



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XII, Issue 2

Summer 2007

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Bats of Loudoun: Our Night Flyers- Part II

(continued from Spring 2007 issue of the Habitat Herald)
by Nicole Hamilton

This article was compiled from a number of sources (listed at the end of the article) as well as with help from Leslie Sturges of Bat World Northern Virginia.

Bats are an ancient species that has been around for 45 million years, yet their appearance has stayed about the same. While there are over 1,100 species of bats worldwide, here in Loudoun we are known to have 7 species. Indiana Bats may eventually be found in western Loudoun, but they are a federally endangered species and therefore are very rare.

Common

Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). Little Brown Bats are one of our most common species. They are small, approximately 3½" long, and have glossy, dark yellow-brown to olive-brown or even chocolate-brown fur. Little Brown Bats mate in fall with fertilization delayed until spring ovulation happens after they emerge from hibernation. Nursery colonies, which can be as small as just several females to thousands, form in late April – May in warm, dark locations. These bats use a variety of summer roosts, including buildings, tree cavities and crevices, tunnels, abandoned mines, and cliffs. Males are solitary, roosting in hollow trees, under loose bark, and in other crevices. This bat



Photo by Laura Weidner

■ Continued on page 3



Are You Missing the Monthly Email Announcements?

Around the first of each month, an email that lists our programs, activities and special announcements is sent to all LWC members. This includes programs or events that did not make it into the Habitat Herald, as well as the occasional action alert. This is a very low-volume email list (usually just one, sometimes two, emails per month). If you are not on the distribution list but would like to be, please send an email to Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org, and you will be added. If you need to change your email address, please send corrections to Nicole at this same address.

Natural History Field Studies Program

Sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society and the USDA Graduate School

Birds of Prey

NATH1155E

Experience the wonder of the fall raptor migration and learn to identify raptors in flight. Study habitat requirements of birds of prey and their relationships to other species. This course will concentrate on species typically found in eastern North America and will cover additional selected species. Three field trips are planned, with Cape May likely to be one of the locations.

2 credits

Class Night and Time: Wednesdays, 7-9 pm

Class meetings: Sept. 19 – Nov. 28, 2007

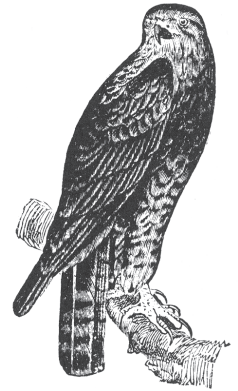
Field Trip Dates: TBA

Location: Rust Nature Sanctuary

Tuition: \$335

Instructor: Liam McGranaghan

To register go to www.grad.usda.gov or call 202-314-3320; for more information go to www.audubonnaturalist.org/temp/ee_nhfs.htm.



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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 first 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.

Visit us at: www.loudounwildlife.org

Contact us

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■ *Bats, continued from pg. 1*

is the species most likely to be found near people's homes and in bat houses. Little Brown Bats forage at late dusk and often repeat hunting flight patterns. They may use waterways or even highways for orientation along their hunting route. They forage about 10 – 20 feet over trees, lawns, and pastures and 3 – 6 feet over open water. Just one Little Brown Bat can eat up to 1,200 insects in an hour of peak feeding activity. Moths make up a major part of their diet, in addition to mosquitoes, flies, beetles, midges, mayflies, and aquatic insects. In October and November, these bats move to their hibernation sites, gathering in caves, tunnels, and mine shafts. They may disperse to several hibernacula, and the hibernating colony may come from many summer colonies. Bats use the same hibernation and nursery sites year after year. Hibernating Little Brown Bats can stop breathing for almost an hour to reduce energy needs. Little Brown Bats are found in much of the United States, Canada, and Alaska.

Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). As its name infers, this is a larger bat, with an average length of 4 – 5". Big Brown Bats have long, glossy, dark-brown hair, a broad nose, and short black ears. Traditionally, Big Brown Bats formed nursery colonies beneath loose bark and in small tree cavities, but they have also adapted to using manmade structures as forests have disappeared. Today, nursery colonies are often found in barns, houses, and churches, as well as caves and abandoned mines. They have up to two pups per year and give birth from May to late June. Big Brown Bats are not migratory and sometimes use the same roost for summer and winter. In fact, it's looking increasingly like Big Brown Bats may not go far at all — possibly from attic to basement or barn to garage! Predators include black rat snakes, screech owls, grackles, house cats, and bullfrogs. This is the most common bat to enter a house. Big Brown Bats are very efficient feeders that can fill their stomachs in an hour of feeding. They fly at dusk, and often go in a nearly straight course 30 feet in the air, often emitting an audible chatter. They are generalists in their foraging behavior and habitat selection, showing little preference for feeding over water versus land or forest versus clearings. Numerous studies have shown that Big Brown Bats consume significant numbers of crop and forest pests, including ground beetles, scarab beetles, cucumber beetles, snout beetles, and stink bugs. In one summer, a colony of 150 Big Brown Bats can consume enough adult cucumber beetles to prevent egg-laying that would produce 33 million of their root-worm larvae, a major pest of corn. These bats are among the last to hibernate, entering their hibernation sites in late October to November. Big Brown Bats clearly rank among America's most beneficial animals. As we destroy their forested habitats, they will seek buildings and other manmade structures to roost in. By providing bat houses, we can keep bats out of our homes yet keep them close enough to benefit from their insect-eating and enjoy their presence. Big Brown Bats have been known to live 19 years in the wild. They are found in most of the United States, Canada, and down into Mexico.

Eastern Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*). This is a medium-sized bat, approximately 3½ – 4¾" long, with bright red to rusty long, silky fur. This is one of the few bats with contrasting color sexes. Females are dull, buffy chestnut with frosting, while males are almost orange-red. This is a tree-dwelling species that lives mostly in dense foliage and hibernates in the open or under leaf litter. Despite their reddish color, they are often hard to see when clinging to trees, since they blend in, looking like a fall leaf or pine cone. Red Bats are solitary except for mating and migrating, and females even roost singly when raising young. During the day, they hang by one foot with their tail membrane wrapped down around their bellies, twisting in the wind like a leaf. Red Bats have 1 to 5 young which are born from late May to early June. Unlike most bats, Red Bats often give birth to twins or triplets. During the day, pups hold on to their mothers with one foot and a perch with the other. Mothers leave their pups at night to forage but will move them to safer locations if needed. Pups begin flying at about 3 – 4 weeks and are weaned just a few weeks later. Red Bats fly in early evening and have been timed at speeds of 40 mph. They feed among trees in the forest, around lights in towns, and on the sides of barns; they eat both hard and soft insects, with moths being a favorite. They migrate south in late September to November, following the same Atlantic flyways as migratory birds. In the late 1880s, there were reports of large migrating flocks passing in daytime, but such sights have not been seen in more than a century. Red Bats live throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Uncommon

Silver-Haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*). This is a medium-sized bat about 3¾ – 4½" long with long, brownish-black, silver-tipped fur. Silver-Haired Bats depend on old-growth forest areas, and so managing forests for diverse age, allowing snags to stay in place, and maintaining forested corridors is critical to them. Mating is thought to occur in the fall, with delayed fertilization until spring. Females form small nursery colonies in tree cavities and small hollows and, like many forest-roosting bats,

■ *Continued on page 4*

■ *Bats, continued from pg. 3*

switch roosts throughout the maternity season. Two pups are born in late June to early July. Silver-Haired Bats fly slowly and at heights of 20 feet or more near mixed or coniferous forests adjacent to water. The males and females spend fall and winter in the same southern areas, but in spring, the females migrate further north than the males. They are frequently found around streams, rivers, and woodland ponds, with tree crevices being the most common shelters/roosts. Beetles are their principal food. Silver-Haired Bats feed earlier than most bats, often coming out just before sunset. Because they are tree dwelling, they are rarely encountered around homes although this sometimes occurs. They often hibernate in woodpiles and have been recovered from garages and, once, an airplane hangar. Life expectancy for Silver-Haired Bats is up to 12 years. They live throughout the United States and into parts of Canada.

Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The Northern Myotis is a medium-sized bat with a total length of 3 – 5". It has no glossy brown fur, with its stomach fur being lighter in color than its back. Northern Myotis are forest bats, needing dense forest stands for their habitat. They forage on hillsides and ridge-forests rather than riparian and flood-plain forests. Little is known about the reproduction of this species, but similar to the Little Brown Bat, they are thought to mate in the fall. They give birth to one pup in June or July. Females form small colonies of up to 30 individuals, sometimes under bark and in tree cavities. They hibernate singly or in small clusters of 4 – 6 individuals or colonies of up to 350 individuals. Hibernation may begin as early as August, and they rely upon caves and underground mines for their hibernation sites. The record for longevity is 18½ years.

Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*). This is the largest of our Loudoun bats, with a length of 5 – 5½". The fur is long and dark to light brown, with gray or silver tips, which gives a frosted ("hoary") appearance.

People rarely get to see these bats because they are not attracted to human structures and they stay well hidden in foliage during the day. They roost primarily in the foliage of trees, often near the edge of a clearing, 10 – 15 feet above the ground during the day. Females do not form nursery colonies as do some other bats but instead

are quite solitary. Two young are born in mid-May to early June. Hoary Bats feed above trees, over water, and in forest clearings, emerging after dark and feeding from early evening to dawn. They sometimes make round trips of up to 24 miles on the first foraging trip of the night and then make several shorter trips, returning to the day roost about an hour before sunrise. They enjoy moths, mosquitoes, dragonflies, wasps, beetles, and grasshoppers. Hoary Bats are strong, swift fliers that are often found in the company of birds as they migrate along the same routes. The sexes remain separate during the summer but then migrate south together in waves, migrating to subtropical and possibly tropical areas to spend the winter. This species is found across the United States and throughout Virginia, but interestingly, most of the Hoary Bats found in Virginia are female. The Hoary Bat is most often encountered during migration periods, as most seem to go farther north to give birth.

Eastern Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus subflavus*). This is one of the smallest eastern bats, with a total length of 2¾ – 3¾". It has yellowish-brown tricolor fur, which, along with the small size, distinguishes it from other bats. There are two, rarely one, young born in sex-segregated maternity colonies from mid-June to early July. They are active until late October, and hibernate in caves/mines often too tiny for other species. There are one to several hundred per cave, some hanging singly scattered about but preferring warm sites in protected passages. Individuals may occupy a precise spot each winter. They may roost in caves, rock crevices, trees/foliage, and seldom buildings. This species forages in early evening in treetops, often over water. Their life span is 4 – 8 years in the wild.

The Future of Loudoun's Bats

As reported by our own Bat World NOVA, while most of our bat species are not yet threatened, they are all suffering dramatic population declines. Bats' habitat and foraging areas disappear as woodlands are cleared and farms are developed. Aquatic insect populations on which our bats prey become scarcer as waterways are polluted or eroded. Habitats become unusable when standing ponds or wetlands are destroyed, because bats must roost within ¼ mile of a water source. Pesticides destroy the insects bats rely on and poison the bats themselves. Pets, particularly cats left outdoors, maim and kill thousands of bats annually. And finally, human attitudes cause thousands of bats to be evicted from the few remaining roost sites they've found — usually wooden structures such as houses, barns, and garages. Bats are routinely killed out of hand if they're found near human habitation because of overreaction about public health concerns or unfounded fear and superstition. You can help bats in several ways:

Install a bat house. Plans for building multi-chamber houses, which are the ones that work the best with our Loudoun species, can be found online at www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/bats/nhp-batintro.asp. Bat houses sold in bird and garden supply stores typically do not work because they are single chamber or too



■ *Continued on page 5*



small. You can learn more about bat houses online at the Bat Conservation and Management website (www.batmanagement.com), which shows why most commercial boxes don't work. They do, however, sell kits that are very good and are recommended by Bat World NOVA.

Use integrated pest management techniques instead of pesticides in your garden. Visit the USDA's backyard conservation website for more information: www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard.

Turn off that bug zapper! Bats do a better job, and bug zappers kill insects indiscriminately. You are taking out the good along with the bad when you use a bug zapper.

Install a pond or water garden. In addition to beautifying your yard, you'll give bats a place to get a drink of water. A healthy pond will support a population of aquatic insects for your bat to dine on as well.

Let dead trees stand. If there is no danger to persons or buildings, leaving dead trees, called snags, standing provides habitat for bats, cavity-nesting birds, small mammals, and bark-dwelling insects.

Attend an educational program to learn more about bats and other native wildlife.

Bats in Boxes

Bats are faithful in returning to both their winter/hibernation roosts and their summer/ nursery roosts, so if you are setting up a new bat house, it may take some time for the bats to take up residence. Bat houses have about a 50 percent success rate, so patience is in order. Install your bat house in the winter or spring. This will allow the bats in your neighborhood to become familiar with the new roost over the coming summer. They may not use it immediately but will check it out. During this first year, you may have a solitary male or two use the box for roosting. The following spring, when the female bats return they may decide to use the new roost. This typically happens when their traditional nursery roost has been destroyed or is uninhabitable or outgrown. Colonies identify their roost partly by their smell. A new



bat house will smell of new materials. As the house weathers outdoors, it will take on a more natural scent. Larger bat houses are more successful than smaller ones. Other important tips such as how high the bat house should be posted, the direction it should face, and other success tips can be found at www.batcon.org.

Batty Situations

There are two situations in which people and bats find themselves in conflict: (1) when a single bat enters a house, and (2) when a nursery or maternity colony roosts in a building. Both of these situations can be solved without killing the bats. Information and detailed instruction on the proper techniques for dealing with these situations can be found on the LWC website at www.loudounwildlife.org/Bats.htm.

Sources and Resources Used to Compile This Article:
A Homeowners Guide to Northeastern Bats and Bat Problems, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences

Bat Conservation International Educational Materials, www.batcon.org

Bats, West Virginia Extension Service, West Virginia University, Norma Venable, 1999

Species Accounts, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries website: <http://vafwis.org/wis/asp/default.asp>

Bat World NOVA, www.batworld.org/batworld_centers/nova.html

LWC Gives Green Business Award

by Karen Strick

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is pleased to announce this year's winner of its first annual Green Business Award — the staff of the Loudoun County Sanitation Authority (LCSA). LCSA demonstrated leadership in the award's three criteria areas: Impact on Ecosystem, Ongoing Commitment to Habitat Preservation, and Education and Outreach to the Community. LWC's panel of judges was particularly impressed with the work that LCSA staff have done over the years in the areas of water conservation education and outreach as well as the way in which LCSA has incorporated best practices (e.g., Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) into the design of its facilities. LCSA was presented with the award at LWC's annual meeting on May 20. Congratulations LCSA!

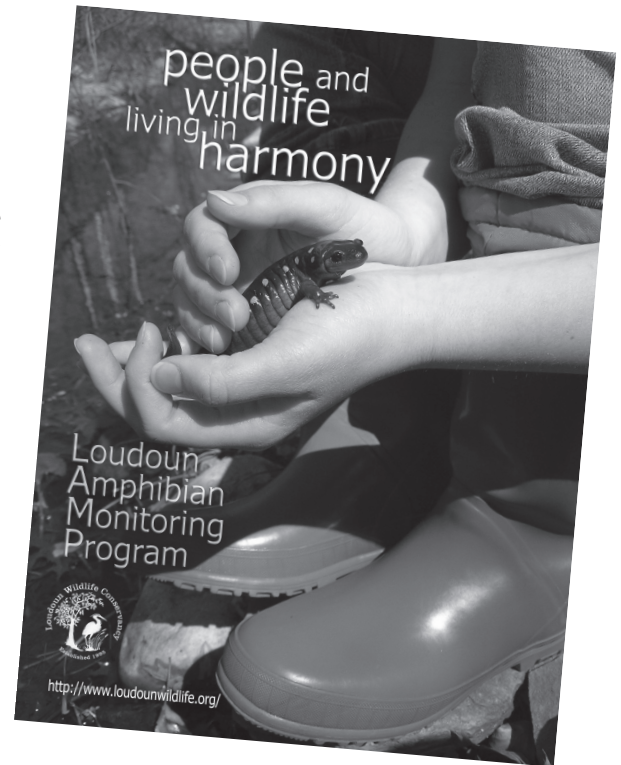


Amphibian Monitoring Poster Contest

by Nicole Hamilton

To help promote our Amphibian Monitoring Program across the county, we challenged the students of Loudoun high schools to develop a poster that would convey basic information about LWC and the amphibian program. We received 16 submissions. Our five judges were LWC volunteers who are both graphic artists and amphibian monitors. The judges were all impressed with the submitted posters and after much deliberation, selected the four winners: 1st place (\$150): Katherine Eckenfels; 2nd place (\$100): Casey Curtis; 3rd place (\$50): Stephanie Roush; and Honorable Mention (\$30): Curtis Winsor.

The posters will be printed in full color and at least 400 copies will be distributed to places across Loudoun County. You can view the posters on our website at: www.loudounwildlife.org/Amphibian_Monitoring_Poster_Contest_2007.htm. If you know of a location where a poster could be hung, please contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org. They will also be available at our Amphibian Monitoring Program End-of-Season Celebration in September. Many thanks to all of the students for their hard work, to Caroline DeMary for leading her art students in this project, and to Liam McGranaghan for coordinating it.



LWC 2007 Annual Meeting Report

LWC members gathered on May 20 for this year's Annual Meeting. President Nicole Hamilton began the meeting by highlighting the organization's accomplishments during 2006:

- led the charge to protect Loudoun County's wildlife habitats by speaking at public hearings and engaging citizens through action alerts, a postcard campaign and the petition to save Wood Turtles in western Loudoun;
- participated in 17 fairs and similar events;
- laid the groundwork for the Amphibian Monitoring Program which was just launched for its first full season;
- added three more trails to our bluebird nestbox trail system;
- led a stream buffer restoration at Frazier Park, planting over 500 trees and shrubs;
- published four new educational resources: Gardening for Wildlife plant list, Butterflies of Loudoun checklist, Dragonflies of Loudoun checklist and the LWC Coloring Book;

- provided over 60 programs and field trips, including the annual bird and butterfly counts;
- increased our membership by 60% and expanded our committees and volunteer corps to better accomplish LWC's mission.

Nicole then discussed plans for the coming year which included further developing environmental education, expanding partnerships, and continuing with outreach efforts.

This year's Outstanding Volunteer Award was presented to Elizabeth Evans for her longstanding work with LWC. Elizabeth has not only served as the LWC board secretary for the past three years but she has also been involved in key committees and outreach efforts for many years. Bertie Murphy was given a Special Recognition Award for the impact she has made by giving LWC a presence at Loudoun community fairs and expanding the organization's outreach. Other awards presented at the meeting went to the Amphibian Monitoring Poster Contest winners and the Science Fair Award winners.

Over 50 members attended the meeting and enjoyed the music of Tabby Finch, refreshments coordinated by Karen Strick, and a presentation by Beth Polak from Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation/Natural Heritage Program. Wade Burkholder then ended the night with a raffle of various donated items.



Butterfly Activity: The Virtues of Rotting Fruit!

by Nicole Hamilton

Attract butterflies to your garden by making a butterfly fruit cocktail. It is easy to do and a great use for over-ripe fruits. Bananas are the big favorite, so you could start with slicing up an over-ripe banana and putting it out on a plate, but if you have other fruit on hand, that will make the fruit cocktail ideal. You can use any combination of fruits, but here is a quick recipe that will bring in a nice variety of butterflies, especially the Commas and Question Marks, Hackberry and Tawny Emperors, Red-Spotted Purples, Red Admirals, and others:

1 over-ripe banana, sliced lengthwise or in rings or mashed up
2–3 over-ripe strawberries, sliced or mashed
few slices of over-ripe cantaloupe melon
pieces of rotting peach, apple, or mango
slice or two of orange, lemon, or lime

Place the fruit slices into a shallow dish or plate that is no more than 1 inch deep and drizzle with pink Gatorade. Gatorade will provide minerals that male butterflies seek and will help keep the fruit cocktail moist in the sun. Put the fruit cocktail outside in a sunny location and await the butterflies. They often find the mixture in the late afternoon as they are returning to their night-

time roosts.

Remember, it is the mushy, rotting, very over-ripe fruit that butterflies like best. Replace the fruit if it dries out or becomes moldy. You can also whirl the fruit and Gatorade in a blender with some syrup and paint it onto a tree or other location where the butterflies will find it (but where you can also hose it off if needed).

As an alternative to rotten bananas, you can place bananas in the freezer until they are frozen. When you thaw them out, the skin will turn black, but the mushy banana inside will be a butterfly's delight. If you don't have any rotten fruit at home, you can ask your local supermarkets if they have any they are going to discard.

It may take some time, but be patient and you will be rewarded with colorful visitors!



Let's Count Butterflies!



LWC's 11th Annual Butterfly Count takes place August 4th. Teams will cover the county, looking for butterflies as they flutter through fields, woodlands and gardens. This is a great activity for all skill levels — whether you know your butterflies or are just getting interested, this is a great chance to see a wide variety of species all in one day. Teams are led by experienced people who share identification tips and other interesting butterfly facts. Join us for the morning or stay throughout the day — your choice. For more information and to sign up, visit our website: www.loudounwildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-9638.

Featured Friend: Chipmunks

by Ginger Walker



A Native American legend says that the chipmunk gained the black stripe on its back after a fight with a black bear! This story reflects the reputation of the chipmunk as an adorable yet feisty creature. The chipmunks in our area are Eastern Chipmunks, one of the largest species of chipmunks. Eastern Chipmunks construct elaborate burrows that they can inhabit for years. Chipmunks use their cheek pouches to carry food to their burrows or carry away dirt while creating the burrows; they can fill their cheeks up just like a hamster hoarding treats.

Even though these creatures are named for their "chip" call and the "chip" choruses they have been known to sing, the life of an Eastern Chipmunk is generally solitary. Unlike squirrels, they will live most of their days alone, coming together only to mate. The male chipmunk has nothing to do with the raising of its offspring; the babies will remain with their mother for about a month, after which they are on their own.

*Photo by Laura Weidner*

Celebrating International Migratory Bird Day in Loudoun County

by Joe Coleman

On May 12, birders fanned out all over the county at locations as varied as the far northwestern corner along the Potomac River within sight of Harper's Ferry to Horsepen Preserve along the Potomac River in the east. This year's counters and walkers found 144 species, a new high for the Loudoun County International Migratory Bird Day Spring Count. Over 90 species were found in two different areas of the county, the Between the Hills Valley which includes the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES), and the area immediately south and east of Oatlands Plantation which includes both the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve and the Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project (DGWMP).

Because there were so many excellent sightings this year, it is hard to pin down the most unusual, but my vote goes to the Laughing Gull sighted by Kurt Gaskill at BRCES. Two species — Loggerhead Shrike and Northern Bobwhite — which have drastically decreased in the past decade, were also found. The two shrikes were found by Bruce Smart's team in the southwestern corner of the county not far from Upperville, and the Northern Bobwhite was heard calling on a farm a little south of Oatlands near one of only five American Kestrels seen that day (the only one not found in the southwestern corner of the county). Kurt Gaskill also found a Peregrine Falcon, whose numbers are on the increase, but still very rare in the county, flying north over the ridge at BRCES. An American Pipit found by Marc Ribaud at the DGWMP as the early morning fog started to lift was an unusual sighting for the time of year.

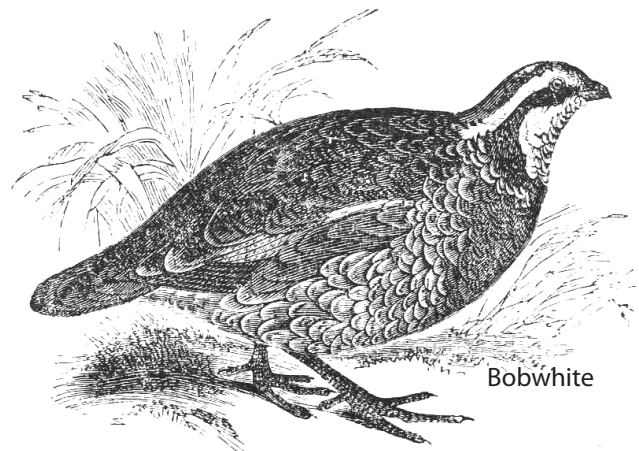
Thanks to Cheri Schneck and Bruce Hill, the heavily wooded ridgeline at Morven Park was visited after the walk Bruce led at the DGWMP. In spite of the late hour, at least for birds, 65 species were found at Morven Park, including an unusually late Brown Creeper. Next year we will need to try and get to Morven Park much earlier. Earlier, during the DGWMP walk, 13 Ravens flew overhead. And of course one of the nicest sights was the Bald Eagles and their nestlings during the DGWMP walk.

The walk at Horsepen Preserve, led by Stan Shetler and always productive, yielded one of this year's rare Purple Finches. Prothonotary Warblers are always hard to find in Loudoun County, but if they are going to be found it is at Horsepen Preserve, and this year was no exception. Another great natural area in eastern Loudoun, but much smaller than Horsepen Preserve, is the nearby Bles Park. Andy Rabin led the walk there and then led a group over to a nearby Great Blue Heron rookery which includes a number of nests, but is, unfortunately, threatened by development.

Over the years Appalachian Trail Road has proven to be a location for unusual sightings, and this year was no exception as Kurt found an American Woodcock displaying near the wetlands about 5 a.m.

Four Black-billed Cuckoos were found, two at BRCES, one on the ridge near Snickers Gap, and one in Loudoun Valley. Interestingly enough a Black-billed Cuckoo was found at BRCES again on the May 26 walk close to where one of the two was found May 12. While most Black-billed Cuckoos migrate through our area to points further north and west, there are a few records of them nesting in the area.

An even more unusual sighting at BRCES was an Alder Flycatcher found during the walk led by Larry Meade and Bob Blakney. With over 900 acres of varied habitat, the Center is rapidly gaining a reputation as one of Loudoun County's premier birding locations, and that was certainly the case on May 12. Four different groups of birders, including the official walk just mentioned, found 98 species of birds there, including, besides the birds already mentioned, Blue and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and 23 species of warblers. Several of the warblers (such



International Migratory Bird Day, continued

as Cerulean and Prairie Warblers), as well as some of the other species found at BRCS, nest there and are "species of concern" due to their declining numbers.

With native grasslands one of the most endangered habitats in the east, grasslands birds are under great stress. Because of this trend we were pleased to find healthy numbers of Grasshopper Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks in several locations.

With IMBD falling so late in the year, many of our winter residents have left the area. While this was especially true of most waterfowl this year, it was not for a number of other species such as a single Sharp-shinned Hawk, a single Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a number of White-throated Sparrows (32), and a few White-crowned Sparrows (7). If you want to see the full count results, please visit the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy website at www.loudounwildlife.org.

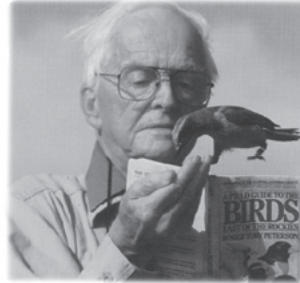
Quite a few people participated in the various LWC IMBD activities this year, and special thanks need to go to Nicole Hamilton and Wade Burkeholder for pulling it all together. Thanks also to the various walk leaders: Stan Shetler for leading the Horsepen Preserve walk; Andy Rabin at Bles Park and the nearby heron rookery; Mary Alice Koeneké and Glenn Koppel at Banshee Reeks; Bruce Hill at the DGWMP; Dirck Harris at the Rust Nature Sanctuary; and Larry Meade and Bob Blakney at BRCS.

A number of people participated in the Birdathon and/or the Spring Count and helped make it a success (my apologies to anyone I've overlooked):

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bob Blakney | Christine Purdue |
| Roger Clapp | Andy Rabin |
| Jim Coleman | Marc Ribaudo |
| Joe Coleman | Cheri Schneck |
| Phil Daley | Stanwyn Shetler |
| Helen deGroot | Bruce Smart |
| Elizabeth Evans | Edie Smart |
| Danny Felton | Emily Southgate |
| Suzanne Felton | Ron Staley |
| Kurt Gaskill | Heather Taylor |
| Mary Ann Good | Richard Taylor |
| Nicole Hamilton | Laura Weidner |
| Dirck Harris | Mary Winants |
| Gerry Hawkins | Mary Young-Lutz |
| Bruce Hill | |
| Mary Alice Koeneké | Brownie Troop/Junior Troop 5186: |
| Glenn Koppel | Troop Leader Jean Mctique |
| Alyssa Lutz | Jasmin Ameera |
| Andy Martin | Maryam Cattaneo |
| Larry Meade | Noora Cattaneo |
| Carole Miller | Hidyah Jaka |
| Paul Miller | Bushra Sallam |
| Martha Munn | Duha Sallam |
| Doug Norton | Amina Shareen |
| Sue Norton | |

Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalist Award

by Mimi Westervelt



Each spring the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy partners with other organizations to serve on the judging panel for the Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalist Award. This award program seeks to provide encouragement for Loudoun County Public School students who demonstrate keen observation and recording skills in the form of a nature journal.

The program is inspired by the life of Roger Tory Peterson, world-renowned naturalist, ornithologist, artist, teacher, author of the Peterson field guide series and recipient of the country's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. This year, LWC volunteer Ginger Walker met with representatives of the Smithsonian Naturalist Center and Loudoun County Public School teachers to select the best student nature journal in both elementary and secondary schools. The winners are announced at the end-of-year school assemblies and receive a certificate, cash and a Peterson field guide.

Dulles Greenway Donates \$27,445 to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

For the second year in a row, Toll Road Investors Partnership (TRIP II), the owner of the Dulles Greenway, presented checks on June 19 to five Loudoun County nonprofits, including LWC. Their generous donation of \$27,445 to LWC will help us continue our work of protecting wildlife habitat in Loudoun County and educating the county's citizens on the importance of wildlife.

Since its creation in the early 1990's, the Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project, managed by TRIP II, has become one of the best birding spots in Loudoun County. For many years, LWC has benefited from its partnership with the Dulles Greenway, surveying birds at the Dulles Wetlands since 1997. Last year we began leading walks for the public onto the Dulles Wetlands. Since 2005, we have observed Bald Eagles successfully nesting there.



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.



LOUDOUN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY BOARD MEETING

– LWC's Board meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg. All LWC members are welcome. Pre-meeting discussion begins at 7:00 p.m., with the meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. **Contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-9638 or nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.**

BENTHIC MACROINVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I (Field Session) – Sunday, July 8, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. **Registration Required.**

Benthic macroinvertebrates (bottom-dwelling boneless creatures) are important indicators of stream health. Join us at a local stream to learn how to identify these fascinating creatures and what they tell us about water quality in our own backyards. **To register for this free field session, sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Audubon Naturalist Society, call Cliff Fairweather at 703-737-002.**

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, July 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.**



BIRDATHON WING DING!– Saturday, July 14 (following the Birding Banshee walk). The Wing Ding will be a light brunch after our bird walk to celebrate the successes of our May Birdathon! We will recap noteworthy sightings from the Birdathon, share stories and award prizes. For those who participated in the Birdathon but are unable to attend the Wing Ding, we will mail your prizes to you. The Birdathon is going to be an annual event, so for those who are interested in participating next year, come and see what the Birdathon is all about!

BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES AT THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – Saturday, July 21, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Join us for one of our free, family butterfly and dragonfly walks. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas that comprise this beautiful 900-acre preserve and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. The preserve is located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rt. 671, in northwestern Loudoun County. Meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Rt. 671 at 10:30. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.**

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, July 28, 8:00 a.m. On the fourth Saturday of each month, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy leads a free bird walk at the Blue 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**

SUMMER STREAMSIDE WILDFLOWER WALK and PICNIC – Saturday, July 28, 5:00 p.m. **Registration Required.** Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, on a walk through the MacDowells' rich streamside, wet meadow near Waterford to view the many wildflowers that thrive there in the summer. These include some unusual wild orchids; the only specimens of this species know to bloom in Loudoun County. If you wish to stay for the picnic after the walk, please bring a picnic dinner and a folding chair to sit on. This free walk is co-sponsored by



A view from Banshee Reeks

the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. **To register and to get directions call Karin or Bob MacDowell at 540-882-9000.**

ANNUAL LOUDOUN COUNTY BUTTERFLY COUNT – Saturday, August 4, 9:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on its 11th Annual Butterfly Count. Come out and have fun while contributing to butterfly conservation. All skill levels are welcome. Teams will be led by experienced butterfly identifiers. We will visit fields, farms, butterfly gardens and woods that span the county from White's Ferry in the east, to the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Center in the west, and from Point of Rocks south to Lincoln. This annual, mid-summer count, modeled after Christmas Bird Counts, is sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. This is a great chance to get outdoors and spot as many as 50 species of butterflies in a day. Spend a few hours in the morning or count all day — your choice. **For more information and to register visit our butterfly count page and sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-9638 or nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.**

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, August 11, 8:00 a.m. See the July 14 listing for details.

BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES at BANSHEE REEKS – Saturday, August 18, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for one of our free, family butterfly and dragonfly walks. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas at Banshee Reeks and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Questions:** contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.

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

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, September 8, 8:00 a.m. See the July 14 listing for details.

LATE SUMMER WINGS AND WILDFLOWERS – Saturday, September 8, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Pre-registration required. Join Dr. Stan Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, and Joe Coleman on a visit to the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES). BRCES offers a mix of habitats, including meadow, forest, and wetland. The two leaders, who know this natural area well, will lead us in a search of late-season butterflies and wildflowers, as well as fall migrants and resident birds. About three or four miles will be covered on our leisurely explorations. This program is co-sponsored with the Audubon Naturalist Society. **Pre-registration required: Members (ANS & LWC): \$23; Nonmembers: \$32. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x16.**

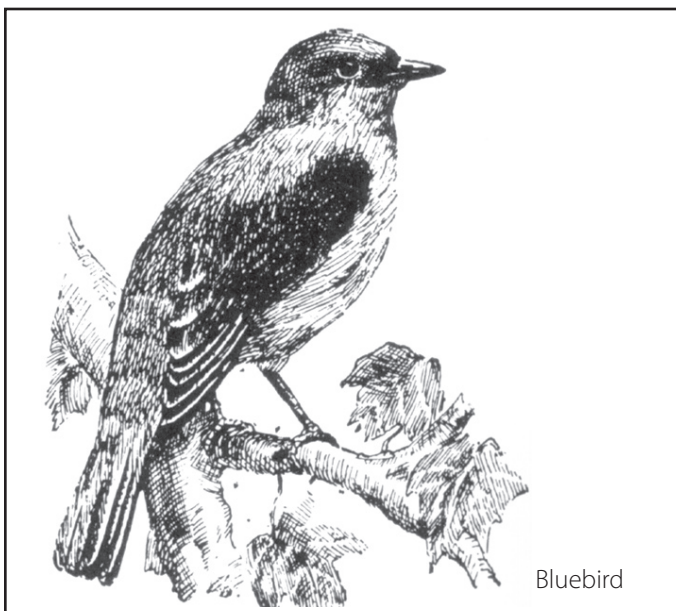
BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES at BANSHEE REEKS – Saturday, September 15, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for one of our free, family butterfly and dragonfly walks. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas at Banshee Reeks and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Questions:** contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.

LOUDOUN AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PROGRAM (LAMP) END OF SEASON CELEBRATION – Sunday, September 16, noon-2:00 p.m. at the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Sanctuary in Leesburg. Registration Required. Join us as we celebrate the end of our first, full season of amphibian monitoring. Meet fellow amphibian monitors, share experiences from the field, look at photographs, and discuss ideas about how we can make the monitoring even better for next year. Free copies of our Amphibian Monitoring Program posters will be available for everyone. Current volunteers as well as anyone interested in finding out more about our amphibian monitoring program are welcome. This is potluck, so please bring a dish to share. LWC will provide plates, utensils and beverages. **Please register online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-9638.**

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

■ Continued on page 12

Programs and Field Trips, continued

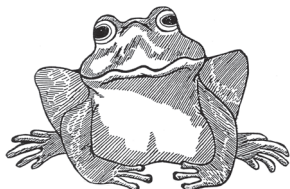


Bluebird

BLUEBIRD NESTBOX MONITORING END OF SEASON CELEBRATION AND TRAIL TALLY– Sunday, September 30, noon – 3:00 p.m. Registration Required. We will say farewell to our bluebirds, tree swallows, and house wrens as we celebrate another great season of bluebirds and their young. Meet fellow bluebird nestbox monitors and hear reports from trail leaders on fledgling tallies for each of the trails. Discussion will include plans for new trails as well as changes to the program to enable registering and reporting data on backyard bluebird boxes or trails. Current volunteers as well as those interested in bluebird nestbox monitoring are welcome. Predator guards and other items will be available for sale. Light snacks and beverages will be provided by LWC. *Please register online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm.*

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, October 13, 8:00 a.m. See the July 14 listing for details.

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



Questions about the above programs? Contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2747.

For up-to-date information on our programs check our web site at **www.loudounwildlife.org**

Meet the Interns!

by Karen Strick

LWC welcomes Emily Bzdyk and Molly Darr as our interns for the summer. Both Emily and Molly will assist with several LWC programs. The interns' primary focus will be to re-launch the stream monitoring program, but other tasks will include working at LWC's student nature camp, participating in habitat restoration, and assisting with the bluebird nestbox monitoring program.

Emily is a student at St. Mary's College of Maryland where she is majoring in Biology, with minors in Environmental Studies and Art. She is a member of the Environmental Action Coalition and volunteers with the St. Mary's River Project to monitor the local watershed. Molly attends Virginia Tech and is majoring in Wildlife Science. She participates in stream monitoring, salamander and black bear data collection, and camera trapping. She is active in the Virginia Tech chapters of the Wildlife Society, Environmental Coalition, and Recreation Society.

Emily and Molly bring talent, knowledge and enthusiasm to LWC's summer programs. We are thrilled to have them and are looking forward to working with them both.



Molly



Emily

Welcome New Members!

by Nicole Hamilton

As LWC grows, we warmly welcome our new members into the organization. The following is a list of new members from January – May 2007:

Michael & Allyson Alto
Dale Ball
Frederic and Ann Bogar
Chuck Borchetta
Sophie Brandt
Richelle Brown
Deborah Burtaine
Kerry Bzdyk
Mary Alice Crawford
Judith Currier
Robert & Cathey Daugherty
Desiree Dimauro
Mary Dorsey-Lee
Susan Duda
Joseph Ellis
Sarah Eshgh
D. K. Evans
Todd & Erin Everline
David Feenan
Margaret Findley
Lance, Marie & Jeannette Forbes
Van Patten Foster
Chris & Jack Frear
Mike Garcia
Kate Gentry
Bonnie Getty
Garrick Giebel
Francis Ginorio
Goose Creek / Jeff Berg
Norman Gresley
Dheeraj Handa
Ellen Hinch

Robin Hoofnagle
Dawne Holz
Susan Hunt
John and Luke Huyett
Cornelia Keller
Loudoun Library Foundation
Whitney Loving
Brian Magurn
Heather Mansfield & Charles Lewis
Frank McLaughlin
Michael McPoland
Maureen Miller
Moore Cadillac/Hummer
Barbara Morehead
Lindsay Newcomb
Northern Virginia Reptile Rescue
Johanna O'Brien
Michele O'Connor
Sharon Lloyd O'Connor
Alexia Orr
Stephen Oshiro
Matthew Porco
Patti Psaris
Donna Quinn
Tom Raque
Deborah Rice
Paul & Lesa Schmidt
Barbara Sloan
Mary Jeanne Smiley
Sharon Spaulding
Genny & Jim Stitzel
Robin Stack

Sharon Stephan and Tom Gabe
Celeste Stewart
Maureen Tucker
Karen White
Patricia Whittle
Robin Williamson
Martha Wolford
Debbie Woods and Debra Breton
Mary Young-Lutz
Luke Yznaga

Membership Referrals – Our Membership Development Committee appreciates everyone who sent in referrals for memberships...please keep them coming! Over the next month, we will continue to send out letters to referrals in an effort to grow our membership further. Updates will appear in the next issue of the *Habitat Herald*.

A special thank-you to all of those who signed on as new Lifetime Members:

Ernie & Patti Jo Carnevale
Virginia Friend
Gerry Hawkins
Robert & JoAnn Lyon
Arthur & Mary Osteen
Barbara McKee & Jeffrey Pfoutz
Stream Valley Veterinary Hospital,
Dr. Mary Corey

Banshee Reeks May Open More Hours

The Loudoun County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services is continuing to meet with a number of stakeholder organizations, including LWC, to find a way to open the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve to the public more days and hours. Currently, Banshee Reeks is open to the public only on the third weekend of the month, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For updates on the status of increasing the open hours of the nature preserve, visit the Friends of Banshee Reeks website www.bansheereeks.org.



Barred Owl

Insect ID: Luna Moths

by Ginger Walker

Many people say that they will never forget their first sight of a Luna Moth, and that has certainly been my experience. When my family moved from Alaska to Virginia when I was ten years old, many elements of the southeast's ecology startled me. One summer morning, my mother found an extraordinary green moth on our front porch. Assuming it was dead, she placed it in a jar on her bedroom dresser. A thunderstorm roared through our neighborhood that night, and in a flash of lightning the moth came alive in the jar and fluttered around so violently that it woke my mother up.

Luna Moths were once common in our area, but now it is a rare treat to see these lovely creatures in most parts of Loudoun County. Luna Moths are members of the silkworm family, which includes other giant local moths such as the Polyphemous Moth. Luna Moths are easy to identify by their pale green color and long "tail streamers." The caterpillars are the archetypical cartoon caterpillar with soft, squishy green bodies. They are able to eat a variety of tree leaves, including walnut leaves which are poisonous to many other species of caterpillar. Luna Moth cocoons look like dead, dry leaves. After the moth emerges from the cocoon, it will live for just one week. Luna Moths have no mouths, so they do not eat in this stage. Their only goal is mating and egg-laying, and the moths can mate for hours at a time. The Luna Moth only flies at night, which is how it earned its name, meaning "moon." If you find one during the day, it will probably be "frozen," just like the moth my mother found. If you discover one of these beautiful silkworm moths, leave it undisturbed. When night falls, the moth will fly again!



LWC Joins with Other Organizations to Improve Environmental Education

by Bonnie Eaton

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is always seeking ways to raise public awareness and aid the community in becoming more involved in its own environmental stewardship. One of the best ways to do this is through education. On April 13, LWC joined with over 40 other participants for the Loudoun Environmental Education Conference at the Loudoun County School Administration Building in Ashburn. The group comprised a wide variety of local and regional organizations with environmental education as their mission. Among the participants were the Audubon Naturalist Society, Loudoun County Public Schools, Loudoun County Sanitation Authority, Earth Force, Loudoun Watershed Watch, and Luck Stone.

What are the needs of the community? County schools face increased challenges to provide meaningful outdoor experiences in an effort to meet state educational goals. Community groups and families seek local environmental stewardship projects. Conference participants met with the shared belief that by joining forces and sharing resources, these goals can be met.

Some of the ideas coming out of the conference include developing a directory of environmental education providers and environmental education events; organizing local watershed projects for neighborhood groups; partnering with community groups and county teachers to sponsor outdoor/nature clubs; and organizing environmental education fairs for county teachers.

As a follow-up to the conference, attendees held the first Steering Committee meeting June 6 to begin organizing a Loudoun County Environmental Education Alliance. If you would like to join in this community effort, please contact Nicole Hamilton at 540-882-9638 at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.



Native Plant ID: *Myrica pensylvanica* (Northern Bayberry)

by Deanna Foster

[Note: While Bayberry is native to the U.S. and to eastern Virginia's coastal areas, it is not native to Loudoun County. That said, it can be used for formal settings, such as yards, gardens, and other artificial landscapes, where it will be a welcome source of food for birds in winter.]

This is a beautiful shrub with an interesting multi-branched form and lovely dark green waxy leaves in summer. The berries appear in summer when the leaves are still on the shrub, but they do not ripen until early January when the leaves have fallen. For winter interest they have a very interesting branching structure with berries running in lines close to the branches.

When our winter snow and ice storms come and most of the natural food sources for our birds are covered or gone, one can easily watch those Bayberry shrubs fill with birds competing for the winter nourishment the berries offer. I have seen Chickadees, Cardinals, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, even the odd Bluebird plucking those berries from the shrub. Fortunately there is an abundance of berries on each plant, and the evidence of their worth is clear when every berry has disappeared after a few weeks. During that time you have the pleasure of watching all those beautiful birds and perhaps making their lives a little easier.

Northern Bayberry likes full sun in average to humus-rich soil, though it is able to take some shade. Mine are deprived of

morning sun in their location at my house, and they are thriving. The books will tell you they take a good amount of moisture, but mine are well-drained and seldom watered in the summer. The Bayberry has a lovely spicy scent as a bonus. It is subject to a bit of fungus spotting in

August, as are so many plants in our humid climate, but this does not seem to affect the plant's performance. As always I would suggest planting a smaller specimen as it will adjust more readily to its new surroundings. Avoid plants that show evidence of being in the pot too long and have girdled roots. Be patient as you allow a year for your Bayberry's roots to take hold, and absolutely allow enough room for its 5- to 6-foot height and spread. Do remember that every plant needs good moisture when first planted, because it will have a small root structure at that point. My Northern Bayberry shrubs reached full height and spread at five years and started producing berries in their second or third year.



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



Come One Come All! Volunteers Needed at County Fairs!

Want a bird's eye view of the county fairs this summer and fall? Come be a volunteer at the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy booth! We are sponsoring booths at the following fairs and events:

August 25-26: Lucketts Fair
September 15-16: Bluemont Fair
September 29: Lovettsville Octoberfest
October 6-7: Sterlingfest 2007
Mid October: Family Stream Day
Late October: Aldie Harvest Fest

These fairs offer a great opportunity to have some fun and meet your neighbors. At the LWC booth, we talk with fair-goers about the virtues of wildlife and the importance of saving their habitat, tell people about the programs and activities that LWC has to offer, and hand out publications. Most volunteers stay at the booth two or three hours, but the schedule is flexible enough to accommodate your needs. We also have a couple on people on-hand to provide breaks. If you want to be part of this fun, outdoor, low-impact activity, give Nicole Hamilton a call at 540-882-9638 or email nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
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