly by, then chases them to mate. Adults do not feed on floral nectar; they have a short proboscis which they use to sip aphid honeydew, mud, dung or sap. Because of their distribution, they are not commonly observed. But if you live in a wooded area, especially near water, and you find that a colony of woolly aphids have descended on your favorite shrubs, perhaps you may be visited by this exceptional butterfly!



*Feniseca Tarquinius*  
Caterpillar  
by Emily Bzdyk

## Resources:

- [www.lepscience.com/2013/10/31/the-harvester-north-americas-only-carnivorous-butterfly/](http://www.lepscience.com/2013/10/31/the-harvester-north-americas-only-carnivorous-butterfly/)
- [www.entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/bfly/harvester\\_butterfly.htm](http://www.entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/bfly/harvester_butterfly.htm)
- [www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Feniseca-tarquinius](http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Feniseca-tarquinius)

# American Bittern by Emily Cook



*American Bittern hiding in the marsh*  
Photo by Laura McGranaghan

Reclusive and highly skilled in the art of camouflage, it is a true gift to see an American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) while out walking the marshes of Loudoun County. A member of the heron family, the bittern is a bird of medium, stocky build with an impressive length of between 23-34 inches for both males and females. Despite this substantial size, their marked brown and buff vertical striping along the neck and their characteristic stance – bill tilted to the sky, weaving among the reeds – enables them to virtually disappear into their marshy surroundings.

They are also not typically social, preferring a mostly solitary existence. As if it weren't difficult enough to find an American Bittern due to its excellent camouflage, locating a single individual out among the marshes proves to be an even greater challenge. An exception to this rule is during mating season, migration or territorial battles between males, when numbers might make a sighting more likely. If you are lucky enough to witness a standoff between males, you are in for quite a display. The scuffle typically begins on the ground, but often escalates skyward, each bird asserting his dominance by using his bill as a weapon while in flight.

Relations between males and females are brief at best. The male attracts the female with his characteristic "booming" call, lowering his neck and ruffling his seldom-seen white neck feathers. Females build their nests around freshwater marshland from a variety of materials including cattails, sedges and other grasses. Females raise 3-7 young independently of the male.

Bitterns feed throughout the day, but primarily during times when lighting is softer such as dusk and dawn. They will consume just about

■ Continued on page 7



# Audubon at Home – Bringing the sounds of nature to your backyard

by Nan McCarry



One of our Audubon at Home Ambassadors enjoying the fruits of their labor

Photo by Ann Garvey

Sometimes people ask, “Why don’t I see any birds? I put up a bird feeder.”

In this issue, we read about the sounds of nature. How can we bring these seasonal sounds to our own backyards? The answer lies in the garden: Our gardening practices can encourage birds, frogs, and other wildlife into our yards.

A study recounted in *Conservation Magazine* found that trees were far more important than bird feeders in supporting bird diversity. In fact, there was “no statistical relationship between using [bird feeders] and having lots of birds.” A mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees creates a more complex habitat than lawns. Vertical diversity – trees and shrubs at different layers in the canopy – makes for more bird diversity. Birds rely on enormous quantities of caterpillars for their young. Native trees support lots of different caterpillar species, with oaks supporting the most of all. You can find lists of the trees that are the best for supporting caterpillars in Doug Tallamy’s *Bringing Nature Home* and also in the Habitat Herald archives on Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s web page. Canopies of large trees also harbor the insects that make my favorite sound of summer, the songs of katydids.

Replacing lawn areas with more diverse vegetation is desirable for many reasons. Lawns provide little in the way of food or cover. Frogs and toads, with their permeable skin, are especially sensitive to any chemicals that are used on lawns and can also be run over by lawn mowers! Leaving unmowed patches of native grasses and wildflowers provides cover and food for many bird and others throughout the year.

Shrubs with fruits and berries can be planted under tree canopies. A few of the many native shrubs recommended for feeding birds are the native viburnums, winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), and American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

Wet areas in the yard are a bonus for amphibians. Provide wet areas and plants to hide in and you may hear frogs and toads throughout the spring and summer. Birds appreciate a water source, too.

Leave the leaves whenever possible. Many birds forage in leaf litter for invertebrates. The decline of the Wood Thrush, whose twinkling call we hear in the forest in summer, has been linked to fewer invertebrates on the forest floor, according to YardMap Network, a website of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Finally, while many of us love our kitties, cats outdoors cause the death of about 2.4 billion birds annually in the United States alone. Even well-fed cats hunt and kill. The best way to protect birds and wildlife in your yard is to leave your cats indoors.

For more information on how to bring the sounds of spring to your backyard, or to inquire about having a volunteer ambassador visit your yard, go to Loudoun Wildlife’s Audubon At Home program at [www.loudounwildlife.org/Audubon\\_at\\_Home.html](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Audubon_at_Home.html).

To find native plants for your garden, come to Loudoun Wildlife’s Native Plant Sale on Saturday, April 23 at Morven Park from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## Resources:

- [www.abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/](http://www.abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/)
- “Backyards could be a boon for urban birds,” (2015), *Conservation Magazine* (online). April 15, 2015. <http://conservationmagazine.org/2015/04/backyards-could-be-a-boon-for-urban-birds/>
- Belaire, J. A., Whelan, C. J. and Minor, E. S., Having our yards and sharing them too: the collective effects of yards on native bird species in an urban landscape. *Ecological Applications*, 24: 2132–2143. doi:10.1890/13-2259.1 (2014)
- “Leaf litter,” YardMap Network website, <http://content.yardmap.org/learn/leaf-litter/>
- Tallamy, Douglas W., *Bringing Nature Home* (Timber Press 2007)



Kids exploring in their habitat  
Photo by Ann Garvey





### ■ American Bittern, continued

anything found in the marshy wetlands, including bugs, small mammals and rodents, crustaceans and fish. They have unlimited patience, standing stock-still, swaying their horizontal bill with the breeze until the right moment presents itself.

We are lucky in Loudoun County to host bitterns year-round, as this is one of the only areas in the country where brackish marshes do not freeze during winter. While this may make it even more surprising we do not see bitterns more often, their stealth-like movements and ability to blend into surroundings make them almost invisible.

One of the best ways to locate a bittern is to become familiar with its unique call. With nicknames like "water-belcher," "thunder-pumper,"

and "mire drum," it is no surprise the bittern's call is quite distinctive. Sounding more like a loud gulping, the inexperienced ear might mistake it for a member of the marsh's frog "chorus" rather than a bird. However, if you familiarize yourself with the call, you will be able to more effectively locate one among the reeds. The use of binoculars, a spotting scope and a lot of determination and patience are key when looking for this spectacular but seldom seen bird.

#### Resources:

- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American\\_Bittern/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Bittern/id)
- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/american-bittern>
- [http://sdakotabirds.com/species/maps/american\\_bittern\\_map.htm](http://sdakotabirds.com/species/maps/american_bittern_map.htm)
- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American\\_Bittern/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Bittern/sounds)



*Redbud with its spring blossoms at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

on old twigs, branches and even trunks. Smooth heart-shaped dark green leaves follow. The wood of this tree is heavy and hard, but because of its irregular shape and small size it is not valued for timber. It is a tough tree and is tolerant of many different types of soils and growing conditions, but is found most often along the edges of forests and on south-facing slopes.

In the late winter and early spring, Whitetail deer will graze on buds and twigs of the redbud. Northern Bobwhite and a few songbirds eat the seeds. During the flowering stage, the blossoms are visited by hummingbirds, butterflies (it is the host plant for Henry's Elfin) and many species of bees. About two weeks after flowers drop, leaves begin to grow. Leaf-cutter bees will use parts of the leaves for nesting materials in the spring and if you look closely you may notice the telltale half circle of damage they leave behind. By midsummer, seed pods have formed where blossoms have dropped. These fruits are reddish brown and 2 to 4 inches long. Inside each are hard, bean like seeds. The pods often persist into the following winter, making the redbud easy to recognize on a winter walk.

Eastern Redbud was used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes. Bark was boiled to make a tea to treat whooping cough and dysentery. Roots were utilized as a cure for fevers, congestion and vomiting. Today, edible flowers are enjoyed in salads as well as fried.

With its rugged nature, rapid growth and exceptional beauty in every season, the Eastern Redbud is a natural choice for the urban landscape as well as the suburban garden. Visit one of our local sources for native plants (Watermark Woods in Hamilton or Abernethy & Spencer in Purcellville) to add this all season beauty to your landscape.

#### Resources:

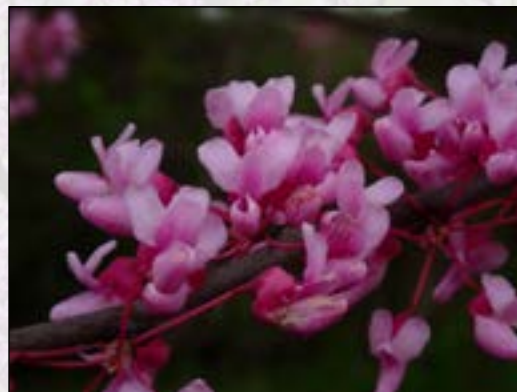
- [http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_ceca4.pdf](http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_ceca4.pdf)
- [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics\\_manual/volume\\_2/cercis/canadensis.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/cercis/canadensis.htm)

## Eastern Redbud

by Kerry Bzdyk

After the subdued colors of a long and snowy Virginia winter, there is no more welcome sight along the roadsides and woodland edges of Loudoun County than the beautiful color of the Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*). Just as the landscape begins to look more hopeful, and the browns of dormancy begin to give way, their striking blossoms paint welcome splashes of color in an otherwise muted landscape.

The Eastern Redbud is a native, deciduous tree that grows quickly to reach a height of 15 to 30 feet and forms a crown 15 to 25 feet wide. It is a member of the pea family with a wide range including the Great Plains and most of the eastern United States from Massachusetts to Florida. It is one of the first of our native trees to bloom, with bright reddish pink to purple flowers appearing



*Redbud close up  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*



# Celebrating Bird Migration by Joe Coleman



*Common Yellowthroat, Phillips Farm  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

While bird migration occurs year-round, from late April through early June millions of birds migrate through our area. While some of these will stay and nest here, many will continue their journey north. As a result it is possible to find and observe over 100 species of birds in a single day. To celebrate this phenomenon the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is presenting a great program on warblers, the “jewels” of the eastern forests, holding a number of bird walks, and sponsoring a Birdathon.

**Identifying and Learning about the Warblers of the Mid-Atlantic Region — Tuesday, May 3, 7:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Michael Bowen, Linda Friedland, and Jim Nelson, all past presidents of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, will cover nearly every warbler species that breeds in or migrates through Maryland and Virginia. Identification pointers and songs of birds in spring are emphasized. The presentation uses high-resolution photos taken by some of North America's finest nature photographers and song tracks from the Stokes Bird Song series.

**Celebrate Birds, Go Birding!** — Loudoun Wildlife sponsors a series of walks (all start at 8:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted) in many of Loudoun's birdiest locations. Join us for one or more of the following walks:

**Morven Park on May 1; led by Nicole Hamilton & Dori Rhodes.** Not only is Morven Park the place that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy calls home, its 1,000 acres include the Ridge Loop trail, a lowland trail aptly named the Wood Thrush trail, and lots of fields and meadows. In spring, wonderful neotropical birds are heard and seen: Scarlet Tanagers, warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, kinglets, woodpeckers, owls, hawks, Wild Turkeys, chickadees, nuthatches and other woodland and grassland species.

**Blue Ridge walk on May 7; led by Joe Coleman and Gerry Hawkins.** The center's 895 acres has vernal pools, meadows, ponds, streams and a rich oak-hickory forest. Located in northwestern Loudoun County, the center not only borders the Appalachian Trail, it is only a couple of miles from the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and serves as a wonderful sanctuary for Loudoun's wildlife.

**Beagle Club/Institute Farm on Wednesday, May 11; led by Emily Southgate and Linda Millington.** We have special permission to visit the Institute Farm, the home of the National Beagle Club of North America, and on the National Register of Historic Places. The farm's brushy, scrubby intermediate habitat, bordered by mature forests, is home to many thicket-loving bird species. This group will also visit a nearby large farm which includes a large pond and extensive fields.

**Camp Highroads on Friday, May 13; led by Christine Perdue and Linda Millington.** This area in southwestern Loudoun includes many large farms that include both extensive fields and rich woodlands through which Goose Creek and its many tributaries flow. In the spring it is home to a number of nesting birds as well as many migrants.

**Banshee Reeks on Saturday, May 14; led by Jane Yocom and Dori Rhodes.** Banshee Reeks was established as a nature preserve in 1999. Its 725 acres include a variety of nature trails that are great for birding. In addition to a mile of Goose Creek frontage, Banshee has a great diversity of habitats ranging from wetlands and ponds to mixed hardwood forests of oak and hickory to wonderful meadows laden with milkweed, goldenrod and thistle.

**The Birdiest Time of The Year: Meet Your Birds! Saturday, May 14, 9:00-11:00 a.m., Algonkian Regional Park.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and local birders Bill & Della Brown for this special International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) event just for kids and their parents. We'll make it easy for you! We'll point out the birds as you enjoy a morning stroll along the Potomac River. See and hear the birds which travel through our area during this special spring migration. Registration required: Space is limited to 15 children, ages 5+, with accompanying adult(s). No strollers or pets. Scout groups are welcome.

**Registration required for all but Banshee Reeks: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**





## LWC Birdathon 2016 May 1 – 15

Help raise funds for bird conservation and education programs here in Loudoun County! All skill levels welcome – A fun way to get outside and identify birds while raising money for our local birds and their habitats – Bird on your own, form a team or join us on one of our bird walks on International Migratory Bird Day, May 14, to count species.

### 2 Ways to Participate

#### Be a Birdathoner

Register to be a participant on our website.

Gather Pledges from friends, family and neighbors in support of helping birds.

Select your own count day (a 24-hour period between May 1 – 15) or join one of ours.

#### Be a Sponsor

Want to support the birdathon but can't get out to an event, then consider making a pledge to a team or individual.

You can make a contribution to the birdathon itself and funds go into funding our mission of preserving and protecting wildlife and their habitats.

**Details and registration are at our website:** [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org).



Carolina Wren

Photo by Nicole Hamilton

## A Great Day for Birds – The 19th Annual Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

Because of a weather forecast calling for rain and heavy fog the first part of the day, none of our 20 or so teams went out owling early, and in fact, several of the teams created options for their team members to join them later than their normal beginning times. While the birding did start slowly because of the weather, the fog and rain lifted about 9:30 a.m. and it turned into a beautiful day with stunning cloud formations occasionally pierced by the sun. And that is when the birding really began!

While the 92 species found by the 110 participants was average for the count, the 46,782 individuals were the most we have ever found in our 19 years of counting. And among those 92 species were some pretty unusual ones. The team covering the area north of Leesburg found our first-ever Eurasian Wigeon, which was only Virginia's fifth Piedmont record of this duck. Our second-ever Black-crowned Night-Heron, a juvenile, was found by the team covering the east side of Route 15 south of Oatlands. As always, the County Landfill proved to be very productive with two Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a juvenile and an adult, only the second time this species has been found on the count. A Palm Warbler and six Horned Grebes, only the third time these two species have been seen on this count, were found by the team that covers the Beavertown Reservoir area. Four of these species were found on properties not normally open to the public, pointing out how important the special permissions we receive are to the overall success of the count.

Our species count was only average because this winter's mild weather (at least up to that point) had not encouraged many northern species to migrate this far south yet. As a result we missed a number of ducks as well as some

other species. However, that same mild weather appears to have led to especially large numbers of American Robins (11,719) and Cedar Waxwings (1,066), both feeding on the extensive berry and fruit crops that occurred because of last spring and summer's rains. We also had unusually high numbers of Ring-billed Gulls (5,171), Herring Gulls (400), Black Vultures (640), and Fish Crows (1,356).

About 5:30 p.m., 40 of us gathered at Morven Park's Stone Barn to share in a delicious potluck dinner and share stories and some tall tales about our day, as well as go through the checklist for unusual sightings. Our thanks go out to the volunteers, some of whom couldn't join us for the count because they had to work, who made the potluck a success.

One of the best aspects of this year's count was how many families joined us. On December 12 we sponsored an introduction to bird-watching for families. We were thrilled that many of the participants, and some who couldn't make the 12th, joined us for the count and indicated they'll be coming out for more birding events in the future!

Loudoun Wildlife thanks the many landowners, private and public, who let us visit their properties. Without that access, this count would not be nearly as successful.

We also want to thank all the birders, experienced and beginner, and especially the 20 sector leaders who spent hours in the field and made this a very successful count.



Juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron — a rare visitor to our area any time of the year  
Photo by Larry Meade



Lesser Black-backed Gulls at the county landfill — a hot spot for the Christmas Bird Count  
Photo by Bob Abrams, who does a great job covering the site and checking out every bird he sees



A tough sparrow to identify  
Photo by Katherine Daniels



# Nooks and Crannies

## *A Place for Families* by Sarah Steadman

Written by and for youth and families, this sweet feature spotlights the special perspective of Loudoun's young with an eye for things unseen, residing in the Nooks and Crannies of our natural world. Have a wildlife perspective, poem, photo, or craft to share? Loudoun's K-12 youth contributors can contact Sarah Steadman at [ssteadman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:ssteadman@loudounwildlife.org).

This month, our contributor is 10-year-old Kashvi Ramani from Belmont Station Elementary School with an important message about the bees and their habitats.



*Living color to brighten our lives, presented by a bumble bee and bee balm*  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton

### **The Buzz about Bees: Did you know?**

Buzz-buzz...bees are very hard-working creatures! The buzzing you hear is created as a bee flaps its wings about 11,000 times per minute and flies really fast at 15 miles per hour. They expertly extract pollen and deliver it from flower to flower in a process called pollination. Thanks to bees, we have food crops like apples, blueberries and zucchini to eat. There are many kinds of bees, but you can thank a bee for 1 in 3 bites of food! They are responsible for pollinating 80 percent of our fruits and vegetables. Some bees like the honeybee are so busy they don't even sleep! The queen bee is the leader of a bee colony and can lay up to 1,500 eggs a day! And what about the other bees in a colony? Well, did you know the honeybee is the only insect to produce food for humans? That's right... an average hive can make 400 pounds of honey a year.

### **Bee Friendly: Save our Bees!**

Bees are declining in population from our natural world. Sadly this is because of people! Using pesticides in our yards, gardens and farming practices is killing our bees. Insects and bees are an important part of our ecosystem. So, please avoid using pesticides and teach others this message.

Bees are also suffering a lack of nutrition. All creatures need to eat! Plant a garden with lots of **bee friendly** plants to help. First, you need brightly colored flowers to attract bees, so think of planting red, blue, purple, and yellow flowers. Bees and other insects need native plants – plants that naturally grow in our region – such as aster, coreopsis, goldenrod, ironweed, lobelia, and milkweed, as well as many other beautiful colorful native plants. Read more about native plants at [LoudounWildlife.org](http://LoudounWildlife.org) and plant your **bee friendly** garden.

**Visit Loudoun Wildlife's Native Plant Sale on April 23 in Leesburg to help you get started on your bee garden. See you there!**

[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)  
[www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MidAtlanticPlantListweb.pdf](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/MidAtlanticPlantListweb.pdf)



*Honey bee on Wingstem*  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton

*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



## Drive for Charity

Please join us on the Dulles Greenway on Thursday, May 19, 2016, for their Annual Drive for Charity Event. On this date, 100% of the tolls collected are donated to non-profit organizations in our community, including Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Please join us in our drive to make a difference. Check out <http://www.dullesgreenway.com/drive-for-charity> for more information.

## We made the Who's Hoo at Martinis Matter!

Thanks to old friends and new for coming out to our extraordinary event Martinis Matter at the River Creek Club. At this important fund-raising event, prizes were won, new friendships created and we shared the splendor of nature with fascinating hawks and owls brought by Adventures with Raptors. The funds raised will go directly to critical programs such as Citizen Science, Habitat Restoration and Educational Programs.



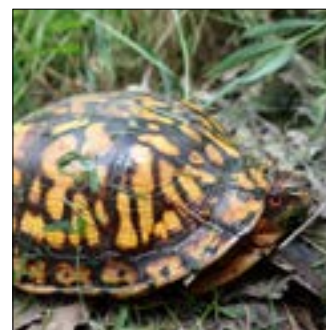
Family meeting a hawk face to face  
Photo by Norm Gresley



Andre and his assistant educator,  
a Barred Owl  
Photo by Norm Gresley

## Visit Us at Morven Park

Here are some of the enriching and enjoyable things you can do with us at Morven Park this spring: Treasure hunt for spring wildflowers – Quest for jeweled migrant birds arriving from the north – Discover vernal pools and the rarely seen creatures that inhabit them – Sign up for vigorous rewarding trail maintenance or invasive plant removal projects. See our Programs and Field Trips listing for more details.



Box turtle discovered at Morven Park  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton

## Spring Native Plant Sale

April 23 at Morven Park  
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

See details in our Programs and Field Trips section.



Shoppers changing their world one plant at a  
time at our semi-annual Native Plant Sale  
Photo by Ann Garvey



# 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.**

**Meet Your Stream: Presentation and Stream Monitoring Kickoff — Sunday, April 3, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m., Ashburn Library Meeting Room A.** Healthy streams and waterways are vital to the sustenance 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 diverse wildlife habitat. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a 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. You will also have the opportunity to sign up for a stream monitoring team in your neighborhood – so you can begin making a difference. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

## Morven Park Nature Walks

**J**oin 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: April 3, May 1, June 5, July 3, at 8:00 a.m.**

## Birding Banshee



**J**oin 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 hot spot. Bring binoculars if you have them.

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

**Second Saturdays: April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, at 8:00 a.m.**

**Spring Wildflowers — Saturday, April 9, 10:00 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, 9:00 a.m., Morven Park.** 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).**

**Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival — Saturday, April 16, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., and Sunday, April 17, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.** The Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival is a great way to kick off your spring activities! Visit Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's booth for hands-on activities for kids of all ages, see what bear scat really looks like, quiz yourself on different wildlife tracks and signs, and pick up lots of free handouts with ideas for the whole family to get outside and explore nature. We will also have a special section of the booth set up with all our Monarch butterfly materials and campaign swag. For more information on the event, visit the festival website at [www.idalee.org/parks/events/FlowerGarden](http://www.idalee.org/parks/events/FlowerGarden).





**“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 in 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 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 15 children, ages 6+, with accompanying adult(s); please register early. No strollers or pets. Scout groups are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Native Plant Sale — Saturday, April 23, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Native plants are beautiful and grow better because they are adapted for our weather conditions and soils; they also provide greater benefit to our native wildlife because plants and animals evolved together. Three vendors will have a wide variety of native plants to offer at this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy-sponsored sale: Janet Davis of Hill House Farm and Nursery in Castleton, VA ([www.hillhousenativeplants.com](http://www.hillhousenativeplants.com)); Julie Borneman of Watermark Woods Nursery in Hamilton, VA ([www.watermarkwoods.com](http://www.watermarkwoods.com)); and Randee Wilson of Nature by Design in Alexandria, VA ([www.nature-by-design.com](http://www.nature-by-design.com)). The sale is staffed by volunteers that have knowledge of native plants. To see plants each nursery carries or to place orders ahead of time (all nursery stock is not present), visit their websites. **Questions: Contact Ann Garvey at [agarvey@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agarvey@loudounwildlife.org).**

**The Organic Garden — Tuesday, April 26, 7:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Join Beverly Morton Billand, co-owner of the award-winning Patowmack Farm restaurant, for this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy program on organic farming. As an avid supporter of local small businesses and organizations, and with a strong dedication to sustainable farming, Beverly will speak on ways to locally grow seasonal organic products through sustainable agriculture. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Celebrate Birds, Go Birding! – Sunday, May 1 – Sunday, May 15.** While bird migration is a year-round phenomenon, from late April through early June millions of birds migrate through our area. While some of these will stay and nest in our area, many will continue their journey north. As a result it is possible to find and observe over 100 species of birds in a single day. To celebrate this, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is presenting a program on warblers, the “jewels” of the eastern forests, holding a number of walks, and sponsoring a Birdathon between May 1 and May 15. The walks include Morven Park on May 1, the Blue Ridge Center on May 7, the Beagle Club/Institute Farm on May 11, Camp Highroad on May 13, Banshee Reeks on May 14, and a family walk on May 14 at Algonkian. Visit our website to see a listing of all the walks and to participate. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Identifying and Learning About the Warblers of the Mid-Atlantic Region — Tuesday, May 3, 7:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Michael Bowen, Linda Friedland, and Jim Nelson, all past presidents of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, will cover nearly every warbler species that breeds in or migrates through Maryland and Virginia. Identification pointers and songs of birds in spring are emphasized. This Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy



## 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: April 23, May 28, June 25, at 8:00 a.m.**

presentation uses high-resolution photos taken by some of North America’s finest nature photographers and song tracks from the Stokes Bird Song series. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**“We’re Going WILD” Youth & Family Nature Walk Series: Nighttime Discoveries — Saturday, May 7, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and local naturalist Brian Balik 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 the sights and sounds of habitats and wildlife at NIGHT! Headlamps and flashlights will illuminate the path as we walk the trail from sunset into early nighttime, just as local wildlife increase their activity in preparation for the night. Space is limited to 15 children, ages 6+, with accompanying adult(s); please register early. No strollers or pets. Scouts are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Monarch Butterflies: Keeping the Magic Alive with You! — Thursday, May 12, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., Morven Park.** You’ve probably heard the news. One of our most recognized species, the Monarch butterfly, is in peril. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we tell the story of the Monarch, the journey it takes, the countries it crosses, the people it touches, and the habitat it needs. Learn about what caused the population decline, and most importantly, become a part of this growing movement to lift the spade, dig in the dirt, and plant the milkweed they need. Monarchs have already left their overwintering sites in Mexico. They are making the great migration back. Let’s join hands to receive them together! Handouts and information will be available. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

■ Continued on page 14



## ■ Programs and Field Trips, continued

**The Birdiest Time of the Year: Meet Your Birds! — Saturday, May 14, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m., Algonkian Regional Park.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and local birders Bill & Della Brown for this special International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) event just for kids and their parents. We'll make it easy for you! We'll point out the birds as you enjoy a morning stroll along the Potomac River. See and hear the birds that travel through our area during this special time of spring migration. Space is limited to 15 children, ages 5+, with accompanying adult(s); please register early. No strollers or pets. Scout groups are welcome. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Dulles Greenway Drive for Charity — Thursday, May 19, All Day!** On Thursday, May 19, paying the toll on the Dulles Greenway has a special meaning for local charities. This, the 11th annual Drive for Charity, raises thousands of dollars that go directly into the local community. Each year, the money raised has increased and is divided among local charities including: The March of Dimes, Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter, Every Citizen Has Opportunity (ECHO), Loudoun Free Clinic, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Fresh Air/ Full Care. This one-day event makes a huge difference for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, enabling us to provide our many programs and projects throughout the year. Our thanks go to the Dulles Greenway for this great event and to all of you who choose to drive the Greenway on this special day.

**Huge Milkweed Plant Sale!!! — Date and Location TBD.** Inch by inch, row by row, let's get our milkweed and Monarchs to grow! These plants are all native – seeds from right here in Loudoun and surrounding parts of Virginia. People like you and me sent them to Monarch Watch in Kansas last fall, and there, the plants were grown naked (NO pesticides!). Now they're coming back home, ready for your garden or landscaping project. At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy sale we'll have approximately 1,000 milkweed plants available for purchase – \$3 per plug. They are mostly Common and Swamp Milkweed but there may be a small number of Tuberosa (Butterflyweed) available too. We'll also have the Monarch rearing cages, books, T-shirts and information on planting and certifying your garden or landscape as a way station. **Questions: Contact Nicole Hamilton at [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Natural History of the Appalachian Trail — Saturday, May 21, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Blackburn Trail Center.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club as we discuss the natural history of the AT. The program will be followed with a short hike up to the AT and the nearby overlook, followed by light refreshments. Limit 20 participants. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Northwest Federal's Leesburg Branch "Goes Wild" in May! — Saturday, May 28, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a part of Northwest Federal Credit Union's Community Partners Program to build habitats. Let yourself and your budding nature enthusiasts "Go Wild" at the Credit Union's Leesburg branch at 525 Trimble Plaza (off Battlefield Parkway). You will learn about the wonders of Monarch butterflies and the habitats that let them thrive during this free, hands-on exhibit. You will be able to buy Milkweed plants (\$3 each) and other native plants. Kids are encouraged to come with tons of curiosity and questions.

**Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's 21st Annual Meeting — Sunday, June 12, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Ida Lee Park.** Each year Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Annual Meeting provides an opportunity for members to gather, celebrate another year of accomplishments and hear an interesting guest speaker. This year we are thrilled to have David Mizejewski presenting a program on "Gardening for Wildlife & Birds." David is a naturalist, television personality and spokesperson for the National Wildlife Federation. He will demonstrate how to create a natural, wildlife-friendly garden while also establishing a living source of entertainment in your own garden. If you're not yet a member or need to renew, please do! We really need you as a current member. The annual meeting also includes light refreshments; award presentations to science fair winners, Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalists, and the volunteer of the year; and a short business meeting. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Sunset Kayak Trip on the Potomac — Saturday, June 18, 4:00 p.m. – dark.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a spectacular sunset kayak trip down the Potomac River! We will meet at the Brunswick Family Campground starting with a brief program from local naturalist Brian Balik about the natural environment along the Potomac before setting sail. The cost for this event is \$75/per person and includes kayak rental, guides, pre-program discussion and light refreshments. Limit 25 participants. For directions to the campground, visit: <http://potomacrivercampground.com/map-and-directions>. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Learn How to Raise & Release Monarch Butterflies — Thursday, June 23, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Location TBD.** Raising and releasing butterflies can be a great way to not only learn about the life cycle of Monarchs but also see the direct relationship between plants and animals. It all starts with having milkweed plants, because that is the only plant that Monarchs lay their eggs on and the only food they eat as caterpillars, so be sure to plant that in your garden this spring. At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy workshop we'll share tips for finding eggs and caterpillars and for raising and releasing Monarchs through the summer and fall. Rearing cages will be available for purchase. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Dragonflies and Damselflies at Bles Park — Sunday, June 26, 10:00 a.m.** Loudoun County is home to over 70 species of dragonflies and damselflies. One of the best places to find them is at Bles Park in Ashburn. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Andy Rabin on a 2- to 3-hour walk around the park in search of these fascinating insects and get to see them up close. This popular trip is always both fun and informative. Bring binoculars and your own insect net if you have one (some nets will be provided). Adults and interested children are welcome. Limit 15 participants. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

**Butterflies of Loudoun Identification Class — Sunday, July 10, 2:30 – 4:00 p.m., Location TBD.** Learn tips and tricks for identifying 55 of our 85 local butterflies. Nicole Hamilton will lead the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy class in an indoor session. After the class, those who are interested can go outside to try the ID tips on butterflies spotted in nearby gardens and wild and weedy areas. This is a great way to hone your skills and get ready for our 20th Annual Butterfly Count in August! Cost: \$5 members, \$10 non-members. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**





## *In loving memory of Lorrie Bennett*



Lorrie graced Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy with her artistry and passion for nature for 20 years. A gifted graphic artist, she created much of the Habitat Herald's signature style today. Her keen perception and eye for detail, exceptional skill at creating compelling designs and layouts, ability to connect people to nature through design, and most of all, her loving spirit and volunteerism, remain forever in our hearts and in the roots of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.



*Caroline Kuhfahl*

## **Volunteer Spotlight: Caroline Kuhfahl**

*by Hannah Duffy*

The Butterfly Lady. That's Caroline Kuhfahl's unofficial title at Hutchison Farm Elementary School where she works. A few years ago, however, Caroline's journey with Monarchs was just beginning. Having seen Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in action, she started looking for ways that she could give back. That first step came in the form of Monarch egg adoption. As she watched the eggs hatch and these beautiful creatures grow, she continued to learn about their biology, life cycle, and habitat. It became obvious that this was something she wanted to share with her community. "Every other word that came out of my mouth was 'monarch' or 'milkweed,'" she notes enthusiastically.

After getting her feet wet, the rest came quickly. Caroline helped organize the planting of a monarch way station at Hutchison Farm Elementary School as well as in her neighborhood of Ashburn Farm. Her HOA was very receptive to advice on landscaping practices to promote the proliferation of Monarchs, and she even had classes for residents on how they could plant way stations and raise monarchs!

Caroline's favorite volunteer experiences have been manning the booth at the USDA during Pollinator Week as well as organizing a "Dance & Plant" Event at Loudoun Sports Park. She even volunteered at the White House Easter Egg Roll last year for Monarch Watch! These events have brought information to so many near and far, and have truly spread the message of the importance of conservation. Having taught and inspired young minds, HOAs, and fellow residents alike, Caroline continues her work to this day by volunteering as a native plant liaison at many of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's native plant sales as well as organizing and leading landscaping classes for her neighborhood. Like many of our volunteers, Caroline's joy in volunteering comes when she sees others inspired by the same beauty that inspired her.

If you feel inspired by the beauty and significance of our natural world, consider visiting our volunteer web page to see how you, too, can spread the word! <http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Volunteer.htm>



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**Every member matters to us!**

## **JOIN US**

### **Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy 21st Annual Meeting**

**Sunday, June 12**

**4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

**Ida Lee Park, Leesburg, VA**

*See details in our Programs and  
Field Trips section! Register online.*