



# Habitat Herald

*A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy*

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Winter 2005

## In This Issue:

- 2 A Word from the President
- 4 Loudoun Watershed Watch Update
- 5 ANS Water Quality Programs
- 7 LWC Program Calendar
- 10 ANS Offers Scout Programs
- 11 ANS Environmental Education
- 12 LWC Stars at Community and
- 14 Amphibian Monitoring Program Update
- 15 Bluebird Trail 2005 Report
- 16 Bluebird Banding Report
- 17 LWC Stream Quality Program 2005 —
- 20 Insect ID: Paper Wasp
- 20 Follow That Footprint, Paw Print, Hoof
- 21 Featured Friend: Groundhog
- 22 Conservation Advocacy Update

**[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)**

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## Plant Life in the Cold

*by Stan Shetler*

For plants and animals, preparing for winter is all about escape or making yourself scarce by retreating to shelter and putting on an overcoat. Birds can fly away to shelter or warmer climes, mammals can grow a thick coat of fur and retreat to nests and burrows, perhaps to hibernate, and reptiles and amphibians can den or dig themselves into the litter or mud to hibernate. Plants just have to sit there and take whatever winter throws at them, so they have their own ways of making themselves scarce and surviving the cold season.

Annuals wrap up their whole life cycle in one season and then die, but their genes live on, prepackaged in their seeds. These little packets of immortality, lacking tender fleshiness, can survive the harsh conditions of winter and live to sprout a new plant in spring or perhaps many springs later. The seeds of some plants, especially weedy species, can remain viable for 50 years or more, waiting in the soil for the right conditions to germinate. Seventeen-hundred-year-old seeds of lamb's-quarters (*Chenopodium album*) dug up from Iron Age deposits in northern Europe have germinated.

Numerous plants in our meadows, waysides, and wetlands are biennials or herbaceous perennials. In addition to producing seeds, they can overwinter underground and rise again to flower and fruit year after year for two to many years. Biennials (i.e., evening primrose, *Oenothera biennis*) are a special case. The first year they germinate and produce a basal rosette of leaves

*Continued on page 3*

*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 first Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are open to all members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Nicole Hamilton.*

You can also visit us at:

**[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)**

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# A Word from the President

by Nicole Hamilton

At the start of each New Year, I always enjoy taking some time to reflect on the year that has passed — the moments that shaped me, the chances I took, the lessons I learned. I also look to the future and muse over the days to come and the direction in which to fly. Some years, I feel like I need a full course correction, while in other years, I may only need to adjust the heading a little. This year, as I look to the days ahead for LWC, I know what we need to do. It's neither a course correction nor a tweak to our heading. It's spreading our wings to our fullest extent. It's putting our collective strength into each wing beat so we can fly higher and stronger than ever!

In 2005, we grew our membership by 37% — a terrific growth spurt. For 2006, we need to sustain this trend. We need to build our voice for wildlife.

Building our voice takes place subtly through all of our activities, but, ultimately, we build our voice when we build our membership numbers. A membership donation of \$20 or \$30 for the year is less than a single tank of gas, even for a hybrid car; yet, this donation is a show of commitment and a joining of voices that demonstrates what we value.

Through building our membership, stretching our wings to all corners of the county, we will have a voice that will roar over the voices of those who do not value wildlife and the natural habitat around us.

*Continued on page 3*

**A Word...***continued from page 2*

If you have already renewed your membership, I thank you. If you have not, please renew today. We need you. We can only grow if we can keep the members we have and expand from there. With that in mind, I also ask you to encourage your friends, relatives and neighbors to join LWC. Pass on this *Habitat Herald* when you're done, hand them a brochure, bring them to a field trip or program, or give them our address or website and ask them to join. You, our members, are our most valued and effective ambassadors for expanding our reach.

At present, when I stand before our Board of Supervisors, I can say that I stand there representing hundreds of members across Loudoun; but if each of you connects with two or three people you know and they join, then I'll be able to say that I stand there representing thousands of our fellow citizens who care about our wildlife and their habitat. Rather than a background din, let's build our voice and ROAR!

Happy New Year!

*Nicole*

**Plant Life in the Cold...***continued from page 1*

that hugs the ground for warmth and remains green through the winter. The second year they send up the stalk that produces the flowers and fruits with seeds, and then the whole plant dies.

Trees and shrubs are woody seed plants, which can withstand often harsh conditions even with exposed limbs spread high above the ground. A woody plant may live for many years, surviving dozens or even hundreds of winters. How do they do it? They have their own strategies for making themselves scarce and taking a break from active growth during the cold season in a state of dormancy, a kind of winter snooze induced by autumn's shortening and cooling days. They awaken in spring to the snooze alarm of warming and lengthening days.

To shed or to fortify your leaves, your most vulnerable tissues — that is the question. Woody plants have adopted one of two basic strategies, either the evergreen habit or the deciduous habit. Some evergreens such as mountain-laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) and American holly (*Ilex opaca*) have broad, leathery leaves, which *can* be further protected by dense hairs underneath, as in rhododendrons. More likely to come to mind, however, are the narrow-leaved



**PLANT LIFE IN THE COLD — Saturday, February 11, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Registration Required.** Winter's fields and forests may appear lifeless to the untrained eye, but to the careful observer they reveal many riddles of life in restless motion. Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, for an exploration of flora in winter. After a short, illustrated introduction and lunch indoors at the Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA, we will move outdoors to one or more nearby sites where we will examine some clues of winter, discussing the winter ecology of plants and their communities, the identification of evergreen trees and shrubs, and wildlife uses of plants in winter.

**Members (ANS & LWC): \$27; Nonmembers: \$38. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x14 or x16.**

*Continued on page 13*

# Loudoun Watershed Watch Update

by Darrell Schwalm

## What is LWW?

I have often been asked to explain, “What is Loudoun Watershed Watch (LWW)?” Although I am one of the early members of LWW, it is difficult to find the right words to describe it. LWW is not a typical organization as it no longer has a formal organizational structure. There is no president or chairperson or secretary, and there are no rules of order. There are no membership fees, and membership fluctuates depending on the project being organized. Some members are members only in the context of one activity or project. We meet when there is an issue or project at hand that would benefit from our collective reasoning and pooled resources. Projects are only undertaken when one or more members are willing to take a leadership role. When we agree on a project, we develop an action plan and tackle it with resolve. Accountability is based on the integrity of our relationships, and our experience in determining what is reasonable to expect and what is not. Respect and close friendships have developed between many of the members. LWW continues because members walk away satisfied that the organization has accomplished something worthwhile, and confidence that future productive projects will also be successful.

While LWW evolved on its own, the description above comes from an article written by Steven Hubbell describing an “informal partnership” in the Winter 2004 issue of the *Volunteer Monitor Newsletter*. When I read the article, “The Power of Informal Alliances,” I felt it provided a perfect description of LWW and a good explanation of the organizational niche that LWW fits.

## The Evolution of LWW

LWW did not start out as an informal partnership when it was formed in 2000. It was originally called the “Loudoun County Cooperative Stream Monitoring Program (SMP)”, and began as an alliance of citizen and government organizations. Its goal was to develop a comprehensive cooperative program to monitor and protect Loudoun County’s water resources. The organization drew upon the strengths and past works of citizens of Loudoun County, private organizations, County personnel, and Federal and State agencies. The original members and partners included the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Loudoun County Building and Development, the Audubon Naturalist Society, the Goose Creek Association, the Leesburg Environmental Advisory Commission, the Goose Creek Scenic River Advisory Board, the Loudoun County Sanitation Authority, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. In 2002 it changed its name to the Loudoun Watershed Watch.

When the focus of Loudoun County politics moved away from managed growth and protection of its natural resources in 2003, LWW changed. The organization became smaller, and was led by a number of individual partners rather than representatives from different organizations and an informal partnership evolved. Since most of these partners are also members of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy (LWC), a close collaboration between the two organizations developed. As a nonprofit organization, LWC handles the grant funds for LWW/LWC projects.

## 2005 Accomplishments

LWW’s close partnership with LWC paid off in accomplishments for both groups in the areas of stream monitoring; and water resource outreach, stewardship, and education. Accomplishments included organizing the Catoctin Watershed Project to help restore the water quality in Catoctin Creek. A Catoctin Creek riparian tree planting project and a Catoctin Creek clean-up project were organized, and educational materials were developed. A new bacteriological monitoring program was

*Continued on page 10*

## ANS WATER QUALITY PROGRAMS

The water quality of Loudoun County's streams is integral to the well-being of local wildlife and is an indicator of overall ecosystem health. Most of Loudoun County's streams support diverse communities of aquatic life, but in the nation's third-fastest growing county, these irreplaceable resources are under daily threat of destruction and need constant vigilance. Streams and shoreline habitats provide food, shelter, and travel corridors for animals and many of the migratory bird species that make their seasonal journeys across our landscape.

Stream Monitoring classes are taught by Cliff Fairweather of Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). As our volunteer base grows, the LWC, in partnership with ANS, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and the North Fork Goose Creek and Catoctin Watershed Committees, plans to establish stream monitoring teams for every watershed in Loudoun County. These programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Please join us for one of our sessions.  
They are educational, good for the environment, and fun for the entire family.

Classes are held at the **Rust Sanctuary** in Leesburg, VA — ***Reservations for these programs must be made at least two weeks in advance using the registration form on page 6.***

### MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I: ORDER LEVEL

**Saturday, January 21 (10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.) — Classroom**

**Sunday, February 26 (1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.) — Field**

**Saturday, March 25 (9:00 a.m.—1:200 noon) — Classroom**

Benthic macro-invertebrates, boneless creatures that live under flowing water are important indicators of stream health. Learn how to identify the major groups of these organisms, including aquatic insects and crustaceans, to the taxonomic level of order (e.g., *Ephemera* or Mayflies). When registering, specify a single section or any combination of sections. Prospective monitors should sign up of and take at least one classroom and one field class.

### MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION II: FAMILY LEVEL

**Sunday, January 15 (10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.) — Stoneflies & Megaloptera**

**Saturday, February 18 9:00 a.m.—1:200 noon) — Caddisflies**

Develop your knowledge and identification skills for aquatic insects to the family level. Since the tolerance level of particular families can vary widely within an order of insects, family level identification gives a more precise reading on stream health. *These classes are only available to current monitors with at least one year of monitoring experience and a good grasp of order-level identification.*

### MACRO-INVERTEBRATE ID REVIEW & QUIZ

**Friday, March 31 (9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) — self-service quiz**

**Saturday, April 1 (9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon)**

**Thursday, April 13 (7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.)**

Before being sent into the field, all stream monitors are asked to demonstrate their ability to identify aquatic macro-invertebrates by taking a quiz using preserved specimens. Macro-invertebrate identification sheets and keys can be used to complete the quiz. Participants who decline to take the quiz will be assigned to a team to assist with data collection and other field logistics. *Specify section.*

### MONITORING PROTOCOL PRACTICUM

**Saturday, April 23 (1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.) — Classroom**

Master the skills of abiotic data (temperature, pH, and several habitat assessments) gathering, and fine-tune your techniques for capturing stream organisms. Learn the data collection protocol developed for the ANS Water Quality Monitoring. New monitors should attend this class prior to their first monitoring session, and current monitors are encouraged to attend this class periodically as a refresher.

For more information go to [www.audubonnaturalist.org](http://www.audubonnaturalist.org).

## PROTECTING LOUDOUN'S STREAMS AND WATERWAYS

If you are interested in becoming a stream monitor, please fill in the following form and mail it to:

Stream Monitoring Project  
c/o Audubon Naturalist Society  
ATTN: Cliff Fairweather  
Rust Sanctuary  
802 Children's Center Rd, SW  
Leesburg, VA 20176

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Street:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

List the Classes and Dates you are interested in:

Class	1st Choice	2nd Choice

List the Stream you are interested in monitoring:

1st Choice	2nd Choice

If neither of those streams is available, are you willing to help monitor a site designated by the Project?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Are you interested in being one of our Team Leaders?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

Would you be interested in helping us with some of our administrative functions (typing, maintaining our database, or record-keeping)?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

**For more information on any of the programs please contact:**

Audubon Naturalist Society — Cliff Fairweather      (703) 803-8400

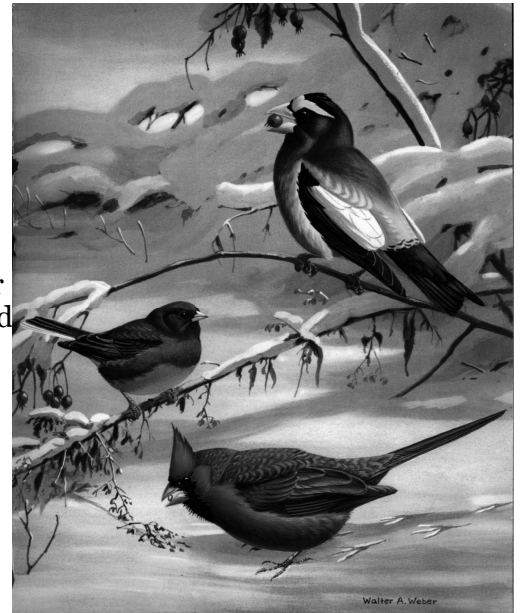
# LWC PROGRAM CALENDAR

*Space is limited for many of these programs.*

Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot.

**CALMES NECK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT — Monday, January 2.** There are several Christmas Bird Counts in Loudoun County besides the Central Loudoun CBC. The Calmes Neck Christmas Bird Count, which includes much of far western Loudoun County, is scheduled for January 2. The count area includes a wide variety of habitat ranging from mountain forests to rural subdivisions to old farm fields and meadows, with the Shenandoah River running through it. If you would like to join the Calmes Neck Christmas Bird Count, please contact Margaret Wester at 540-837-2799 or [margaretwester@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretwester@hotmail.com). (Both Joe Coleman, [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org) or 540-554-2542, and Phil Daley, [pdaley@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:pdaley@loudounwildlife.org) or 540-338-6528, are sector leaders for the Calmes Neck CBC. Phil's area includes Round Hill and north, and Joe's area includes Bluemont south to Bloomfield. If you are interested in joining either of them, please contact each directly.)

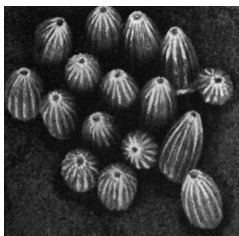
This year the count will be followed by a tally rally beginning at 5:30 at Bear's Den Lodge. After a potluck supper, all of the counts from the different sections will be compiled and tallied. There is a \$5 fee for adult bird-count participants to help offset the cost of preparing the database and publishing a summary in *American Birds*. The database reflects the health of and changes to the bird populations.



**BIRDING BANSHEE — Saturday, January 14, 8:00 a.m.** Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve for the monthly bird walk. Because of its rich and varied habitat, this part of the county is a birding hot spot. Please bring binoculars. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*

**WINTER'S WONDERS: WOODS AND FIELDS IN THE COLDEST MONTH — Monday, January 16, 10:00 a.m.** *Registration Required.* Join Phil Daley as he explores the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship during winter. While many people stay indoors during the cold months, others enjoy the beauty of a season when the sky is so clear you can see forever and the sun casts the longest shadows. During this free winter hike, watch for the many birds and mammals that winter-over here and examine some of the plants to see how they adapt to temperatures that dip below freezing. The Blue Ridge Center comprises 900 acres on the west side of Harpers Ferry in northwestern Loudoun County. Meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Rt. 671 at 10:00 a.m. *To register contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or [pdaley@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:pdaley@loudounwildlife.org).*

**BUTTERFLIES IN WINTER — Saturday, January 21, 10:30 a.m.** Where do butterflies go in the winter? What is that crumble of leaves under the bush? How does a miniscule egg form into a beautiful creature of flight? Can you raise butterfly eggs to adulthood for release? These and many more questions will be answered by The Butterfly Lady, Mona Miller! Learn how you can help butterfly populations and encourage butterflies to over-winter in your very own backyard. This free program is sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Audubon Naturalist Society at the Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg (802 Children's Center Road, SW). *Questions: contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-4839 or [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org).*



**BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER — Saturday, January 28, 8:00 a.m.** On the fourth Saturday of each month (except December) the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy leads a bird walk at the Blue

*Continued on page 8*

**Calendar...***continued from page 7*

Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES). This beautiful 900-acre preserve is located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rt. 671, in northwestern Loudoun County. Only a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, the property includes meadows in the valley and heavily forested slopes on the Blue Ridge. Meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Rt. 671 at 8:00 a.m. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*

**BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, February 11, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 14 listing for details.

**PLANT LIFE IN THE COLD – Saturday, February 11, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. *Registration***

***Required.*** Winter's fields and forests may appear lifeless to the untrained eye, but to the careful observer they reveal many riddles of life in restless motion. Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, for an exploration of the flora in winter. After a short, illustrated introduction and lunch indoors at ANS's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA, we will move outdoors to one or more nearby sites where we will examine some clues of winter. Winter ecology of plants and their communities, the identification of evergreen trees and shrubs, and wildlife uses of plants in winter will be discussed. This program is co-sponsored with the Audubon Naturalist Society. **Members (ANS & LWC): \$27; Nonmembers: \$38. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x14 or x16.**



**SEARCHING FOR BIRDS OF PREY – Saturday, February 18, 2:30 p.m.** Join Liam McGranaghan on a winter raptor search sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. After meeting at the ANS's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, 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 over here. ***Sign-up required*** – *contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*



**BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, February 25, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 28 listing for details.

**BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, March 11, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 14 listing for details.

**SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE – Sunday, March 19, 2:00 p.m.** Join Phil Daley of the Friends of Banshee Reeks and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for an informal, family walk around the preserve. Search for the many natural wonders that make this such a special place as spring is beginning. *For information call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316.*

**BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, March 25, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 28 listing for details.

**BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, April 8, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 14 listing for details.

**BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, April 22, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 28 listing for details.

**AMPHIBIANS AFOOT – Thursday, April 27, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 29, 3:00 - 9:00 p.m. *Registration required.*** Under rocks, in the grasses, on the trees, in the water – the wild is alive with amphibians! While April showers may bring May flowers, they also bring a host of frogs, toads and salamanders. Returning from the forests to their primordial breeding pools, these amphibians are continuing a cycle of life that has gone on for thousands of years. Join us for a two-part training event to learn about these creatures

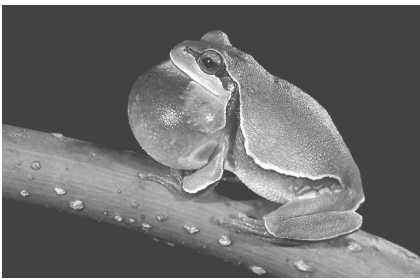


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**Calendar...***continued from page 8*

and kick off our amphibian-monitoring program. On Thursday, April 27, we will begin with an introduction to the frogs, toads and salamanders of Loudoun. We will review the various species known to live here, listen to their calls, and discuss their habitats and lifecycles. Their biology and role in the forest and wetland ecosystems will be discussed, also. On Saturday, April 29, we will spend the afternoon and early evening visiting some local breeding ponds. We will search for frogs, toads and salamanders and practice using our amphibian-monitoring protocol. Following the training, anyone interested in being a part of the amphibian-monitoring program will be invited to stay for a short discussion of next steps and our plan to begin monitoring. Although donations are appreciated to help defray the costs of launching this program, the two-day training is free. *To register, contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-4839 or [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org).*



**TRILLIUMS AND WARBLERS – Saturday, May 6, 9:00 a.m.** Spring bursts forth with incredible energy and show at the Thompson Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in northwestern Fauquier County. Join Bill Cour and Mary Ann Good for a wildflower and warbler walk at this beautiful location on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountain, near both Linden and Sky Meadows State Park. Acres of large-flowered trilliums along with a number of other wildflowers bloom in early May along the mountain trails in the Thompson WMA at the same time migrating warblers move through the area. While we will meet in one of the parking lots at the Thompson WMA, car pooling from some locations in Loudoun County will also be possible. **Sign-up required** – *contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*



**BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, May 13, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 14 listing for details.

**BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES AT BANSHEE – Saturday, May 20, 10:30 a.m.** Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks for one of our free butterfly and dragonfly walks. We will investigate some of Banshee's many diverse natural areas and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*



**SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE – Sunday, May 21, 2:00 p.m.** Join Phil Daley of the Friends of Banshee Reeks and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for an informal, family walk around the preserve. Search for the many natural wonders that make this such a special place in spring. *For information call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316.*

**BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, May 27, 8:00 a.m.** See the January 28 listing for details.

Questions about the above programs –  
contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).  
For up-to-date information on our programs check our web site at [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org).

**Loudoun Watershed Watch Update....continued from page 4**

started in the Catoctin Watershed. LWW also updated the *Loudoun County State of Streams Report* that will soon be printed, and organized the *Fourth Annual Loudoun Family Stream Day* in Broadlands. Information on LWW and these activities can be found at [www.loudounwatershedwatch.org](http://www.loudounwatershedwatch.org).

**2006 Goals for LWW**

2006 may be the “Year of Opportunity” for LWW, LWC, and its other partner organizations. The Catoctin Watershed Project will be in its second year, and new community outreach and educational initiatives are being planned. We will continue bacteria monitoring and help organize stream stewardship events in Taylorstown and Purcellville. We will develop new educational materials on water quality and stream restoration needs in the county. These activities may include increased collaboration with state and county authorities. The county will be using grant funds to begin a watershed management planning process that LWW and LWC plan to support. The county initiative may also include support for LWC’s stream monitoring activities. The success of these projects will depend upon the level of support received from volunteers in LWC and other partner groups. If any of these activities appear exciting to you, please contact me or another LWC board member so we can include you in planning our activities, or sign up online at [http://www.loudounwildlife.org/index\\_files/Volunteer.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/index_files/Volunteer.htm).



## **ANS Offers Scout Programs**

**Looking for a wild place to earn your scout badges??** The Audubon Naturalist Society offers a variety of programs for scouts designed to help them earn their nature and wildlife-related badges. Programs are offered locally at the Rust Sanctuary. Custom programs can also be designed for your group. For more information and to register for programs, call (703) 669-0000.

**Daisies:**

Nature related petal programs

**General Patches:**

Water Drop Patch

**Brownie Try-Its:**

Eco-explorer  
Watching Wildlife  
Water Everywhere  
Animals  
Plants  
Earth and Sky  
Outdoor Adventurer  
Senses

**Junior Badges:**

Science Discovery  
Your Outdoor Surroundings  
Water Wonders  
Earth Connections  
Doing Hobbies (bird-watching, nature explorer, hiking)

**Cadet and Senior Girl Scouts:**

All About Birds  
Wildlife

## ANS Environmental Education Programs

*The following classes are given by the Audubon Naturalist Society at the Rust Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA. Please contact Cliff Fairweather at [cliff@audubonnaturalist.org](mailto:cliff@audubonnaturalist.org) or 703-669-0000 for more information or to register.*

### Family Programs (For beginners of all ages)

**Fees:** *ANS members: \$7 per child (\$5 for each additional child); nonmembers: \$10 per child (\$7 for each additional child). Please note that additional child discount is for siblings only. Adult participation required; adults do not pay fee unless otherwise noted. All programs require registration, but drop-ins are welcome!*

#### Nature for Toddlers Ages 2 & 3 years (with adult)

Friday, January 6 (9:30 — 10:30 a.m.)  
Wednesday, February 1 (9:30 — 10:30 a.m.)  
Tuesday, March 7 (9:30 — 10:30 a.m.)

Come and explore nature with your toddler! Join us for a single day or several days and learn how to teach your child about nature. Each day we will read a story and investigate an animal that lives at Rust. A craft and a short hike will be included during our time together. If your toddler needs a ride during our hike, please bring a backpack (strollers are not appropriate for the trails).

### Free Programs

#### Beginner Bird Walks

January 7 (8:00 — 9:00 a.m.)  
February 11 (8:00 — 9:00 a.m.)  
March 11 (8:00 — 9:00 a.m.)

These one-hour walks are for bird watching beginners and are led by an experienced birder. Learn about what to look and listen for and tips on identification. Bring your binoculars and field guide if you've got them; if not, we've got some to loan. For reservations and more information, call the Rust Sanctuary office at 703-669-0000.

### Special Adult Programs

#### Plant Life in the Cold Saturday, February 11 (9:30 a.m. — 3:30p.m.)

Winter's fields and forests may appear lifeless to the untrained eye, but to the careful observer they reveal many riddles of life in restless motion. Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, for an exploration of flora in winter. After a short, illustrated introduction and lunch indoors at the Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA, we will move outdoors to one or more nearby sites where we will examine some clues of winter, discussing the winter ecology of plants and their communities, the identification of evergreen trees and shrubs, and wildlife uses of plants in winter. **Members (ANS & LWC): \$27; Nonmembers: \$38. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x14 or x16.**

#### Birds of Prey and Winter Waterfowl

Saturday, March 4 (10:00 a.m. — dark)

Join two birders (Joe Coleman and Jon Little) on a daylong search for birds of prey, waterfowl, and other winter birds on this trip to field, thicket, and wetland habitats in western Loudoun and northwestern Fauquier Counties. We'll begin the day at Rust Sanctuary. From here, we will visit other areas in Loudoun, including Lucketts and Dulles Wetlands, before moving on to the ponds at Airlie and Clifton Farms in Fauquier. We'll end the day at dusk near Marshall, VA where we hope to catch a view of Short-eared Owls, which typically overwinter here. **ANS Members: \$28 Nonmembers: \$39**

# LWC Stars at Community and County Fairs

*by Bertie Murphy*

A great way to spread our wildlife message to is to join in the fun at county and community fairs. This past season, a stalwart team of volunteers did just that! From Broadlands to Bluemont, we covered the county, sharing our collective knowledge on Loudoun wildlife and engaging fair-goers in discussions on the how's and why's of living in harmony with nature. Sometimes we conducted workshops and demonstrations — Darrell Schwalm's whistle-making activity at Claude Moore Park, Felicity Francis' field trip at Water Day that helped the Girl Scouts get biology badges, and the bluebird habitat demonstrations that Debbie Harrison and others conducted at the Lucketts Fair.

Starting in early spring and going through late fall, LWC volunteers participated in seven fairs: Arbor Day at Banshee Reeks, Catoctin Stream Day near Waterford, Nature Day at Claude Moore Park, Water Day at National Recreation and Park Association Headquarters in Ashburn, Lucketts Fair, Bluemont Fair, and Family Stream Day at Broadlands. The volunteers who helped at these fairs share a common love of nature but otherwise have varied backgrounds and expertise:

- **Bill Oscanyan**, a real Smokey the Bear in another life and champion in engaging fair-goers in 'nature' and natural dialogue;
- **Darrell Schwalm**, a resident stream expert who knows how to whittle a little and keep a group of impatient kids engaged;
- **Debbie Harrison**, a bluebird specialist who wowed fair-goers with her aviary wit and wisdom;
- **Ellie Daley**, our band-leader at the Arbor Day parade, who always adds a twinkle to any event she participates in, and she participated in lots of our volunteer efforts!
- **Felicity Francis**, an outstanding Loudoun County science teacher who beguiled a group of Girl Scouts on a very hot afternoon at Water Day in Ashburn;
- **Gil Hamilton**, our in-house logistician who hauled the tent to the fairs, perfected the set-up to a scientific precision, and even on the wettest or hottest day always had a cheerful word to say;
- **Joe Coleman**, our resident guru and birder who convinced more than a few fair-goers of the benefits of living harmoniously with nature;
- **Karen Coleman**, a nature artist who shared her eye for beauty and voice for nature with Bluemont Fair-goers;
- **Karen Strick**, an adventurer, traveler and sailor who showed up to pitch in whenever and wherever;
- **Laura Weidner**, a bird-lover with a can-do attitude and a knack for collecting pledges and sharing ideas;
- **Lily Evans**, a high-school student who is the quintessential nature-loving, always-willing-to-help, already-making-a-name-for-herself volunteer;
- **Lisa Taylor**, a non-profit expert in her own right who willingly shares her expertise and was a real trouper to work the Lucketts Fair in a cold drizzle;
- **Marsha Humphries**, a never say "no" pinch-hitter who hit a homerun at the Bluemont Fair;

*Continued on page 23*

**Plant Life in the Cold ...continued from page 3**

conifers such as pines, spruces, and hemlocks, which reduce their exposure to the elements by having scale- or needle-like leaves. Evergreen leaves may also be fortified by thick, insulating outer cells and antifreezes such as the abundant resin in coniferous leaves.

The deciduous habit dominates the forests of the Appalachian region, including our area. Deciduous woody plants shut down their leaf factories in the fall, break down the photosynthetic machinery, and reveal their beautiful, true colors, which often are species-specific, before releasing the leaves to recycle their elements for another year and future generations. All remaining product of the summer is first transported to the roots or stored in the woody tissues for safe-keeping for next year. Finally, their tender twigs of the year cease growing, harden, and terminate their tender growing points with buds covered by tough, insulating outer scales. In both evergreen and deciduous woody plants, woody tissues and bark protect the living cells in trunk and limb. As part of the autumn shutdown, these cells flush out the freezable liquid into the intercellular spaces and concentrate the solutes in the cells, so that the protoplasm itself will not freeze.



Dormancy is a season of restless sleeping because growth never really ceases altogether. Buds slowly swell until they burst in spring, and the earlier the warmth the faster the swelling. Evergreens can carry on limited photosynthesis on the milder, sunnier days.

Winter can be an exhilarating time in nature, and neither cold nor snow should keep you from field and forest. Read the clues and look for what may not be so obvious amid the dense, bustling greenery of summer. Crunch the crust and tramp the fields, meadows, and waysides to look for the skeletons of summer's weeds and wildflowers, survey the range of fruits and seeds that skip across the icy surface or hitchhike a ride to other habitats of opportunity, or pick a lonely, mellowed persimmon waiting for a predator. Flowers produce fruits, which may be dry or fleshy, such as berries, and fruits contain seeds, at least one. Fruits fascinate but also are telltales of their species. Look in sheltered places for rosettes or other gems of winter green. Listen o'er the wind for the faint tinkling of tree sparrows or the rat-a-tat-tat of a downy woodpecker working on a goldenrod gall—now you hear it, now you don't.

Winter strips the forest of its summer pretenses and, like an x-ray, lays it bare to the skeleton. Now everything is unmasked – the evergreens, great and small; the storeys of the forest, from the canopy to the bushes and the lowly ferns and mosses; the silhouettes of boles and branches and thus the shapes of species; the landscape architecture and hue of bark; the twigs with their vibrant buds and other unique identifiers; the snags that have passed from life to death into the hands of the decomposers but in so doing are giving life to other great casts of characters, the bacteria, fungi, and insects, and apartments for birds and mammals.

Skulking through the swamps and bottomlands may turn up lingering, stringy yellow flowers on the zigzag twigs of witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*); the speckled twigs of spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) with the scarlet berries of last year or the swelling flower buds of the new year; the deep red berries of the deciduous holly known as winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*); or the spears of a marching army of skunk-cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) flowers pretending that winter is nothing at all. Thoreau called these "cabbages" "hermits of the bog."



The snowy winter woods is a magical, enchanting place, never to be despised. There you can find solitude and silence. There you can learn simple lessons from complex systems. There you can enjoy moments of ecstasy under monarch trees or when a ruffed grouse explodes from the snow under your feet. There you can ponder the wonder and awe of nature.

# Amphibian-Monitoring Program Update

by Nicole Hamilton

The amphibian-monitoring program is getting ready to launch! Over the past few months, we have been gathering materials and information on other amphibian-monitoring programs across the country. This has given us an idea of the practices currently in use, the level and type of data collected, and the ways in which we can contribute to monitoring these creatures and their habitats.

By launching this program, we look forward to having another means through which to learn about wildlife and their intricate web of diversity. Amphibians are a terrific indicator of habitat health, not only because they require both land (forests, grasslands) and water (ponds, vernal pools, wetland marshes) to survive, but also because their skin is so porous. By tracking their populations, we can learn their story of habitat loss or conservation, as well as the quality of their habitat as it relates to pollution. We will collect data on the diversity of species of frogs, toads and salamanders and track their populations. In addition, we will share this data with organizations at regional and national levels so we can contribute to broader citizen-science projects. We will also look for critical habitat areas where we can possibly hold citizen-assisted road crossings during “big night” migrations in the spring as frogs, toads and salamanders move from their wooded habitats to their breeding pools. If you notice areas this spring where you hear or see large numbers of frogs, toads or salamanders, please let us know.

Because this will be our first year monitoring amphibians, it will start as a pilot program. Over the coming weeks we will select sites to start monitoring and begin using the monitoring protocol and materials that have been developed. Our goals with this program focus on both education and action. We want to learn more about the amphibian species that we have here in Loudoun and understand their habitat needs as well as the human impact, but we also want to get out into the field, collecting data, listening to their calls, peeking under logs, and wading into ponds. The program we are designing will have opportunities for those who would like to focus just on surveys via calls and for those who would like to get their feet wet. Having this variety will also enable us to open up the program to schools which can use this as a means to introduce students to scientific methods and ecology. Ultimately, we will be building a repository of data on the amphibian species of Loudoun. This data will help us as we learn about sensitive habitats and act as a voice for wildlife.

To kick off the pilot, we will conduct a two-day training session on April 27 and 29. During the training, we will provide an introduction to amphibians, host a field trip to explore their habitats and begin identification, and review the data collection protocol. The pilot monitoring will last through the summer. During this time, we will gather lessons learned and refine our methods and materials. If you are interested in joining this pilot program, please contact Nicole Hamilton at [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org) or 540-882-4839. Future opportunities to become an amphibian monitor will also become available after we work through the trial period.



## Amphibians Afoot

**Thursday, April 27, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Saturday, April 29, 3:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

Under rocks, in the grasses, on the trees, in the water — the wild is alive with amphibians! While April showers may bring May flowers, they also bring a host of frogs, toads and salamanders. Returning from the forests to their primordial breeding pools, these amphibians are continuing a cycle of life that has gone on for thousands of years. Join us for a two-part training event to learn about these creatures and kick off our amphibian-monitoring program. On Thursday, April 27, we will begin with an introduction to the frogs, toads and salamanders of Loudoun. We will review the various species known to live here, listen to their calls, and discuss their habitats and lifecycles. Their biology and role in the forest and wetland ecosystems will be discussed, also. On Saturday, April 29, we will spend the afternoon and early evening visiting some local breeding ponds. We will search for frogs, toads and salamanders and practice using our amphibian-monitoring protocol. Following the training, anyone interested in being a part of the amphibian-monitoring program will be invited to stay for a short discussion of next steps and our plan to begin monitoring. Although donations are appreciated to help defray the costs of launching this program, the two-day training is free. Registration is required; please contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-4839 or [nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org).

# Bluebird Trail 2005 Report

*by Nicole Hamilton*

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy supports the Virginia Bluebird Society in managing and monitoring the bluebird nest-box trails of Loudoun County. We currently have ten trails across Loudoun, all located in public areas such as county and regional parks. They range in size from five to 26 nest boxes per trail. While we set up the trails primarily to track bluebird populations, we also enjoy monitoring other cavity nesters as they build their nests and raise their young. This enables us to gather additional data on Tree Swallows, chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and House Wrens.

The 2005 season showed a marked improvement over the past few years. In 2003 the serious snowstorms took a toll on the adults; in 2004 the cold wet spring took a toll on the spring fledglings. Both events caused us to have very low fledgling numbers for the past two years. This year was a pleasant change. The weather was milder and our numbers soared. We started seeing our first eggs around April 8th and our first hatchings around April 21, although some trails started seeing activity in early May. Across our ten trails, we recorded fledging a total of 359 bluebirds, 193 Tree Swallows and 65 House Wrens. At Banshee Reeks, we had some mammal visitors in one of the boxes – bats took up residence and stayed for a few weeks. They roosted in these boxes last year, too, so this may become an annual resting spot for the bats as they travel through the area. Morven Park had another occurrence of white bluebird eggs. It was in a different box from past years, and we wondered if this was the same pair each year. David Mitchell began a bluebird-banding program at both the Brambleton and Franklin Park trails this year, and we look forward to tracking these locations in the coming season.



As in past years, we continued to have approximately four volunteer monitors per trail. For 2005, we had a total of 42 people monitoring the trails, 19 of whom were new to nest-box monitoring. Volunteers included a number of home-schoolers whose parents used the nest-box trail at the Rust Sanctuary as an outdoor classroom. Students experienced the gathering of data firsthand and the use of the data to analyze trends from past years. They also were shown how the information they gathered contributed to the regional and national data being collected, and they learned about the importance of seeing a project through to completion.

A warm thank-you to everyone who monitored for 2005:

Sarah McDade	James Han	Bob Wybraniec	Lynn Webster
Karen Strick	Siu Wong	Rebecca Besbris	Nicole Hamilton
Ellie Florence	Brian Shifflett	Pete Rundel	Mimi Westervelt
Debra Gutenson	Carol Coyle	Jeanne Duffie	Deb MacLean
Roger Clapp	Pat Whittle	Kimberly Welter	Dale Thornton
Laura Weidner	Marsha Weidner	Steve Johnson	Tamara and Scott Harris
Jolie Williams	Mary Ann Good	Lisa Desjardins	Nancy and Jenny Reeves
Sasha Stitch	Chris and Misty Thomas	Susan and Gretta Ungera	
Ann Munsen and her children Ava and Steven			
Amy Beyers and her children Sidney, Levi and Jacob.			

Special thanks to Eagle Scout Kevin Staton who led the charge to set up predator guards along the Rust Sanctuary trail. These raccoon and snake guards will keep the nesting birds and babies from being eaten by predators.

Additional information on the bluebird trails of Loudoun, as well as past years data, can be found on our website: [www.loudounwildlife.org/index\\_files/Bluebird1.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/index_files/Bluebird1.htm).

# Bluebird Banding Report

by David Mitchell

*David Mitchell is a long-time bluebird trail monitor and is the leader for the nest-box trail at Franklin Park*

This summer the Virginia Bluebird Society completed its first season of bird banding here in Loudoun. The project's inaugural year was treated as a pilot study to determine the feasibility of doing long-term research on bluebird population dynamics. Protocol and techniques were honed throughout the season, and the results proved promising for developing insight into the bluebird populations on our monitored trails. This year bluebirds were banded on two of our nest-box trails: Franklin Park and Brambleton Regional Park. Most of the effort was made at Franklin, with 30 birds (24 chicks and 6 adults) banded. At Brambleton, one adult female and her six chicks from her first clutch were banded. One of the crucial elements of the pilot study was to confirm that no detriment to the bluebirds would occur. After all banding events, parents returned to their nests, most in less than 20 minutes, to successfully fledge their young.



A crucial part to any population study is recapture or re-sighting of the marked individuals. To aid re-sighting, individual birds not only received the obligatory metal band but were also color banded. Each parent had two bands per leg: a metal band and a unique combination of three color bands. All 2005 hatching-year birds received the metal band on one leg and a red color band on the other. Because the parents were uniquely color banded, we were able to confirm through observation that one pair fledged three broods in one box, and another female fledged two broods in one box then shifted to a neighboring box to raise a third. (Her male partner or partners eluded capture throughout the season.)



For 2006, the project will focus on developing a more reliable means to capture adult males. The technique used this year required males to enter the box completely, but males will often only insert their heads to feed the box occupants. Next year monitors will be looking for banded bluebirds with one red-color band. When a second year bird is re-sighted, attempts will be made to capture that individual by a mealworm-baited trap or audio-playback and mist nets.



By continuing to mark and re-sight individuals, this study will help us understand how bluebird survival varies across age, life-history decisions, and landscape. Such data will provide information on how to make better management decisions to conserve bluebirds and their habitat.



# THE LWC STREAM QUALITY PROGRAM IN 2005 – A SNAPSHOT

*by Darrell Schwalm*

2005 was a successful year for stream monitoring highlighted by several activities in partnership with the Loudoun Watershed Watch (LWW). Although benthic macro-invertebrate monitoring slackened off, the new bacteria stream monitoring program kept volunteers busy and brought in new volunteers. These activities were supported by a grant for \$4,200 from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). LWC also partnered with LWW for a grant for \$6,000 from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund to continue these activities in 2006.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

**Benthic Macro-invertebrate Monitoring** – LWC monitored 16 sites on 22 occasions for benthic macro-invertebrates, down from 27 sites on 46 occasions in 2004. A new site was added in the Catoctin Creek watershed that will help LWC assess progress on restoring water quality in this watershed.

## To our 33 Volunteer Monitors, including nine new ones, Thank You!

Gem Bingol	Otto Gutenson	Robert Perantoni
Emily Bzdyk	Diana Huber	Will Sacripanti
Judy Clister	Gary Joaquin	Darrell Schwalm
Ellie Daley	John Jones	Colby Sherwood
Phil Daley	Margaret Jones	Charles Stafford
Shawna Daley	Sean Jones	Janos Stafford
Helen deGroot	Ann Larson	Doris Taxis
Cliff Fairweather	Kristi Larson	Suzanne Wade
Scott Findley	Peter Larson	Carol Ward
Bill Gordon	Barbara Lupfer	David Ward
Matthew Gordon	Kate Marincic	Eric Ward

**Training** – ANS continued to offer free training in stream monitoring protocol and benthic macro-invertebrate identification at both the order and family level.

**Quality Assurance Program Plan** – As a condition of the DEQ grant LWC submitted a quality assurance plan (QAPP) and its two QA Officers, Darrell Schwalm and Cliff Fairweather, made seven field audits.

*Continued on page 18*

**LWC Stream Quality Program...continued from page 17**

**Bacteria Monitoring** – LWC collaborated with LWW to begin a bacteria monitoring program at 12 stations in the Catoctin Creek watershed. Coordinated by Carolyn Randall, Darrell Schwalm, and David Ward, samples were analyzed for *E. coli* bacteria.

**To our Volunteer Bacteria Monitors and Lab Analysts, Thank You!**

Fred Fox

Steve Giannino

Otto Gutenson

Margaret Jones

Sharon Lloyd-O'Connor

Juanita Loilpallai

Kate Marincic

Kevin Oliveau

Carolyn Randall

Linda Schlosser

Darrell Schwalm

Doris Taxis

David Ward

Beginning in June 2005 volunteers collected samples twice monthly. The Leesburg Sewage Treatment Plant provided laboratory bench space for volunteers where the samples were incubated and counted. The bacteria monitoring program will help LWW track the progress being made to restore water quality in Catoctin Creek under the Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) voluntary implementation plan.

**Riparian Tree Planting Event** – On April 17 LWC helped LWW and over 50 volunteers plant 500 trees and shrubs along the North Fork of the Catoctin Creek near Waterford. The participating Girl Scout troops, other youth, and adults learned about protecting streams and wildlife with riparian buffers.



*Girl Scouts planting trees*



*Scouts cleaning up Catoctin Creek*

**Catoctin Creek Cleanup Event** – LWC supported LWW's successful Catoctin Creek Stream Cleanup Event on April 24 at the Taylorstown Bridge. Over 60 adults and youth volunteered in the cleanup and the activities at Taylorstown. The Boy Scouts had a large participation and much trash was collected from the creek. Girl Scout Troop 514, Lovettsville, had several members pick up trash at McKimmey Landing on the Potomac River. Both the youth and adults also had an opportunity to learn about aquatic life in the Creek.

*Continued on page 19*

**LWC Stream Quality Program...continued from page 18**

**Student Science Projects** — LWC volunteers, Darrell Schwalm, Kate Marincic, Otto Gutenson, and David Ward, helped one high school and two middle school students with their science projects involving bacteria monitoring of Loudoun streams using the Coliscan Easygel media.

**Family Stream Day** — Several LWC volunteers, Gem Bingol, Phil Daley, Otto Gutenson, Linda Schlosser, and Steve Moulton, manned displays at the third annual LWW Family Stream Day in early October at the Broadlands Community Center. Despite the pouring rain there was a large turnout of families.

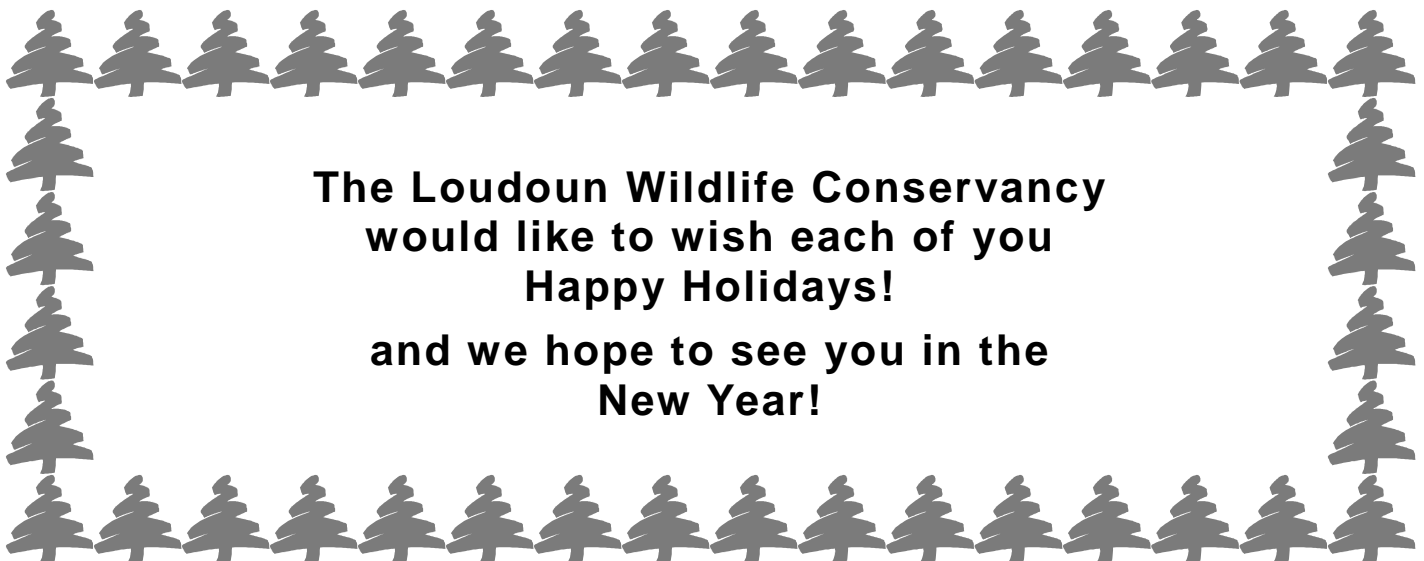
**High School Stream Monitoring Programs** — LWC volunteers, Darrell Schwalm, Phil Daley, Linda Schlosser, and Carolyn Randall, collaborated with Earth Force, to continue their work with high school and middle school teachers to provide stream monitoring programs for students.

**2005 State of Loudoun Streams Report** — Using the 2003-2005 data, LWW updated stream profiles on each watershed (see [www.loudounwatershedwatch.org](http://www.loudounwatershedwatch.org)).

**Referral of Marginal Monitoring Sites to DEQ** — Based on the stream monitoring data several streams have been referred to DEQ because of their poor condition.

**PROGRAM NEEDS FOR 2006:**

- LWC needs a Stream Quality Program Coordinator and a Program Committee to provide better communication, team building, and recruitment of monitoring volunteers.
- LWC needs to review the stream monitoring protocol to determine whether it can be made easier and more enjoyable.
- LWC needs to look at ways to enhance the training of volunteers to ensure that quality data is collected.

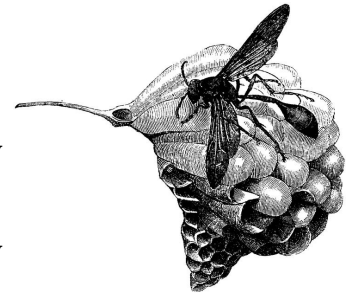


**The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
would like to wish each of you  
Happy Holidays!  
and we hope to see you in the  
New Year!**

## INSECT ID: The Paper Wasp

by Nicole Hamilton

Many of us have seen the nests of paper wasps under the eaves of roofs or under large branches. For those who monitor bluebird nest boxes, we often encounter these wasps trying to build a nest inside the roof of a box. The nests are made by female wasps that bite off tiny pieces of wood or tree bark, chew it in their mouths, and combine it with saliva to make pulp. This pulp is then used to make the nest cells. The nest of a paper wasp may be as small as a few cells or as many as 200 cells.



Paper wasps lead an interesting life. In fall, the male and female wasps mate. As the days grow shorter and colder, both sexes go into hibernation in rock crevices and rotting logs. They stay in these crevices through the cold of winter, but only the females survive to spring. As the warm days of spring return, the females (now the queens) fly in search of a spot to build their nests. They will begin by building a couple of cells and laying an egg in each. A fascinating behavior occurs during this period. If for some reason a queen is not able to complete her nest, she will join another queen and become part of that queen's group of workers. As the larvae grow, they emerge and join the force of female workers. At the end of summer, the queen lays more eggs, and it is now that she uses the sperm that she received from the male the fall before to fertilize some of the eggs. These fertilized eggs are fed extra amounts of food, for they carry the hopes of the next generation, growing into both males and the queens for the next year. As fall returns, the queen stops laying eggs, the workers stop working so hard, and the males and new queens leave the nest to begin the new cycle.

## Follow that footprint, paw print, hoof print ...

Have you ever tracked someone's footprints in the sand or snow? It can be kind of a mystery figuring out where someone was going and what they were doing. By looking carefully at animal tracks you can learn more about their comings and goings too.

Winter is the perfect time to put on your detective hat and follow some animal tracks. You can do this in your yard, at a local city park, or for a real adventure, head out to a state park or forest. Pick a day right after a snowfall and see how many different types of tracks you can find.

Here are some hints to get you started:

- Think about what kind of animals live in the area. This will help you narrow the identification. It's a pretty good bet that if you're looking in your backyard you'll find squirrel, bird, and maybe rabbit tracks.
- Four toes on each of the front and hind feet means you're looking at a track from the dog family (fox, wolf, coyote, neighborhood dog), the cat family (bobcat, neighborhood cat) or the rabbit family (cottontail). Does the paw print have small triangular marks in front of it? If so, those are claw marks. Raccoons, skunks, coyotes, foxes, and dogs will often leave claw marks. Cats, on the other hand, retract their claws when they walk or run. So, you won't usually find claw marks with bobcats, or house cats.
- Four toes on the front foot and five toes on the hind foot means it's a rodent (mice, voles, chipmunks, squirrels, groundhogs).
- If the track has five toes each on the front and back feet it's from the raccoon and weasel families (weasel, skunk, bear, beaver, opossum).
- If you find a two-toe track, it's probably a deer.
- What direction is your animal going? How can you tell? If your animal has claws it's pretty easy...claw marks point in the direction the animal was going. If there aren't any claw marks, see if you can see where the snow is pushed back by the animal's feet. The pushed back areas shows the direction the animal came from.



## FEATURED FRIEND:

by Nicole Hamilton

### Groundhog

During winter, groundhogs, also called woodchucks, are in the midst of hibernation. Living off fat reserves they gained over the summer and fall, they are sleeping in chambers in tunnel systems running 30 feet long that they excavated just below the frost line. You may see entrances to their underground burrows on well-drained slopes, hidden in rocks, or tucked in next to tree stumps.

Prior to winter, you may have seen groundhogs out gathering grasses and other soft material. They use these to line their chambers, creating a comfortable place for their sleep. They also create a special "room," solely for use as a bathroom. Once spring arrives, this furry friend will emerge, 40% skinnier, looking for food and a mate. The males emerge from their burrows first and sniff nearby burrows for females. Here they mate, and by May/June, a new generation of groundhogs is born. The females care for the young, transforming the hibernation chambers into a nursery where the babies will be comfortable and safe. The mother groundhog teaches her young everything they need to know to survive, including a variety of whistles to communicate danger.

Once the young are ready to "leave home," a gradual departure occurs. First, temporary burrows are made within about 300 feet of the mother's burrow. She still keeps a watchful eye on them during this time, but eventually the young become more independent and move on to establish their own territory.

Groundhogs play an important role in the environment. Their abandoned burrows serve as homes to other animals like raccoons, skunks, foxes, and opossums. Their digging helps loosen the soil so water can be better absorbed by the earth. Another interesting fact is that groundhogs are the largest North American mammal in the squirrel family.



#### Help Build Our Voice for Wildlife!

If you have already renewed your membership for 2006, thank you! If you have not, we hope you will renew today. Your membership makes a difference not only in the financial support you provide but also in the show of commitment to wildlife and habitat it represents. Benefits of membership include:

- *Habitat Herald* four times per year, mailed directly to you
- New member information packet sent to new members
- Free programs, field trips, and monitoring opportunities
- Discounted fees on programs with our partner organizations
- Access to information such as past articles and monitoring data via the website
- Timely updates on habitat issues and opportunities to get involved
- Members' annual meeting
- Fellowship with others who care about the wildlife and habitat of Loudoun
- Representatives to speak for wildlife before our Board of Supervisors.

# Conservation Advocacy Update

by Nicole Hamilton

Over the course of this past year, LWC has examined its advocacy role in helping to guide our county on the environment. As the voice for wildlife in Loudoun, we recognize that LWC is the organization that needs to be out in front of the issues — analyzing information and assessing how decisions being made impact the use and preservation of our wildlife habitat. As such, we have refocused our outreach function, changing the title from “public policy” to “conservation advocacy.” In times like these, when sounds of bulldozers taking down trees are more common than the singing of Northern Bobwhite (quail), we need to be action oriented. Internally to LWC, this change in title creates a more defined function that stands as a pillar beside our educational and habitat monitoring functions. Between LWC and its members and supporters, this provides a clearer path for becoming informed, getting involved and being a part of the solution.

Throughout 2005, we stepped up to address each of the issues that are affecting our natural environment. Often, LWC and its members were the lone voices telling our supervisors that protecting wildlife and habitat matter to us, not only as a quality of life issue today but also as a responsibility that we have to future generations. We wrote letters to the editor on the State Supreme Court’s reversal of our Comprehensive Plan, as well as on habitat loss in general. We spoke at public hearings on western zoning, the Phil Bollen Park, and the Dulles South CPAMS. We also continued to be a partner in the Campaign to Save Courtland Woods and provided representation to the Campaign for Loudoun’s Future.

Throughout these efforts, we have been building and forming our messages. Now, we are working to develop two key documents. The first is LWC’s *Environmental Stewardship Guidelines*. This document will establish our guiding principles for sound environmental stewardship in Loudoun. It will identify key priorities on which our county must focus and describe the key environmental protections that Loudoun needs to have in place to have balanced stewardship of our natural resources over the long term. We will circulate this document within our membership, provide this document to the Board of Supervisors, and encourage the Board and their staff to implement environmental protections.

In addition to the *Stewardship Guidelines*, we will continue to produce position papers in response to the direction in which our county is moving environmentally. While the *Guidelines* is planned to be an enduring document, only updated periodically, the position papers will be created and refreshed based on initiatives pursued by the Board of Supervisors.

Having these two types of documents will enable us to be more flexible, more empowered, and more successful in assessing and responding to actions that threaten our natural environment. Talking points for our members who are willing to speak at public hearings can then be more easily drafted, and positions on specific Board or developer actions can be more readily defined.

In addition to these documents, in the coming weeks we will be calling on you, our members, to send the Board of Supervisors a strong message. We are launching a grassroots, postcard campaign that will enable all of us to tell the Board that we want environmental protections and sound environmental stewardship. We want to tell them that we hold them accountable for what habitat is saved and what is destroyed. Our plan is to develop a series of postcards that will be distributed to all members, along with tips and guidelines about how to use them in a way that enhances our wildlife conservation efforts. You will be able to send these postcards to the Board of Supervisors, adding your own personalized notes. We are reviewing postcard ideas right now and will be in touch as our planning efforts progress. LWC is very excited to make this kind of unique “kitchen table” communications tool available to our members. Our county government needs to hear our concerns for wildlife and habitat.

We hope you will help us convey this message.

**LWC Stars...continued from page 12**

- **Melanie Jerrell**, a repeat volunteer whose own interest in nature sparked the curiosity of fair-goers;
- **Nicole Hamilton**, our LWC president and fearless leader who demonstrated her wholehearted support by participating in all the fairs and keeping track of all the supplies;
- **Phil Daley**, a gem of a scholar whose willingness to share his love of nature enlivened several of the fairs and captivated many fair-goers;
- **Sandy Reufer**, a volunteer's volunteer who knows more about organizing meaningful outreach programs than we could ever put in a book (but that, too, would be a worthwhile endeavor);
- **Sara Bergel**, our other high-school student volunteer whose smile would melt anyone's heart;
- **Wade Burkeholder**, a Leesburg resident who is not afraid to work at the fairs on the hottest day in July or the busiest day in October!

To all of you, thank you! In 2006, we hope to continue with all the fairs we covered in 2005 and even add a few more. As Loudoun's people population continues to outpace (and displace) the wildlife population, it is ever more important to keep a lively, ongoing conversation about living in harmony with nature. The county and community fairs offer an ideal venue for meeting our neighbors and sharing ideas. If you would like to join the fair brigade of volunteers, please sign-up via our website [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org), email me at [bmurphy@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bmurphy@loudounwildlife.org), or call 540-882-4839.

## YES, I want to become an LWC Member!

### Membership Benefits Include:

- \* Subscription to *Habitat Herald*
- \* Classes and Workshops
- \* Volunteer Opportunities
- \* Regular Membership Meetings and Programs

Mail this form along with your payment to:

*Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
PO Box 2088  
Purcellville, VA 20134-2088*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, ST, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your membership level:

(\*membership runs from January 1- December 31)

☐ \$10 Student\*

☐ \$30 Family\*

☐ \$200 Individual Lifetime

☐ \$20 Individual\*

☐ \$75 Corporate\*

☐ \$300 Family Lifetime

☐ Additional Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Renewing Member

☐ New Member

## **Programs at a Glance**

(see pages 5-9 and 11 for complete descriptions)

### **January**

- 2 Calmes Neck Bird Count (L)
- 6 Nature for Toddlers (A)
- 7 Beginner Bird Walks (A)
- 14 Birding Banshee (L)
- 15 Macro-Invertebrate ID II (W)
- 16 Winter's Wonders (L)
- 21 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)
- 21 Butterflies in Winter (L)
- 28 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)

### **February**

- 1 Nature for Toddlers (A)
- 11 Birding Banshee (L)
- 11 Plant Life in the Cold (L & A)
- 11 Beginner Bird Walks (A)
- 18 Searching for Birds of Prey (L)
- 18 Macro-Invertebrate ID II (W)
- 25 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)
- 26 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)

### **March**

- 4 Birds of Prey and Winter Waterfowl (A)
- 7 Nature for Toddlers (A)

### **March (cont)**

- 11 Birding Banshee (L)
- 11 Beginner Bird Walks (A)
- 19 Sunday in the Preserve (L)
- 25 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)
- 25 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)
- 31 Macro-Invertebrate Review and Quiz (W)

### **April**

- 1 Macro-Invertebrate Review and Quiz (W)
- 8 Birding Banshee (L)
- 13 Macro-Invertebrate Review and Quiz (W)
- 22 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)
- 23 Monitoring Protocol Practicum (W)
- 27 Amphibians Afoot (L)

### **May**

- 6 Trilliums and Warblers (L)
- 13 Birding Banshee (L)
- 20 Butterflies and Dragonflies (L)
- 21 Sunday in the Preserve (L)
- 27 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)

**A = ANS      L = LWC      W = Water Quality**



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**P.O. Box 2088**  
**Purcellville, VA 20134-2088**

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