



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy ■ www.loudounwildlife.org

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Spring 2008

Vanishing Vernal Pools: A Wetlands Conservation Decade

by Michael Hayslett

A Non-Unique Problem

The colossal loss of historic wetlands in our country has come to light significantly in recent decades. The US EPA's web site summarizes the phenomenon this way:

In the 1600s, over 220 million acres of wetlands are thought to have existed in the lower 48 states. Since then, extensive losses have occurred, and over half of our original wetlands have been drained and converted to other uses. The years from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s were a time of major wetland loss, but since then the rate of loss has declined. (www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands/vital/status.html)

As we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Old Dominion, we somberly recognize that this trend began here at home, and our own state has half the wetlands it once did. The destruction of these valuable habitats has been especially striking in Northern Virginia and Loudoun County, where an abundance of wetlands faces a rate of suburban growth that ranks highest in the nation!

To add insult to injury, isolated wetlands currently lack federal protection (though the Department of Environmental Quality does regulate them in Virginia). The complexity of various categorizations for freshwater wetlands and even disagreement by experts over what constitutes a "vernal pool" muddy the water further. These complications have created an unfortunate tangle of legal hierarchy for these disappearing treasures, and we can ill afford to loose another single acre these days. In light of this challenge, I find myself battling to save every pothole. In my own frustration, I've often contended for simplicity and inclusion with the retort, "If they're WET lands, then they're wetlands!"

But let's look on the bright side. Northern Virginia is naturally blessed with LOTS of wet places, and though this may represent a headache for homebuilders and regulators, it has presented a veritable Xanadu to me for a decade! I've often said that three reasons keep me coming back to visit and help spread this message: 1) lots of wetlands, 2) lots of wetlands loss, and 3) lots of wetlands-loving friends!

■ *Continued on page 3*



Photo by Nicole Hamilton

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A Word from the President

by Nicole Hamilton

This is the last column for Nicole Hamilton as president of LWC. Nicole has been president since 2004, and her term of office will end at the annual meeting on May 18. She has been an enthusiastic and productive leader who has given many hours and energy to the continued development of LWC as the most effective volunteer environmental organization in Loudoun County. We hope everyone will come to the LWC annual meeting to celebrate her very successful tenure and to thank her for all she has done.

"We do it for a greater good... for a future that will have 'big night' migrations of frogs, toads and salamanders that traverse the dark wet forest floors to primordial pools... for the quickening heartbeats of flocks of birds that descend upon a grove to rest... for the piercing yellow eyes of a Great Horned Owl that stares brilliantly through a wood... for the fox that barks at night to declare its territory and claim its mate."

Since first finding Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy nine years ago, I've had such a pleasure discovering wild things and making so many new friends. And, since becoming president in 2004, I have had the opportunity to play one of the

most rewarding roles I have ever had. It's been an opportunity to create, explore and learn; and it's been a chance to meet and get to know so many of you.

I remember the first county Public Input Session at which I had to present LWC's position on western zoning for Loudoun. I was still finding my voice for how to speak on these issues that I feel so passionate about and was nervous that the words might not come out right. What I realized is, while we are each one person, we step into everything that we do with the strength and support of those who have come before us. It is that will and encouragement upon which we draw and develop our own voice.

I think of past environmental greats like John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Margaret Meade, Rachel Carson, and contemporaries like Jane Goodall. Each took a stand, popular or not, to be the voice for wildlife, to pave the way for future generations, to help create a world that is better than the one in which they lived, even though they may not live to see the fruits of their struggles. What I learned from them is that being a voice for wildlife is not a sprint, but a long distance relay. Throughout our lives, we do our part in talking about habitat and wildlife and teaching others, whether in a Board room, in a classroom, along a trail or in chatting with a neighbor; and we pass our baton on to others so they can carry the voice.

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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.

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■ *A Word From the President, continued from pg. 2*

We don't do this for ourselves. We don't do this because it is quick or easy, or because it will keep a roof over our heads. We do it for a greater good. We do it for a future that will have "big night" migrations of frogs, toads and salamanders that traverse the dark wet forest floors to primordial pools. We do it for the quickening heartbeats of flocks of birds that descend upon a grove to rest and replenish their energy upon a long journey home. We do it for the piercing yellow eyes of a Great Horned Owl that stares brilliantly through a wood. We do it for the fox that barks at night to declare its territory and claim its mate.

This May, I will step down as president. Our bylaws state that an elected officer can only hold two consecutive terms, and this is a good thing — it gives us a chance to bring fresh ideas and faces to our board, and it gives our leaders a chance to recharge or take on new roles that will have impact in our community and on our environment. Another thing I've learned is, once you've found your voice, it's very hard to put the genie back in the bottle. So, I look forward to staying involved with LWC — whether it is knee deep in a vernal pool looking for fairy shrimp, handing out information at our fair booth, or helping formulate our positions as LWC continues to be Loudoun's voice for wildlife.

Thank you for all your support over the past four years and for all that you do in our community as members and volunteers of LWC to carry the voice forward.

See you along the trails,

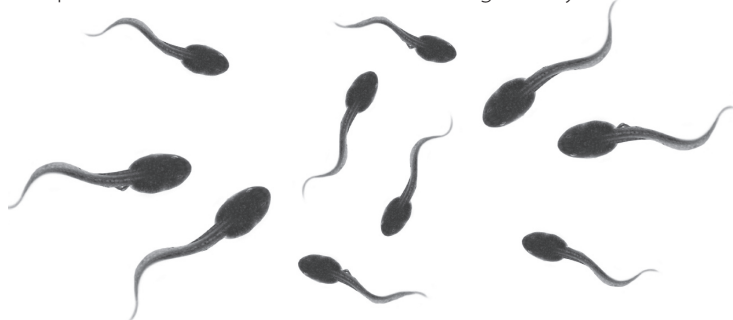
Nicole

■ *Vernal Pools, continued from pg. 1*

Northern Virginia's Unique Position

Why so many wetlands? Portions of Loudoun and several other northern Virginia counties fall within the largest band of Virginia's Triassic Lowlands: the Culpepper Basin. This ancient swamp region is characterized by hydric ("drainage challenged") soils which cause high densities of isolated surface wetlands. The only comparable area I've encountered in the state might be the Danville Basin in Pittsylvania County. Flooded fields viewed from your car in passing are likely Triassic wetlands, and these isolated wetlands often hold water for only a portion of the year, hence they are "vernal" or seasonal.

Loudoun is also within the Commonwealth's "physiography squeeze." This is a distinct area where the generally distant re-



Wood Frog
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

gions of the mountains and the coast come close together. The county therefore has both montane and lowland environments to support a variety of wetland types and their specialized wildlife (i.e., "indicator species"). In fact, this proximity of Blue Ridge to Coastal Plain causes the ranges of at least two mountain amphibians to extend closer to the ocean than anywhere else in the Commonwealth. The Jefferson Salamander — a northern species of cooler and higher climates — occurs well into the Piedmont in Loudoun, where it reaches the easternmost limit of its range in Virginia. Thanks also to the combination of relict swamp soils and geologic squeezing, the Wood Frog is likely more abundant in Loudoun than any other county in Virginia (Fairfax still has many left). I continue to be amazed at how commonly they occur here in Northern Virginia!

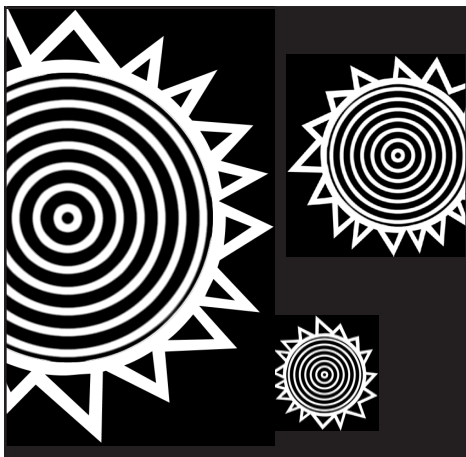
A Decade of Vernal Pool Promotion

These unique ecological circumstances have enticed me annually to Northern Virginia. It has been my great pleasure to work with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Audubon Naturalist Society, and other organizations over the past decade to seek out these habitat gems, pursue their preservation, and help raise public awareness of their value.

I have gained so many stories to tell, both sad and successful. We have been able to reach thousands of students at a dozen schools through assemblies, classroom visits, and field trips (and that's but a fraction of the 68 schools with 53,000 students in Loudoun). An especially rewarding experience has been an annual four-day series with the Environmental Explorations students at Loudoun Valley High School. We've also reached adult audiences through lectures, workshops, and field forays at over 30 locations in parks, preserves, private lands, and public places.

Providing technical support for the Rust Pond acquisition and development of the new Loudoun amphibian monitoring program (LAMP) are memorable highlights of this campaign. Evaluating and documenting hundreds of these wetlands around the region and consulting with owners/ managers about their importance as wildlife habitat has been a staple activity of each visit. Some examples of the many field finds warrant mention.

■ *Continued on page 4*



Summer Nature Camp — Natural History Day Camp

Two sessions: July 7-11 and July 14-18

Plan now for some summer fun and adventure for your children at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. Campers entering grades three through six will have the opportunity to learn about and enjoy nature as they explore the woods, fields, and waters of this special place. This is a fee-based program (\$120/week) and spaces will be filled on a first-come basis. The camp is jointly sponsored by LWC, PEC, FOBR, and PRCS. For more information visit www.loudounwildlife.org or contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pedaley@verizon.net.

■ *Vernal Pools, continued from pg. 3*

Unhappy Scenarios & Hopeful Successes

Following a Naturalist Center program at Leesburg in my early years, a Wood Frog specimen in a jar led me to nearby Sycolin Road, where a half-acre willow swamp site suffers from urban multi-stress symptoms. Cleared surrounding forest, no protective travel corridor for salamanders, reduced upland habitat, traffic danger from adjoining roads, airport expansion, and now stormwater features crowd this vernal pool's natural space and threaten to whittle it and its resident wildlife away to nothing.

A participant approached me after a public presentation further to the east. She told me that a new library had been built on a flooded meadow where Spadefoot Toads once uttered their odd calls. Now the only known site left in the county for this rarely encountered amphibian is near Balls Bluff. Let's hope it doesn't become extirpated.

To the insidious threat of urban sprawl devouring these precious habitats, we now add the apparent effects of climate change. As rainfall cycles become less dependable, seasonal wetlands may not hold water long enough for their dependent creatures to complete their life cycles, and phenological mayhem ensues as amphibians respond to false weather cues, migrating outside of their traditional seasons. It is easy to get discouraged with all these troubles, but there are reasons to rejoice and some encouraging battles have been won.

Dedicated in 2003, the Rust Pond is an unusual bog-like wetland isolated atop the Catoctin ridge where it holds water permanently, even in severe drought. Though it is not an ephemeral or "vernal" pool, this unique wetland hosts Wood Frogs, rare albino Green Frogs, and the most easterly occurring Jefferson Salamander population in the county. Five acres of this unique site were purchased for \$300,000 through grassroots efforts, and the pond is now part of the ANS Rust Sanctuary in Leesburg.

In 2004, Loudoun Valley students helped discover the first documented Loudoun County Marbled Salamander population

at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship near Neersville. This preserve has an impressive assortment of wetland types and harbors at least four of the six vernal pool indicator wildlife species (also called "obligates") found in the county. Not in nine years of mucking through Northern Virginia's soggy spots had I confirmed one viable population of Fairy Shrimp (the freshwater crustacean that is also a vernal pool obligate), until last spring when we made an exciting and anxious discovery in the Lucketts area of Loudoun. Our team found a fantastic natural complex of woodland wetlands near Stumptown. These ponds are some of the most pristine examples of forested wetlands that I have seen in the region, and they are especially unique in being karst sinkholes. This part of the county, located along the eastern base of Catoctin Mountain, is underlain by limestone (consider the local name "Lime Kiln Road"), making Loudoun the only Piedmont county in Virginia with karst topography. That makes these vernal pools especially unique in Loudoun, as they appear more akin to environs of the southern Shenandoah Valley than the Potomac River region. Five vernal pool obligates have been found among seven pools so far — the highest diversity of these indicator species we've seen at any one location in Loudoun. These facts make this site my 2008 "poster pool" for the wetlands conservation message! Especially since the future of this area is precarious, with housing development encroaching upon what's left of these ancient vernal pools.

Now with LAMP volunteers and many other folks versed in the importance of these marginalized wetlands, vernal pools and their denizens are being found, defended, and given a voice. Let us strive to see that special places like the Stumptown Sinkholes — which may have persisted for millennia before us — can be preserved for the future.

I am very grateful to all of my wetlands-loving friends in Loudoun County and Northern Virginia who have contributed to the realization of this benchmark year. Thanks for helping to champion these vanishing vernal pools!



The Great Blue Heron

by Kerry Bzdyk

Loudoun County is home to a great diversity of bird species, from small beautiful songbirds to large and striking raptors, but one of our more majestic and easily identifiable permanent residents is the Great Blue Heron. Just about everyone has a memory of seeing one of these elegant birds poised over a pond or wetland in the early morning, motionless and hunting for a meal. It is always a thrill to see them.

The Great Blue Heron is a large grayish-blue bird, standing about four feet high, with long legs and a long curved neck. It has a thick, pointed beak, a white stripe on the crown of the head and a black stripe that begins behind the eye and extends to the back of the head. The feathers on the wings and back can look rather shaggy or hairy. The males and females of this species look alike. They are striking to see in flight as well, with their long legs extended out behind them and their six-foot wingspan.

Great Blue Herons are found all over the United States and southern Canada, and a white form of the bird ranges from southern Florida and into the Caribbean. They are most often found near bodies of water or wetlands, where they eat a variety of fish, frogs, salamanders, and even rodents and insects. Nesting pairs bond in the spring, and nests are built in trees close to food sources so that the young will be well fed. Although pairs will occasionally nest singly, most Great Blue Herons nest in large colonies called rookeries. The nests are constructed of sticks and may be used in subsequent years if they remain intact. Three to seven eggs are laid in March or April and are incubated for 28 days. The young are fed mostly regurgitated food in their early days, but graduate to a diet of whole fish dropped into their beaks. The young leave the nest in about 60 days and may live for up to 15 years.



More than half of the East Coast's breeding population of Great Blue Herons live near the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. Loudoun County, with its abundance of streams, ponds, and wetlands areas, has always been home to Great Blue Herons, and their numbers are strong here. You can observe a thriving island rookery nearby by looking south as you cross on White's Ferry (best seen in early to mid-spring before the leaf cover hides the large treetop nests). But as with many species, loss of habitat is the greatest threat to their continued coexistence with us. If we continue to work to preserve wetlands, and to support organizations that monitor and protect these habitats, we will be able to look upon these gracious birds for many generations to come.

Resources:

www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/heron.htm

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Great_Blue_Heron.html

Raffle to Support Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy



Support LWC programs and events by buying tickets for a chance to win this original artwork, Great Blue Heron (framed, 18w x 14h), by local nature artist Merri Nelson. Tickets: \$5/each or \$20/5 tickets. Raffle tickets can be purchased online at www.loudounwildlife.org or during LWC field trips or programs. Tickets will also be available for purchase at the annual meeting on May 18, prior to the start of the meeting. The winning ticket will be drawn at the annual meeting.

Conservation Issues

by Nicole Hamilton and Joe Coleman



Photo by Nicole Hamilton

LWC Speaks Out Against Vulture Killing in Hamilton and Middleburg

This winter, LWC discovered that the town governments of Hamilton and Middleburg planned to kill Turkey and Black Vultures and hang their dead bodies from trees in order to discourage fellow birds from roosting in surrounding trees and structures. Because Turkey and Black Vultures are protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, killing even one bird requires a permit from the USDA. LWC, with help from

our members and residents in the towns, investigated the issues to gain an understanding of the extent of the flocks and if any damage was being caused by the birds. In each case, the flock size was not extraordinary, and we did not find any damage.

As a result, we sent letters to each of the town governing bodies. Our letter provided a summary of Loudoun vulture population data over the past ten years, information on the benefits of vultures and their migratory patterns, and information debunking the health risks that were being insinuated. Further, we requested copies of the applications for the permit to kill the birds so that we could review the justifications. As of March 10, we had not received the requested information, but had heard from the Town of Middleburg that they plan to proceed with killing a vulture and hanging the body where the vultures congregate. We have not heard back from the Town of Hamilton yet. We have offered to each town our services in providing educational programs and information about the lifecycles and benefits of these birds so that greater public awareness and appreciation can be gained.

To review the letters visit www.loudounwildlife.org/Issues_and_Actions_Alerts.htm. We will continue to stay involved in this issue for a number of reasons. It is a very important issue as it not only sets an example for children regarding respect, appreciation and tolerance of wildlife, but also because **vultures play an invaluable role in our ecosystem.**

Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition Priorities

Several of the priorities that the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC) is working on are of interest to LWC:

1) Paving dirt roads, and especially **The Woods Road** —

Although not initially identified as a priority, the Transportation Plan that is under consideration by the Board of Supervisors included the paving of several of Loudoun County's rural dirt roads. Because the Comprehensive Plan states that *"The County is committed to the preservation of the unpaved rural road network in its present state with exception only for essential safety enhancements"* the coalition decided to include it as one of its priorities. Most of the rural dirt roads in Loudoun County have tree-lined hedgerows with stone walls that are excellent wildlife habitat. The dirt roads also help generate a natural traffic-calming effect which results in fewer animals being hit by motor vehicles.

The Transportation Plan would also **realign and pave The Woods Road through the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.**

This road would cut through the northern tier of the preserve and would not only destroy a rare habitat in Virginia, it would also ultimately seriously impair the integrity of the entire preserve. It appears that several county departments are trying to ram-rod this decision through the Board on March 18 and are not willing to consider any alternatives that would still allow the landfill to expand but not harm the nature preserve. The coalition believes that a consensus needs to be reached among all the interested parties on any realignment of the Woods Road before it is included in the Transportation Plan.

2) Enacting Dark Sky legislation — Loudoun County is the only local jurisdiction without a Dark Sky Ordinance. An ordinance almost became law four years ago but was indefinitely tabled by the Board of Supervisors. The coalition believes the County should enact that ordinance **now.**

3) Re-enacting legislation that would protect mountainsides, river and stream buffers, and areas that are prominently underlain with limestone soils — While the protection of these special areas is part of the Comprehensive Plan, the specific ordinances that would do so were allowed to disappear by the last Board of Supervisors.



4) Controlling deer

— Judy Randal is researching different methods, including contraception, to control the burgeoning deer populations that are destroying significant amounts of wildlife habitat and native plants.

5) Enacting and enforcing a Tree Save ordinance — Loudoun County has

been losing its forests at an alarming rate for the last ten years. Because trees play such an important role in the environment, LWC believes that the county should implement a no net-loss policy for trees. LCPCC is developing a Tree Save position paper which would support this and help protect our trees.

Insect ID: Damselfly

by Bonnie Eaton

The damselfly is a close relative to the dragonfly. Both belong to the ancient order *Odonata*. Damselflies belong to the suborder *zygoptera*, and dragonflies are in the suborder *anisoptera*. *Odonata* means "toothed" referring to their chewing mandibles. Depending on the species, damselflies inhabit the terrestrial and aquatic environments provided by cool streams, rivers, ponds or marshes.

Contributing to the delicate balance of nature, damselflies are beneficial in keeping down annoying populations of flies and mosquitoes. Yet unlike their prey, they are harmless to humans. And their presence is usually an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. Damselflies require clean water in which they lay their eggs and without it, they are unable to breed.

How do you tell the difference between a damselfly and dragonfly? One way is to examine the torso. A damselfly has a long, slender body, while a dragonfly has a stockier build with a thicker torso. Another way is to look at the wings. At rest, the damselfly holds its wings close to the body. By comparison, the dragonfly holds its wings out horizontally the way it would if it were in flight. It does not have the necessary hinge that allows its wings to fold.

Damselflies hatch from eggs and begin their lives underwater as nymphs. They spend most of their lives in this larval stage, breathing through three tail-like gills. They are ferocious aquatic predators, feeding on other larva, tadpoles and small minnows. How long they live underwater depends on available light and food and water temperature, so their underwater stage can last anywhere from a few months to a few years.

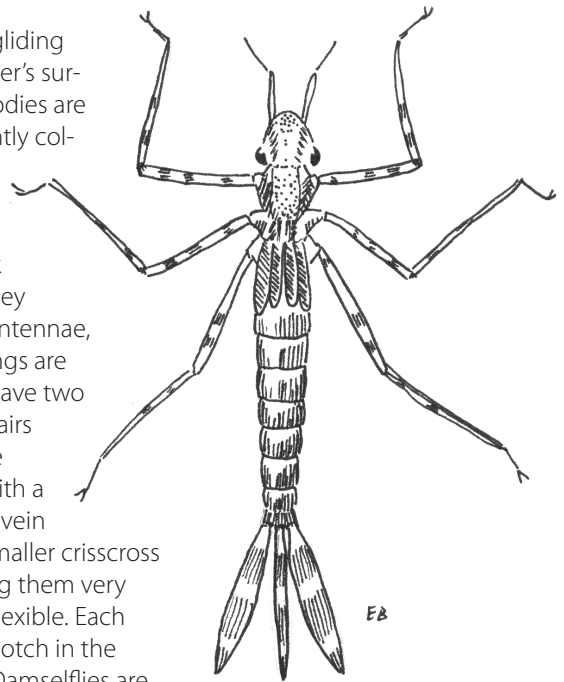
While living the aquatic life, damselflies molt several times. On the final molt, they slowly emerge from the water, finding a long stem or rock to settle on, and begin the final transformation. The nymph cracks open leaving the old skin and gills behind and the adult damselfly emerges. After the damselfly dries out—extending its long, slender wings and abdomen as it sunbathes—it immediately begins to fly and search for food and a mate. Mating takes place while perched, taking from five to ten minutes.

Often seen gliding over the water's surface, their bodies are usually brightly colored with green, blue, red, yellow, black or brown. They have short antennae, but their wings are large. They have two elongated pairs of wings, the same size, with a strong cross vein and many smaller crisscross veins, making them very strong and flexible. Each wing has a notch in the front edge. Damselflies are amazing fliers with very strong muscles. Their stupendous feats of aerial acrobatics include darting sideways, backwards, changing direction in mid-flight, hovering and stopping instantly.

Equipped with huge, protruding compound eyes, they can see up to 28,000 facets at one time. They put all of these tiny images together, enabling them to spot prey, such as a mosquito or a gnat, up to 40 yards away.

Hunting can take place for hours at a time. Damselflies have six hairy legs located near their heads, but they are seldom used for walking. Instead, they are folded into a kind of net while flying, and their insect meals are then scooped into the mouth. A prehensile labium, a lip-like structure, can be extended from underneath their head making their bite immediately fatal to their prey. They do not bite or sting humans.

It is a relatively short life for adult damselflies. Some live a few weeks, while others live for a few months. But damselflies are among the oldest living creatures on the planet. Fossilized specimens show them to be more than 300 million years old and to have once had wingspans of nearly 30 inches across.



Drawing by Emily Bzdyk

E-mail Notification

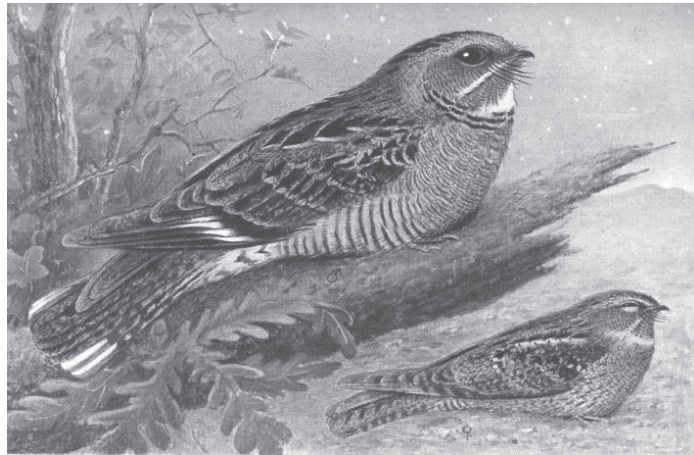


Are You Missing the Monthly Email Announcements?

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. If you are not on the distribution list but would like to be, please send an email to Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org. If you need to change your email address, please send corrections to Nicole at this same address.

Nightjar Survey — Volunteers Needed

Nightjars are the most enigmatic group of birds in the world. Little is known about the basic aspects of their life history. In recent years, conservationists have come to believe that the populations of Nightjars are declining through-



out North America. However, there has not been any large-scale or long-term design to study this group of birds when they are active at night.

In the spring of 2007, the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary began the process of collecting data on Nightjars. This project relies on volunteers to adopt and conduct survey routes. Nightjar surveys are easy to perform and do not take more than a few hours to complete. By driving and stopping at ten points along a predetermined 9-mile route, volunteers conduct roadside counts at night, during specific time windows when the moon is about 50 % illuminated. At each point, the observer counts all Nightjars seen or heard by species during a six-minute period. No artificial broadcasts of the species' calls are used.

If you think you might be interested in helping with the surveys, please visit the United States Nightjar Survey Website (www.ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm) for more details, including location of routes, instructions, and last year's results.

The Eleventh Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

On December 28, 2007, for the eleventh year in a row, a combination of 80 experienced and new birders spent hours counting every wild bird they could find in the 15-mile-diameter circle that comprises the Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The circle stretches from Ashburn Road in the east to Franklin Park in the west and from Waterford in the north to Aldie in the south. While most of the birders were members of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, several of the counters came from Fairfax and Arlington, and one from as far away as Indian Head, Maryland. They were part of the largest (over 50,000 observers on more than 2,000 counts in the western hemisphere) and oldest continuous (108 years) citizen-science project in the world. The information gathered through these counts has become invaluable in measuring early winter bird populations and monitoring long-term trends, some good and some bad.

In what was, for the most part, an average year, our 80 counters found 90 species and 28,979 individuals. However, because this has proven to be an irruption year, a time when species that inhabit and spend most of their lives in the tundra or boreal forest in North America irrupt out of their normal wintering grounds, we found a number of boreal forest species. (For more information on irruptions, see the last issue of the *Habitat Herald* at www.loudounwildlife.org.) These included the only new species we found this year — two Black-capped Chickadees (our local chickadee is the Carolina) — and unusually high numbers of Purple Finches (85), Red-breasted Nuthatches (12), and Pine Siskins (6). The one Rough-legged Hawk, only the third found in our 11 years of counting, was another indicator of an irruption year.

What was missing on the count was a diverse number of duck and blackbird species. We also had a surprisingly low number of Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures this year. The 331 Turkey Vultures were the fewest we have ever found, and we had not found as few as 79 Black Vultures since the first two years of the count.

However, it was a great year for birds of prey. For the first time we observed more Red-shouldered Hawks (113) than Red-tailed Hawks (109). And that count of 113 was 33 higher than our previous high for that species. We also found six more Bald Eagles (18) than our next-highest year, as well as 13 Northern Harriers, 20 accipiters, and 28 American Kestrels. And while we did not set any records for owls, we found one Barn Owl, seven Eastern Screech Owls, five Great-horned Owls, and 20 Barred Owls (our second-highest count ever for this species).

It was also a good year for gulls, with over 1,100 Ring-billed Gulls, 77 Herring Gulls, and 2 Great Black-backed Gulls, most at the landfill. While all three of these species are found in larger numbers in the counties to our east, they are not nearly as common in Loudoun County, perhaps because of how tidy the landfill is kept.

Other unusually high counts of species included 17 Red-headed Woodpeckers (compared



■ Continued on page 9



LWC Holds its 13th Annual Meeting on May 18th

All members are cordially invited to our Annual Meeting to be held on May 18 at the Rust Nature Sanctuary, 802 Children's Center Road, in Leesburg. The evening begins at 5:00 p.m. with refreshments and music by flutist Karen Strick, who has been kind enough to offer her talents for the evening.

Nicole Hamilton will be giving her last report as president, science fair awards will be announced, and new officers will be elected. We will also announce this year's winner of the Green Business Award for the local business that has demonstrated a commitment to preserving wildlife habitat. And, there will be much anticipation awaiting the raffle drawing for the beautiful artwork of a Great Blue Heron. Raffle tickets will be available for purchase until the start of the meeting.

The highlight of the evening will be our guest speaker, Jeff Pfoutz, who will be talking about our local pollinators and their critical role in a healthy ecosystem: "Pollination Under Pressure." While honeybees and their status have been in the news a lot lately, the benefit of plant pollination goes far beyond the realm of commercial food production. Jeff Pfoutz, a local beekeeper, will present an overview of the critical role pollination plays in our ecosystem and not just by honeybees, but by other insects, birds, and animals as well.

Hope all of you can join us for this fun and informative evening.



■ Christmas Bird count, continued

to the previous high of 12), 20 Common Ravens (the previous high being 17), 110 Horned Larks, 271 White-breasted Nuthatches, and an astounding 654 Eastern Bluebirds, a number that is surely the result of the many LWC bluebird boxes scattered around the county.

A complete listing of what was seen this year and the previous 10 years can be found at www.loudounwildlife.org/CBC_Summary_Data.htm. And if you want to compare the Central Loudoun CBC to other counts, you can visit www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/.

At the end of the day, about 60 very tired (some had been in the field since 3:30 a.m.) but very satisfied birders met at the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg for a Tally Rally to share our finds and misses and celebrate another great effort with a hearty dinner.

While all 80 counters made the Central Loudoun CBC possible and deserve a thank you for their efforts, special thanks is owed to the 22 leaders who coordinated the count in their own specific areas, and to those individuals who worked on the Tally Rally. Special thanks also to the many private and public landowners who gave us permission to visit their properties for this special event. Without the unencumbered access given by private landowners and public facilities that normally restrict access to their properties, this count would not be nearly as successful or complete.

This Year's Leaders and Counters:

Bob Abrams	Trish Bartholomew	Bob Blakney
Barb Adatte	Jeanne Berens	Ann Bogar
Dale Ball	Carmen Bishop	Fred Bogar

Joan Boudreau	Brendan Himelright	Dori Rhodes
Pat Caro	Craig Himelright	Rich Rieger
Roger Clapp	Tammy Himelright	Cheri Schneck
Joe Coleman	Robin Hoofnagel	Tyler Scott
Karen Coleman	Gerco Hoogeweg	Bill Seebeck
Anita Colvard	Bruce Johnson	Emily Southgate
KC Crichton	Greg Justice	Sharon Stephan
Phil Daley	Sharon Kearns	Karen Strick
Ellie Daley	Robert Klarquist	Heather Taylor
Robert Daugherty	Karen Lowe	Richard Taylor
Charles Devine	Steve Makranczy	Carolyn Tousley
John Devine	Kevin McKee	Scott Tousley
Tim Eckert	Larry Meade	Anna Urciolo
Elizabeth Evans	Stuart Merrell	Helen Van Ryzin
Cliff Fairweather	Scott Michaud	David Van Tassel
Karen Fairweather	Carole Miller	Leslie Vandivere
Michael Friedman	Mark Moran	Anthony Wagner
Virginia Friend	Rusty Moran	Warren Wagner
Tom Gabe	Carter Morrow	Mary Weeks
Ann Garvey	Gary Myers	Laura Weidner
Tony Garvey	Matthew Myers	Debbie Woods
Kurt Gaskill	Camille Neville	Mary Wright
Mary Ann Good	Ed Patten	
Jay Hadlock	Rob Payne	
Dirck Harris	Christine Perdue	
Gerry Hawkins	Billy Psimas	





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 ANS Rust Nature Sanctuary. All LWC members are welcome. Pre-meeting discussion begins at 7:00 p.m., with the meeting itself beginning at 7:30 p.m. *Contact Nicole Hamilton (540-882-882-9638 or nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org) for additional information.*

BIRD WALK AT BLANDY — Saturday, April 5, 8:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy at the Blandy Experimental Farm/Virginia State Arboretum in Boyce, VA for a free bird walk at which all ages are welcome. Because of its rich and varied habitat, this is a birding hot spot. Please bring binoculars. We will meet in the main parking lot near the Quarters Building. Directions can be found at <http://www.virginia.edu/blandy/>. *Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com (preferred) or call 703-723-6926.*

STREAM MONITORING PROGRAM SPRING KICK-OFF EVENT

— **Saturday, April 5, 9:00 a.m. – about 1:00 pm.** Registration Required. Join us at Temple Hall Farm in Leesburg as LWC kicks off its 2008 Stream Monitoring Program! At this event, we will present how monitors collect data on stream habitats and aquatic insects, as well as introduce our new nets and equipment that are fun and easy to handle. We will review the monitoring protocol, answer questions, and provide the hands-on training volunteers need to get started. No experience is needed to become a monitor, just an interest in learning about our local streams and their habitats. Bring boots or toe-covered shoes for wading in streams. Advance sign-up is required. For directions to Temple Hall, go to www.nvrpa.org/parks/templehall/. **To register for this event Sign Up Online or contact Meg Findley at mfindley@loudounwildlife.org or 703-349-2831.**

BIRDING BANSHEE — Saturday, April 12, 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.*

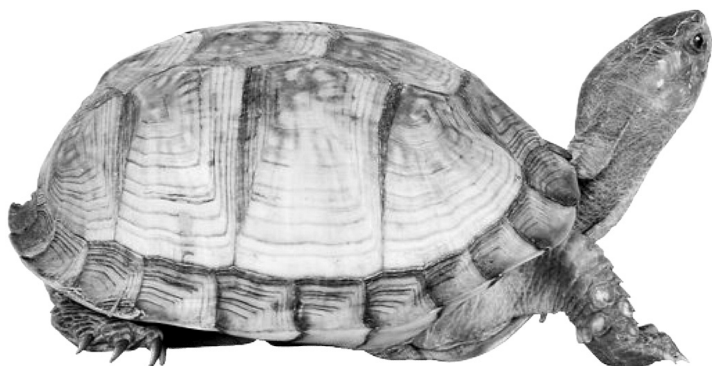
ARBOR DAY AT BANSHEE REEKS NATURE PRESERVE — Saturday, April 12, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Visit Banshee Reeks for another wonderful Arbor Day celebration! There will be activities for kids, great nature displays, family fun, and lots of food. Arbor Day will also feature a "Walk in the Woods," which will consist of a series of four stations, each with hands-on activities for families: (1) Exploring Plants and Trees in a Forest, (2) Exploring Animals and Birds in a Forest, (3) Exploring a Forest Pond, and (4) Family Fun in a Forest. At the "Exploring Plants and Trees in a Forest" station, LWC will be planting trees in the riparian buffer and will explain the importance of riparian buffers. *If you would like to volunteer or have questions contact Debbie Burtaine at 571-434-0867 or dburtaine@loudounwildlife.org*

MID-WEEK NATURE WALK ALONG THE GOOSE CREEK

— **Wednesday, April 16, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.** Registration Required. Join Christine Perdue Smith and Joe Coleman on one of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's mid-week birding trips as they explore an area along the Goose Creek near St. Louis in western Loudoun County. We will look for late winter and early spring migrants, as well as any early wildflowers that are blooming. **Sign-up required** _ To register and find meeting location, contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

WATERFORD 10K RUN-HIKE-WALK — Saturday, April 19, 9:30 a.m.

Join us as we help fellow, local nonprofits with a fundraising event. The event is being organized to raise funds for the Waterford Foundation to further their mission to preserve and protect the Historic Landmark and for the Briggs Animal Adoption Center to support their efforts to help homeless dogs and cats. The entire event will take place on historic Talbot Farm (a privately owned property within the Historic Landmark District). The route meanders across a creek, up and down hills, and along the property boundaries. The run route is approximately 10K, the hike route 6K, and the walk about 3K. Race day registration begins at 8:30 am, with a 9:30 a.m. start time. LWC will play a role in the walk part of the event. The 3K (about 2 miles) walk will be a bird walk led by our very own Phil Daley. Walkers will observe the many birds and other natural wonders that populate this locale. Fun for all! *For more information, visit www.WaterfordVa.org.*



18th ANNUAL LEESBURG FLOWER & GARDEN FESTIVAL

— **Saturday, April 19, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 20 from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** Visit us at our LWC booth!

We will have displays and lots of free handouts, including the Gardening for Wildlife Plant List, the LWC Coloring book, and lots more. LWC hats and pins as well as some great bird treats and garden accents will be for sale to help us raise money for our programs. For more information on the event itself, visit the festival website www.idalee.org/parks/events/FlowerGarden. *Anyone wanting to volunteer at the LWC booth can volunteer online or contact Debbie Burtaine at 571-434-0867 or dburtaine@loudoun-wildlife.org.*

SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE — Sunday, April 20, 1:00 p.m. Join the Friends of Banshee Reeks and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a free informal, family walk around the preserve. Search for the many natural wonders that make this such a special place. *For information call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316.*

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER — Saturday, April 26, 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.*

HOP TO IT! FROGS, TOADS, AND THEIR RELATIVES — Sunday, April 27, 2:00 p.m. Hop on over and join the fun. Learn all you ever wanted to about frogs, toads, and other amphibians. Get a chance to meet some of these creatures up close as you discover some of their secrets and play some froggy games. Join us at the ANS Rust Nature Sanctuary as local naturalist and storyteller, Alonso Abugattas, presents a fun and exciting children's program. This free program is co-sponsored with the Audubon Naturalist Society and is part of their free Conservation Celebration scheduled from noon to 3:00 p.m. That afternoon the Rust Nature Sanctuary is hosting a family picnic and eco-fair. Bring a picnic and enjoy nature-themed crafts and games, guided hikes, and much more! Healthy food options will be available for purchase. For more information on the fair visit www.audubonnaturalist.org or call 703-669-000; *for questions on the amphibian program contact Laura Weidner at 540-554-2747 or lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.*

BIRDATHON 2008! — Saturday, May 3 -11. LWC is again sponsoring a Birdathon this year as part of Celebrating Wings Over America. You can have fun birding and also help raise money for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy through the Birdathon. Participating teams pick any 24-hour time-period between May 3 and May 11 for their own Birdathon. If you do not want to participate in the Birdathon, but still want to help, you can sponsor one of the teams. *Visit our web site at www.loudounwildlife.org for more information.*



CELEBRATING WINGS OVER AMERICA: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY — Saturday, May 10, 8:00 a.m. During spring, thousands of migratory birds move through North America to their nesting territories. Some will stay and nest in our area, while others will spend only a few days here replenishing their energy before continuing a journey that may be thousands of miles long. To celebrate and highlight this natural phenomenon, International Migratory Bird Day is scheduled on May 10. In recognition of the importance of healthy wildlife habitat, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is sponsoring several 8:00 a.m. bird walks and an all-day bird survey throughout Loudoun County on the 10th. Some of the sites the different groups will visit are Horsepen Preserve in eastern Loudoun, Morven Park and the ANS Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve and the Dulles Wetlands in central Loudoun, Phillips Farm in Waterford, and the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in northwestern Loudoun. In addition to participating in the bird walks, you can also help with the survey. *To participate in one of the walks or the survey, sign up on our website or contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudoun-wildlife.org before May 8. Please bring binoculars.*

SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE — Sunday, May 18, 1:00 p.m. See April 20 listing for details.

ANNUAL MEETING: CELEBRATING LOUDOUN'S WILDLIFE WITH THE LOUDOUN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY — Sunday, May 18, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Join us for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's annual membership meeting at ANS's Rust Nature Sanctuary. The event will include a raffle for an original work of art, wildlife habitat exhibits showcasing the floral and fauna of our area, and a program by local beekeeper Jeff Pfoutz on honeybees and the critical role all pollinators play in our lives. All LWC members are invited to attend! *Questions: contact Elizabeth Evans at eevans@loudounwildlife.org.*

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER — Saturday, May 24, 8:00 a.m. See the April 26 listing for details.

■ Continued on page 12



■ Programs and Field Trips, continued

BENEFIT CONCERT FOR LWC — Saturday, June 7 at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Featuring Acoustic Burgoo and other local bands. Watch our website, www.loudounwildlife.org, for details!

BIRDING BANSHEE — Saturday, June 14, 8:00 a.m. See the April 12 listing for details.

MID-WEEK NATURE WALK AT BANSHEE REEKS AND DULLES WETLANDS — Wednesday, June 18, 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Registration Required. Join Joe Coleman on one of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's mid-week birding trips and explore Banshee Reeks and the wetlands. We will meet at the Dulles Wetlands at 7:00 a.m. For those who can't make it at that time, we will meet at the visitor's center at Banshee Reeks at 9 a.m. Hiking footwear (waterproof if you are coming to the Wetlands), long pants and insect repellent advised. *To register or for questions contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.*

BUTTERFLIES at BANSHEE REEKS — Saturday, June 21, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Mona Miller, the "Butterfly Lady," for one of our free, family butterfly walks. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas at Banshee Reeks and identify all of the butterflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. *Questions: contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-9638.*

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES OF LOUDOUN FIELD TRIP — Saturday, June 28, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Bad weather date: Sunday, June 29). Registration Required – limit 12 participants. Join Andy Rabin and Kevin Munroe on a free, fun, and informative day of "dragon-hunting" as we visit some of the best dragonfly and damselfly habitat in the county. We will learn how to catch, handle, identify, and release these insects, so bring an insect net if you have one (some extra nets will be provided).

Other things to bring include a hat, sunscreen, lunch, snacks, water, and binoculars. We may be walking off-trail through some tall vegetation. To get the most out of this trip you will want to be an active participant, so be prepared to get your feet wet and muddy. Adults and interested children are welcome. Meet at Bles Park in Ashburn (for directions <http://www.loudoun.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=924>), and then we will visit one or two other sites in the county. *To register and for questions please e-mail Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com (preferred) or call 703-723-6926.*

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER — Saturday, June 28, 8:00 a.m. See the April 26 listing for details.

BIRDING BANSHEE — Saturday, July 12, 8:00 a.m. See the April 12 listing for details.

BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES (location to be determined) — Saturday, July 19, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for one of our free family butterfly and dragonfly walks. Check the website for location.

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER — Saturday, July 26, 8:00 a.m. See the April 26 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



Summer Intern Opportunity

LWC is proud to continue its summer internship program. The purpose of the internship program is two-fold: to provide a means for educating college students in environmental issues that impact Loudoun County and for the intern to work on productive projects that benefit the organization.

Interns in previous years have supported LWC's bluebird monitoring and amphibian monitoring programs and have developed publications that are distributed at fairs and events. The primary role of this year's intern will be providing support to the stream monitoring program. The focus of the LWC stream monitoring project is aquatic insects (benthic macroinvertebrates) found in streams. The type and quantity of aquatic insects found in a stream reflect the quality of water in

the stream and its surrounding habitat. The intern will conduct field work and report back findings about the biology of and threats to Loudoun's streams.

Additional intern support will be needed on the bluebird monitoring and amphibian monitoring programs as well as with supporting an environmental camp for kids and working on the Birds of Loudoun atlas.

Our intern program is designed for an enthusiastic self-starter who wants both to learn and contribute. LWC seeks to maximize the intern's experience by exposing the person to all of our programs through project work. Interns may apply for this paid internship by going to the LWC community link on our website.

Programs and Field Trips Sponsored By Our Partners

AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY RUST NATURE SANCTUARY
802 Children's Center Rd, Leesburg, VA 20175
703-669-0000

Come and enjoy the Rust Nature Sanctuary anytime from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, any day of the year. Our 68 acres encompasses meadows, forests, and ponds where you will find a variety of wildlife and plants.

A Conservation Celebration! April 27, noon to 3:00 p.m.

Join us at the Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, Virginia for a free family picnic and eco-fair. Bring a picnic and enjoy nature-themed crafts and games, guided hikes, and much more, including a fascinating children's program — **"Hop To It!"** by Alonso Abugattas. Healthy food options will be available for purchase. For more information, visit www.audubonnaturalist.org or call 703-669-0000.

Free Rust Nature Walks for adults and older children with an interest in expanding their understanding of the natural world. Meet at the information shed. Call 703-737-0021 for more information.

- **Rust Nature Walks:** Naturalist-led walks, 1st Sunday of each month, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
- **Midweek Rust Rambles:** Explore Rust with a naturalist, 2nd Wednesday of each month, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
- **Rust Bird Walks for Beginners:** Learn birding basics, 3rd Saturday of each month, Sept. through June, 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Special Rust Walks for adults and older children; please RSVP 703-737-0021.

- **Spring Migrants at Rust — Saturday, May 3, 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.** Join us as we seek out warblers, thrushes, and other spring migrants at Rust. Along the way, we will discuss the amazing phenomenon of migration.
- **Rust After Hours — Saturday, Jul. 12, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.** Spend an evening eavesdropping on bats, hooting for owls, black-lighting for bugs, and finding out what else might be out in the dark and how they have adapted to the night life.

Rust Nature Talks: ANS brings speakers to the Rust Nature Sanctuary to highlight current issues in natural history and conservation in the metropolitan area. Free but please RSVP at 703-737-0021.

- **The Potomac Gorge: Biodiversity at our Doorstep — Thursday, May 22, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.** The Potomac Gorge is a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot in the heart of the Washington area. Mary Travaglini, Potomac Gorge Habitat Restoration Manager for The Nature Conservancy of MD/DC, will describe what makes the gorge such a treasure.

Broadlands Nature Talks: In partnership with the Broadlands Association, ANS brings speakers to the Broadlands Nature Center to address natural history topics with an emphasis on nature in a suburban setting.

• Birds of Prey — Thursday, March 27, 7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Some hawks have found a place in the suburbs, often to the surprise of human residents. Liam McGranaghan will describe hawks you might see in our area and how they make their lives among us.

Broadlands: The Nation's 25th Certified Community Wildlife Habitat — Saturday, May 3, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

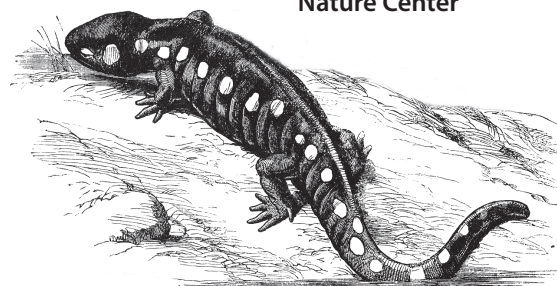
The Broadlands Wildlife Habitat Committee and the National Wildlife Federation will hold a Certification Ceremony at the Broadlands Nature Center. There will be activities for kids, entertainment by the Eagle Ridge Jazz Band, exhibits by environmental organizations, and more. The Nature Center is located at 21907 Claiborne Parkway, Broadlands, VA 20148.

Free Rust Family Programs, "Growing Aware!" On the First Tuesday of every month, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.; ages 3-5 with an adult. Space is limited for these free programs so please **register** ahead of time at 703-669-0000 or jgurnee@audubonnaturalist.org.

- **April 1, Adventures Under a Log:** There is a *big* world lurking under a little log. Roll logs and discover roly-polys, wiggly worms, slimy slugs and more. Learn about how these animals find food, water and shelter in their unique home.
- **May 6, Reptiles and Amphibians:** Learn about how these critters stay warm, what they eat and where they live. You will also get to meet a snake and search for frogs and salamanders.

Summer Camps at the Rust Nature Sanctuary: Offering unique nature programs for children ages 4 to 11, ANS's summer camps are designed to foster environmental awareness and expand natural and cultural knowledge. We will use magnifying glasses, insect nets, and binoculars to delve into the natural world and explore the special relationships between ourselves and the animals and plants around us. For more information about the camps, please visit www.audubonnaturalist.org or call 703-669-0000. Camp sessions include:

- **Predators and Prey**
- **Web of Life**
- **Fantastic Flyers**
- **Microworlds**
- **Friends in the Forest**
- **Brownie Nature Camps**
- **Junior Nature Camps**
- **Camps held at the Broadlands Nature Center**



■ Continued on page 14

■ *Programs and Field Trips Sponsored By Our Partners, continued*



CLAUDE MOORE PARK NATURE PROGRAMS

Visitor Center: 21544 Old Vestal's Gap Road, Sterling, VA 20164

www.loudoun.gov/prcs/parks/claude.htm

Visitor Center/Discovery Room: Daily 9:00A-5:00P

Park Hours: Daily 7:00A-Dusk

Find the wild in Sterling, Virginia! Explore eleven miles of hiking trails through Claude Moore Park's forests, fields and ponds. Have an encounter with the birds, squirrels and deer that make CMP their home. Check out our Discovery Room and Frogshackle nature centers and programs at www.loudoun.gov/claudemoores-park, call 571-258-3700 or e-mail claudemoore@loudoun.gov. To help make the most of your experience, join one of our naturalist-led programs. Here are some samples:

- **"Earth Day/Keep Loudoun Beautiful Park Clean-up"** — on April 19 help maintain natural habitats.
- **"Celebrate Earth Day"** — on April 26 you can enjoy a live animal program, meet a tree, and discover recycling in a rotten log with crafts, games and more at this special event.
- **Nature Classes** — Ages one, two and 2-4 year-olds with an adult discover frogs, bugs and ducks and geese; preschoolers (3-6 years) can meet **"Creepy Critters"** or play **"Nature Bingo."** School-aged kids discover **"Endangered Species"** or explore **"Nature and Photography."** Scouts earn badges and take hikes.
- Everyone enjoys nature at programs such as **"Going Batty at Twilight Hike and Campfire," "Dragonflies and Butterflies," "Family Bird Walk"** and **"Spring Owl Prowl."**
- Summer is for camps like **"Critic Camp"** (4-6 year-olds) or **"Wetland Detectives"** and **"Nature Adventures at Sundown"** (school-aged children.)
- We welcome teen volunteers as **"Summer Naturalist Interns"** helping park staff with nature study and sharing nature with children.

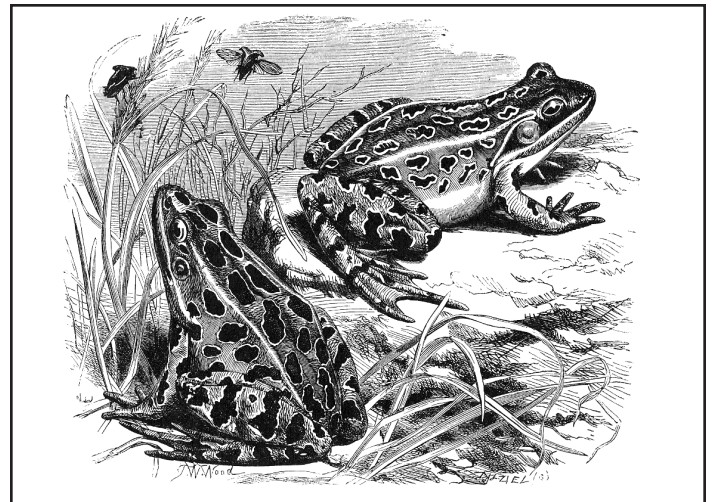
There's a little bit of nature for everyone at Claude Moore Park!

Stream Monitoring and Related Activities to Begin Soon

by Meg Findley

Interested in protecting and learning about the water quality and aquatic insects of Loudoun County's streams? Join us as we launch LWC's 2008 Stream Monitoring Program on Saturday, April 5. From 9:00 am to about 1:00 pm at Temple Hall Farm in Leesburg, we will meet to provide an overview of the program, discuss the methods we use, and help integrate new volunteers into our existing monitoring teams. Stacey Brown with the Virginia Save Our Streams organization will provide hands-on training in the use of fun and easy to learn monitoring techniques.

LWC's stream monitoring program is a fascinating way to learn about stream ecology as well as participate in data gathering for local government decision-making to protect the health of our county's streams. Monitoring occurs in the spring months of April and May, and again in the fall during September and October. During each of these two seasons it takes about one to three hours for a team to monitor a stream sampling site. At other times throughout the year, LWC offers other related



activities such as stream walks, habitat assessments, training in aquatic insect identification, and stream habitat restoration projects. No experience is needed to become a monitor, just an interest in learning about our local streams and their habitats. Our stream monitors represent a wealth of diversity, with some people possessing years of experience and knowledge in stream health and environmental management, others representing interested citizens, and still more involving families and children aged about 9 years and up. Bring boots or toe-covered shoes for wading in streams. Advance sign-up is required. To register for this event Sign Up Online or contact Meg Findley at mfindley@loudounwildlife.org or 703-349-2831. For directions to Temple Hall Farm, go to www.nvrpa.org/parks/templehall

Jump in — Become an Amphibian Monitor!

It's time to get ready for the 2008 Amphibian Monitoring season. The busy time for monitoring is from March through July, and we need your help to build our knowledge base of where the animals are and the state of their habitats. We have three methods for monitoring amphibians:

Frog Call Survey: Conducted by driving along an established route with set monitoring spots. At each stop, monitors record data on the environmental conditions and frogs heard. This survey typically occurs at sunset and into the evening when frogs and toads are calling.

Site Surveys: Conducted by visiting an established monitoring location either on your own property or at a public wetland area. This approach uses both visual and auditory senses to survey the area. These surveys occur during the day or evening.

Migration Mapping: Composed of two types of volunteer roles: "Volunteer A"—participates in one or more night crossings to monitor and rescue individuals crossing roads; "Volunteer B"—scouts a selected area for "Big Night" events (large amphibian migrations).

For more information and to sign up to monitor this year, contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-9638. More information and the signup form can be found on our website: www.loudounwildlife.org/Amphibian_Monitoring.htm.



Volunteer Appreciation

Compiled by Lynn Webster

Because the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is an all-volunteer organization, any accomplishment, large or small, is due to the efforts of volunteers. *This list covers the time period from the beginning of December through early March, but does not include those who helped with the Christmas Bird Count and the Phillips Farm project as they are listed in articles elsewhere in this issue.*

We apologize if we have omitted or misspelled anyone's name. If we have, please contact Lynn Webster, our Volunteer Coordinator, at lwebster@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-3823.

We can't do our work without you!

Lisa Baisden
Lorrie Bennett
Daniel Biggs
Gem Bingol
Debbie Burtaine
Emily Bzdyk
Kerry Bzdyk
Joe Coleman
Karen Coleman

Bill Cour
Ellie Daley
Phil Daley
Molly Darr
Bonnie Eaton
Elizabeth Evans
Cliff Fairweather
Meg Findley
Fred Fox

Jay Frankenfield
Michael Friedman
Ann Garvey
Tony Garvey
Mary Ann Good
Debra Gutenson
Otto Gutenson
Gil Hamilton
Nicole Hamilton
Senai Hamoui
Debbie Harrison
Gerry Hawkins
Mike Hayslett
Craig Himelright
Tammy Himelright
Gretl Learned
Jon Little
Brian Magurn
David McCarthy
Liam McGranaghan
Frank McLaughlin
Mark Meudt
Paul Miller

Bill Oscanyan
Andy Rabin
Jennifer Roberts
Darrell Schwalm
Stan Shetler
Bob Shuey
Sylvia Shuey
Ray Smith
Sharron Stephan
Karen Strick
Lisa Taylor
Helen Van Ryzin
David Van Tassel
David Ward
Lynn Webster
Laura Weidner
Marcia Weidner
Marianne Weitzel
Mimi Westervelt
Jeff Wolinski

New LWC Board Members

LWC is please to introduce and welcome Debbie Burtaine, Mark Meudt, Paul Miller, and Helen Van Ryzin as new Board members.

Debbie Burtaine, LWC's new Chair for Community Outreach, lives in Sterling with her husband, 22-year daughter, 16-year-old son, a Golden Retriever, and two cats. She also has a 22-year-old stepdaughter and a 22-year-old stepson (twins). For over 15 years she worked in the insurance industry before returning to school to explore other arenas. In 2007 she graduated from the University of Maryland University College with a B.S. in Environmental Management. Her special areas of interest are wildlife and habitat conservation. She has enjoyed working with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy delivering public relations materials around the Sterling area and doing bluebird monitoring along the Rust Sanctuary trail. Debbie believes that community support is vital to ensuring a healthy and happy environment filled with lots of animals and natural resources for future generations.

Mark Meudt, LWC's new Conservation Advocacy Chair, is Vice President for Communications and Marketing for the Information Technology sector of General Dynamics. He has more than 25 years experience as an accomplished communications and marketing executive and has been responsible for launching numerous corporate brands and integrated public relations programs and marketing campaigns for a number of companies. Mark is active on several Boards, including the Public Relations Society of America, the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, and the GovMark Council. He lives in Leesburg with his wife and two children.

Paul Miller, LWC's new Chair for Environmental Education, worked for 30 years as a teacher and administrator for Loudoun County Public Schools where he was the Assistant Principal at Loudoun Valley High School for 18 years before going to Banneker Elementary as its Principal. For the past five years, he has worked as a part-time consultant and recruiter with the School's Personnel Office. Paul, who grew up in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, got his Bachelor's from Shepherd College and his Master's in Public School Administration from Virginia Tech. Paul is also a member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Purcellville and the Purcellville Rotary Club. He is married to Lauraine Landolt and has two children and three grandchildren.

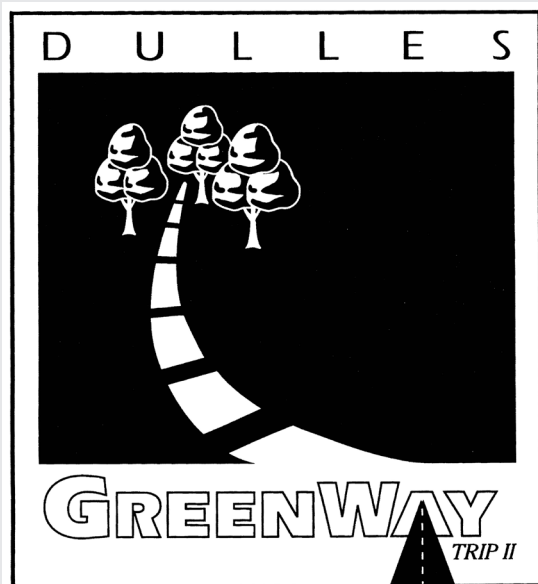
Helen Van Ryzin, LWC's new Membership Chair, lives in Waterford where she raised three children and was the Waterford PTO Secretary for three years. After graduating from NYU with a degree in Business/Economics, she worked for 15 years developing computer systems to support Wall Street traders. She is currently a self-employed contract programmer developing a ratio calculating software tool for loan officers, financial analysts, and managers. She managed the Waterford School's butterfly garden and worked with Mimi Westervelt to get the school certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat. She is an avid gardener, with an herb garden, vegetable and flower gardens, and a large water garden full of fish, frogs, and dragonflies.

Drive for Charity on May 15, 2008

Dulles Greenway's Third Annual Drive for Charity

For the third year in a row the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has been chosen as one of the recipients who will receive a share of all of the tolls collected on the Dulles Greenway on a single day.

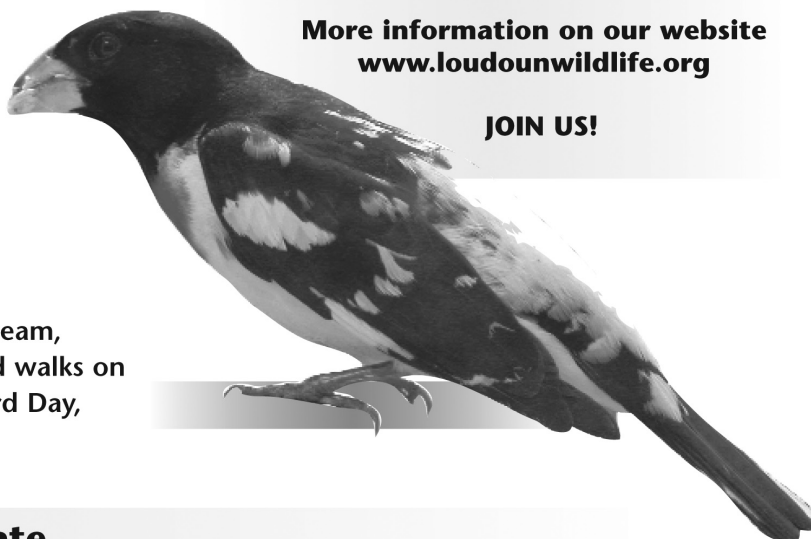
'Drive' for Charity on Thursday, May 15, 2008, and see 100% of your tolls returned to the community. On that day all the tolls collected on the Dulles Greenway will be donated to charity. Approximately \$185,000 was raised during last year's 'Drive' and donated to five charities: the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the March of Dimes, the Loudoun Chapter of the Special Olympics, the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter, and Fresh Air/Full Care.



Birdathon 2008! – May 3-11

Help raise money for bird conservation and education programs here in Loudoun!

- All skill levels welcome
- A fun way to get outside and identify birds while raising money for our local birds and their habitats
- Great prizes for different age groups and skill levels
- Bird on your own, form a team, or come on one of our bird walks on International Migratory Bird Day, May 10, to count species



**More information on our website
www.loudounwildlife.org**

JOIN US!

2 Ways to Participate

1) Be a Birdathoner

- ◆ Register to be a birdathon participant by signing up on the website.
- ◆ Gather pledges from friends, family, neighbors in support of helping birds.
- ◆ Select your count day (a 24-hour period between May 3-11).
- ◆ Visit our website to sign up for one of the bird walks on May 10, International Migratory Bird Day.
- ◆ Conduct your count, identifying as many species as you can.
- ◆ Follow up with your sponsors to collect their pledges and mail them in to LWC by June 12.

2) Be a Sponsor

- ◆ Want to support the Birdathon but don't have time to gather pledges? Please consider making a pledge.
- ◆ You can make a flat contribution to the birdathon itself or sponsor a team and challenge them to find as many species as they can!

More information on our website: www.loudounwildlife.org



Phillips Farm Habitat Restoration Project – A Success!

by Joe Coleman

On the first day of March, 46 volunteers showed up to plant over 400 shrubs and remove invasive alien plants along the banks of the South Fork of the Catoctin Creek in a project designed and planned by Jeff Wolinski, a local Consulting Ecologist. Jeff spent the day before preparing the site and removing the invasive alien plants that he could get to with his bush-hog.

Thirty-six Gray Dogwoods in two-gallon pots along with about 400 live sapling stakes, comprised of Buttonbush, Silky Dogwood, and various Willow species, were planted in an area threatened by erosion caused by excessive storm-water runoff. Only shrubs were planted in the riparian buffer as the Waterford Foundation wants to preserve an agricultural landscape that has existed for almost three centuries on the historic Phillips Farm. LWC paid for the plants through a grant from Kimley-Horn's charitable foundation.

Upon completion of the project, LWC's Stream Monitoring Chair Meg Findley and LWC member Darrell Schwalm demonstrated stream monitoring near the mill. They were pleasantly surprised to find a number of stoneflies, which are generally good indicators of water quality. Overall, they informally rated the stream as "fair" for benthic macroinvertebrates, and were encouraged with the potential this may hold for stream recovery if good stewardship practices increase.

This was the first segment of what LWC hopes will be a long-term project to restore the stream-side environment along the banks of the Catoctin on the Phillips Farm to a healthy state.



Photos by Norm Gresley

The day after the project, Mimi Westervelt, the liaison between the Waterford Foundation and LWC, wrote to Joe Coleman, who coordinated the event: "I think yesterday was a grand success on

a multitude of levels — from habitat restoration to environmental education and the partnership forged between LWC and Waterford. Deep thanks for your support, your impressive organization skills, and the excitement you've helped us generate for protecting and restoring natural resources on historic Phillips Farm."

Our thanks go out to the following volunteers, from both the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Waterford Foundation, who helped with the March 1 Project:

Lisa Baisden	Meg Findley	Frank McLaughlin
Dan Biggs	Ann Garvey	Darrell Schwalm
Tena Brass	Tony Garvey	Sally Snidow
David Chamberlain	Kate Gentry	Brownwen Souders
Betsey Coffey-Chaudet	Annie Good	John Souders
Joe Coleman	Norman Gresley	Karen Strick
Anita Colvard	Drew Gutenson	Helen Van Ryzin
Bill Cour	Otto Gutenson	David Ward
Candi Crichton	Ian Gwinn	Lynn Webster
Casey Crichton	Kathleen Hughes	Mimi Westervelt
Kate Dykgraaf	Lauren Lang	Jeff Wolinski
Elizabeth Evans	Rob Lauten	

And thank you to the group of volunteers who came from Bethel United Methodist's Roots & Shoots Environmental Stewardship Club:

Eslynn Dudek	Nan McCarry	Amelia Tonelli
Kimberley LaFave	Will McCarry	Nathaniel Tonelli
Richard Lynn	Brianna Morris	
Caroline McCarry	Tara Morris	

More projects are planned for the future. On April 11, we will be helping the Lucketts Elementary School's Potomac River Rangers with a tree planting in the Lucketts area. On April 12, we will be doing a riparian buffer demonstration planting at the Arbor Day celebration at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.

If you are interested in helping with the other habitat restoration projects that will be coming up later this year contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.





With this issue of the Habitat Herald, we will begin a new column just for kids, introducing the characters Zoom and Compass, by teacher Senai Hamou. Many thanks to artist David Sheldon for bringing our Nature Detectives to life. David is a children's author and illustrator living in Ashville, NC. Visit him at www.davidquentinsheldon.com.

Adventures of **Zoom & Compass**

By Senai Hamou

Nature Detectives Zoom and Compass were scouring their backyard for evidence of insect larvae when they got their first call. Zoom raced to her bag and pulled out a shiny metallic pink cell phone. She propped the phone under her chin and reached into her bag again, taking out a journal and pen. She scribbled some notes and looked up at Compass.

"Little brother, we have an UNO," she said.

"An UNO? As in Unidentified Natural Occurrence?" Compass jumped to his feet.

"Precisely!" Zoom replied. "It's at the Mallard's pond. It seems that there is something strange floating on the water. Maysi, the little girl that lives there, is flipping out. She thinks it's a jelly fish monster."

"Ooh... maybe it's a Giant Portuguese Man O'War that's come to share a seaweed sandwich with the Lock Ness monster." Compass looked down at his compass watch. "If we head northeast past the playground and over the hill, we'll see the pond on the right."

"You're quite clever for a 9 year old, aren't you?" Zoom remarked. "Lead the way, Compass."

Using his watch for direction, he led them to the pond where he found a small mound with extra leaves and some loose dirt. "Check this out," he beckoned to Zoom.

Zoom kneeled down, looking through her magnifying glass. "It looks like a nest for the painted turtle. During the spring or early summer, Momma turtle uses her back legs to dig a hole where she'll leave her eggs to keep them safe. Two to three months later, the babies hatch and they're on their own."

Compass searched the tall trees for sight of a nest. "The turtle hatchlings are going to be very vulnerable to predators. The Great Blue Heron, for one, would find them to be a tasty snack."

A sudden movement in the tall grass ahead brought Compass' attention back to the pond. He pressed a silver button on his watch, and the sound was amplified. He recognized it at once. "Zoom, it's a snake," he warned.

Zoom held her magnifying glass in front, creeping through the tall grass. "It's just a harmless garter snake," she announced.

"Whew," Compass breathed. He poked his binoculars through the tall cattail and examined the pond's surface.

"We've got our monster, just 45 degrees NW."

"Let me see," insisted Zoom as she took the binoculars from him. Floating on the water was a jelly-like mass with black spots inside. "Eggs—not so scary after all!"

"Not unless it's the monster's eggs," Compass teased.

"Ha, ha, funny. Well, it's not the carp or minnow. Their eggs wouldn't be floating on top of the water like that."

"Nor would the newt's, which would be on the underside of a leaf or on an aquatic plant stem," Compass pointed out.

"How about the snail? Dragonfly? Beetle? Mosquito?"

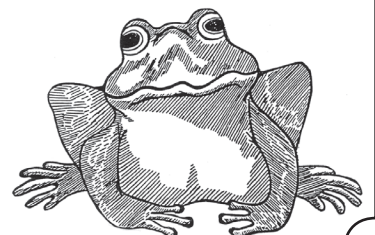
"Hmm... the snail's eggs would be on the underside of a leaf that's underwater. The dragonfly's could be in the water, but on a floating leaf maybe. The beetle's eggs would be laid along a plant stem that is out of the water, and the mosquito's would be on the water's surface, but it'd look more like a raft."

"I can't believe you just said all that in one breath," said Compass, amazed. "Anyway, that leaves the frog or toad, and it's not the toad since toads lay their eggs in strings of jelly."

"Ribbet, ribbet, it's a frog! Soon, there will be tiny tadpoles swimming around the pond, eating lots and lots of algae," said Zoom.

"...and hopefully evading lots and lots of predators," finished Compass.

"Mystery solved!" said the detectives together.





Yes, I want to become an LWC Member!

Membership Benefits include:

Subscription to Habitat Herald • Classes and Workshops
Volunteer Opportunities • Regular Monthly Meetings and Programs

**Mail this form along with your payment to: Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy,
PO Box 2088, Purcellville, VA 20134-2088**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ E-mail _____

Please indicate your membership level:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Individual Lifetime | <input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Family Lifetime | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Donation \$ _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member | <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | (* membership runs from January 1 - December 31) | |

Join online: www.loudounwildlife.org



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