



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XIII, Issue 4

Winter 2008

Citizen Science is Thriving in Loudoun County

by Elizabeth Evans, Nicole Hamilton, and Meg Findley

You might think that studies to map the mating activity of frogs and salamanders, track how many bluebirds have fledged in a given year, or count the number of aquatic insects that inhabit a stream impacted by habitat improvement activities are meant to be conducted by professional researchers from laboratory facilities or distant institutions of higher learning. But the truth is that these activities are alive and well within our own Loudoun County, and that they are being conducted by interested citizens who volunteer their time to learn analytic approaches to monitoring our natural environment in a fun, yet scientifically robust manner. These volunteers are part of a larger phenomenon that is happening all across the country as concerned citizens are engaging in environmental studies, and effectively democratizing the nature of scientific monitoring. Eleanor Ely, editor and writer of the EPA-supported Volunteer Monitor National Newsletter, defines citizen science as "projects in which volunteers partner with scientists to answer real-world questions." Below are three examples of how the Loudoun

"These volunteers are part of a larger phenomenon that is happening all across the country as concerned citizens are engaging in environmental studies, and effectively democratizing the nature of scientific monitoring."

Wildlife Conservancy is contributing to our country's citizen science movement and is changing the way communities view science and environmental management.

Amphibian Monitoring

Our amphibian monitoring program began as a pilot project in 2006. Nicole Hamilton kicked off this program with support from Liam McGranaghan, a Loudoun County environmental science teacher, Cliff Fairweather, a naturalist at the Audubon Naturalist Society, and Mike Hayslett, a herpetologist and teacher at Sweet Briar College. There are three ways to participate – through site surveys, frog-call driving surveys, and migration mapping.

Since starting the program, we have gathered data from over 50 participants. Conducting our surveys has been educational as well as fun for the participants, who have learned about the different habitat needs of amphibians, the life cycles of these animals, and the abundance (or lack) of specific species. We've had a lot of fun examining vernal pools in 40-degree weather and watching salamanders walk over forest floors and snow to reach their breeding sites. We've watched the effects of the drought on frog and salamander tadpoles. We've discovered new locations where amphibian populations are thriving, and we've started developing relationships with citizens of the County in order



Phillips Farm Tree Planting, photo by Nicole Hamilton.

■ Continued on page 3

In This Issue:

A Word from the President	2	LWC Membership	7	Partners Programs and Field Trips	12
Passing of a Great Lady	4	Tree Planting a Huge Success	8	Volunteer Appreciation	14
Loudoun's Woodpeckers, Pt. II	5	Persimmons	9	Zoom and Compass	15
Birds of Loudoun County	7	Programs and Field Trips	10	Internship Program	16

A Word from the President — *Make a Difference!*

by Joe Coleman

Most of us join organizations because we believe they make a difference. When we choose to actively participate in those organizations, their effectiveness becomes even more important to us. For me, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy fits that bill. As LWC has grown it has become increasingly more proactive and effective. In its early years, LWC concentrated on educational programs because we knew that people wouldn't protect what they didn't cherish, and they wouldn't cherish what they didn't understand.

Educational programs are still at our core. However, as the organization has grown, we've expanded our activities and now participate in a number of citizen science projects. Early in our existence we formed a partnership with three other local organizations to monitor water quality in Loudoun's streams. Our next step was to become more proactive in protecting and preserving Loudoun County's natural areas and to begin enhancing those areas through a variety of ways, including our Habitat Restoration projects. In fact, our riparian buffer planting projects have become very popular, and I'd argue it is because they make a difference in a multitude of positive ways.

As our monitoring programs, especially the Bird Atlas and Amphibian monitoring program, grow and expand, they will help us go to the next level. We will be able to identify the habitat areas that are most important to wildlife. We will work with others to protect, preserve, and enhance these areas.

LWC does make a difference, whether we are planting several hundred trees along a stream in Waterford, identifying and protecting vernal pools where amphibians and fairy shrimp thrive, or finding out, through our atlas project, what areas are most important to breeding and migrating birds. Join us in making a difference!



Articles in the Habitat Herald are published for the information of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members. You are welcome to reprint these articles as long as you credit the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy or other sources noted in the articles. Copyright remains with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

Coordinator: Joe Coleman
Editor: Karen Coleman
Mary Ann Good
Design: Lorrie Bennett

Printed by: Mr. Print, Purcellville, VA

© 2008 Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. To reprint any or all of the Habitat Herald, please contact Joe Coleman. Permission will generally be granted if appropriate credit is given.

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 Joe Coleman.

President	Joe Coleman	(540) 554-2542	jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
Past President	Nicole Hamilton	(540) 882-4839	nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org
Vice President	Bonnie Eaton	(703) 726-3078	beaton@loudounwildlife.org
Secretary	Cheri Schneck	(703) 431-4225	cschneck@loudounwildlife.org
Treasurer	Michael Friedman	(703) 858-7692	mfriedman@loudounwildlife.org
Finance	Craig Himelright	(703) 777-8691	chimelright@loudounwildlife.org
Programs and Field Trips Chair	Laura Weidner	(540) 554-2747	lweidner@loudounwildlife.org
Habitat Restoration	Joe Coleman	(540) 554-2542	jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
Membership	Helen Van Ryzin	(540) 882-4187	hvanryzin@loudounwildlife.org
Fundraising	Vacant		
Environmental Education	Paul Miller	(540) 882-3112	pmiller@loudounwildlife.org
Public Relations Chair	Bonnie Eaton	(703) 726-3078	beaton@loudounwildlife.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Rhonda Chocha	(571) 246-7408	rchocha@loudounwildlife.org
Conservation Advocacy	vacant		
Habitat Herald	Joe Coleman	(540) 554-2542	jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
Community Outreach	Debbie Burtaine	(571) 434-0867	dburtaine@loudounwildlife.org
Stream Monitoring	Meg Findley	(703) 349-2831	mfindley@loudounwildlife.org
Bird Population Surveys	Joe Coleman	(540) 554-2542	jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
Bluebird Monitoring	Elizabeth Evans	(540) 822-5438	eevans@loudounwildlife.org
Special Projects Ops	Phil Daley	(540) 338-6528	pdaley@loudounwildlife.org
Special Projects Admin	Karen Strick	(703) 283-2149	kstrick@loudounwildlife.org

■ *Citizen Science, continued from pg. 1*

to share our data and protect important habitats. We've had students discover new vernal pools in their neighborhoods and study them as part of their science studies.

Studying amphibians and their habitats takes us out during unexpected times doing unexpected things. On warm, rainy spring nights, it's the intrepid few who think, "Hey, I'd better go outside," but that is just what we do, because this is when the amphibians are active – moving to and from their breeding ponds and forests. An area we are going to work harder at next year is mobilizing volunteers to help with migration mapping, also known as "big night" events. These are the nights when the frogs, toads, and salamanders move from forests to breeding pools; and these are the times when we can help them cross the road. Road mortality is extremely high for amphibians on "big nights" – an entire population can be killed in a single night as they try to cross a busy road. If we can locate the migration routes, we may be able to not only capture data but also help promote the well-being of local populations. On March 21, we will hold our Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Program kickoff and launch a series of programs centered on learning about amphibians and their habitats.

Bluebird Monitoring

LWC's bluebird monitoring program had its inception in 2004 when then-president Nicole Hamilton, who had been volunteering with the Virginia Bluebird Society since 1999, developed a partnership between LWC and the Society. Beginning with 13 trails in 2004, the program has grown to include 22 trails and approximately 70 volunteers. This year, it has expanded to include private, home trails in response to requests by monitors and others who wanted to collect data on nestbox activity around their homes. Our dedicated volunteers meander happily through meadow and field, ever watchful for a feathered family fledging its young. The commitment of these volunteers has helped to support bluebird proliferation in Loudoun.

This season we had an overall success rate of 75% of 241 nest attempts as 635 bluebirds fledged from our trails. Bluebirds and monitors prevailed over the challenges inherent in changing habitats, inclement weather, predators, and invasive bird species. Monitors rotate checking each nestbox once weekly and determine what type of bird has nested there, count and check eggs or young, and record the information in a notebook. Once the young have fledged, the monitor removes the old nest and brushes out debris so the birds can begin anew. Bluebirds will raise several broods each season if conditions are right. Monitors are ever watchful for threats to the birds' livelihood, such as invasive European Sparrows, which can be quite aggressive. There are techniques for dealing with these invaders, and monitors are trained in helpful strategies. Monitors also report needed repairs and generally serve as guardians of the trails.

At this writing, the data has been collated and sent to the Virginia Bluebird Society where it will help trace the long-range patterns among the bluebird population within our state. Without the

valuable volunteer efforts of our monitors the data would be lost. Anyone interested in joining this rewarding field work is invited to our 2009 kickoff program at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve on February 28 from 1:00-3:00. There you'll meet our current monitors and enjoy a program on bluebirds. Additionally, keep your eyes on our website for an announcement about a predator guard workshop this winter. We are always in need of nestboxes and predator guards!

Stream Monitoring

Members of LWC have been monitoring streams throughout Loudoun County since 1996. We monitor streams that are threatened by development or land use practices, as well as pristine streams in preservation areas and degraded streams in urban or farming areas. Stream monitoring involves bacterial sampling and the collection of the diverse array of critters that live beneath, amongst, and on top of the rocks and cobbles that carpet the streambed to determine the overall quality of the water and health of the stream system. By examining the array of aquatic beetles, fly larvae, hellgrammites, worms and even crayfish, one can tell a lot about the ability of a stream to support life and remain healthy.

Loudoun County's streams, like streams throughout most of our nation, are seriously threatened by a variety of forms of pollution. Fertilizers and pesticides that run off farmland, oil and gasoline from roadways and construction areas, organic wastes from livestock or sewerage facilities, and sediment from eroding hillsides all have a negative impact on the natural stream environment. Also, bacterial pollution enters streams from all of these sources. Some types of aquatic organisms are relatively tolerant of pollution, such as flatworms and blackfly larvae. Other groups of aquatic insects, such as stoneflies, mayflies, and many types of caddisflies, are less tolerant. When we find a preponderance of tolerant forms of life, it is a good indication that the stream's water quality is being compromised by some form of pollution. On the other hand, when we observe a higher percentage of intolerant organisms, we know that water quality is relatively good. Loudoun County hosts streams representing a diverse array of stream quality and conditions.



■ *Continued on page 4*

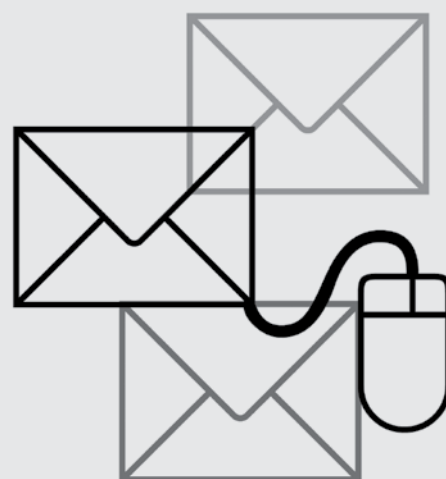
■ *Citizen Science, continued from pg. 3*

LWC offers training and a certification program to volunteers interested in monitoring stream health. This year's season will kick off on Saturday, April 4, at Temple Hall Regional Farm Park north of Leesburg. Volunteers who successfully attain certification receive a stream monitoring kit with the necessary equipment and guidance to sample stream-dwelling organisms every three months and identify them as pollution tolerant or intolerant. The data and numbers of organisms in each group are tabulated to attain a water-quality index or score. Data sets from different sites are entered into a database and trends over time are tracked, with volunteers meeting regularly to discuss the data and exchange sampling tips and notes. Some of the results are exciting to share and encourage other volunteer efforts that impact streams, such as habitat restoration activities. For example, LWC volunteers documented notable improvements in Limestone Branch at Temple Hall Farm some 2–3 years following a riparian, or streamside vegetation, tree-planting activity to protect and stabilize the streambank and floodplain. And volunteers who recently adopted a stream monitoring site on Catoctin Creek at the historic Phillips Farm in Waterford, in conjunction with a series of tree and shrub planting and habitat restoration activity led by LWC and the Waterford Foundation, are hopeful that they will see similar improvements over time.

People like to see firsthand that their hard work is achieving meaningful results, and it is citizen science activities such as these that make environmental stewardship truly rewarding. New volunteers and observers are always welcome. For more information on LWC's entire citizen monitoring programs, visit www.loudounwildlife.org.

Resource:

Ely, Eleanor, 2008. *Volunteer Monitoring & the Democratization of Science*. The Volunteer Monitor, Vol. 19, Number 1, Summer 2008.



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.



The Passing of a Great Lady

If you ever visited our booth at one of the many fairs that dot the County anytime between 2004 and 2007, you almost certainly met Bertie Lee Murphy. Bertie was our Community Outreach Chair during that time period and was not only instrumental in getting us out into the public at fairs, at public hearing events, and in and around our communities, she seemed to always be there, herself. She retired from Booz Allen and left our Board in spring 2007 so she could pursue her dream (at age 70!) of working with the Peace Corps to educate and help people in other countries read. She spent the last year and a half doing just that in Belize and led the charge to create a library in one of their towns. Bertie was an amazing woman, always positive and smiling, and an incredible "can do" attitude. She touched us deeply and we will miss her terribly. To keep her spirit with us, we've created the Bertie Lee Murphy Volunteer of the Year award, which will be given out annually.



Loudoun's Woodpeckers — Part II

by Nicole Hamilton

(Continued from Part I which appeared in the Fall 2008 Habitat Herald)

Woodpeckers are unique birds that have been around for approximately 50 million years. Their drumming, which to many Native Americans symbolized the heartbeat of the earth, can be heard in woods around the world as they are found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica.

As pointed out in the last issue of the Habitat Herald, there are over 200 species of woodpeckers worldwide. Part I of this article described three of the seven species found in Loudoun County: Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied. Now, we will look at the Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers, the Northern Flicker, and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. All of these except the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker are year-round residents.

Red-headed Woodpecker: The Red-headed Woodpecker is well named. It has an entirely bright red head, jet black back, white belly, and large wing patches. This woodpecker will engage in flycatching, especially for brightly colored insects, and also will forage on the ground. Establishment of territory and courtship takes place in May and June. For nesting, they prefer to use trees that have been long dead and are barkless, and they like forest edges. They may use the male's winter roosting cavity for the nest or excavate a new one. The female conveys her acceptance of the cavity by tapping on the tree. Interestingly, Red-headed Woodpeckers have been known to use fence posts and utility poles for nest sites as well.

Through spring and summer, insects are the most important food for this woodpecker. They eat ants, wood-boring insects, beetle larvae, grasshoppers, caterpillars, and small rodents. In winter, their food is similar to that of the Red-bellied Woodpecker with an interesting difference: when they cache their food, they add a small moistened woodchip to help conceal it. Red-headed Woodpeckers also feed from sap wells drilled by sapsuckers and will make their own wells by scaling off bark. They collect and cache food quickly in a few spots and then disperse it at their leisure. Red-headed Woodpeckers have been in significant decline and today are fairly uncommon to see. In the 1800s, naturalist John Burroughs recorded that Red-headed Woodpeckers were more abundant than American Robins in Washington, DC! Today this is certainly not the case, and while not yet endangered, they are on the Federal Watch List. Because they require dead trees and snags to roost and nest, the biggest threat to this bird's survival is human activity in cleaning up dead trees in wood lots.

Pileated Woodpecker: The Pileated Woodpecker is our largest woodpecker, being about the size of a crow. Pileated Woodpecker territories span 150–200 acres as they require large forest areas with large dead trees big enough to accommodate their nests. Because even a mature forest may have only one or two dead trees or snags large enough to support a pair, every dead tree is critical, and forest clearing or cleanup can mean the end



Red-headed Woodpecker

Photo by Nicole Hamilton

of breeding. The pair will begin courtship in late March with nest excavation occurring in mid-April. Both the male and female excavate the cavity. They raise just one brood per year, and they rarely leave it unattended. The incubating bird will not leave the nest until its mate is at the cavity hole ready to make the switch. The non-incubating bird stays close as it forages, in case of threats from snakes or squirrels. They defend their nests primarily from squirrels which try to take them over as their own. If a squirrel does decide to take the nest, it will usually win the battle. Eggs are laid around mid-April, and rearing lasts through the end of August. It takes 3–4 weeks for the nestlings to grow strong enough to fledge. Fledglings remain with their parents for several months and are fed as they continue to grow. During this time, parents use a version of the "cuk-cuk" call to keep in touch with the young.

At the end of summer the young disperse; however, the mated pair remains together throughout the year. They sleep in separate roost cavities, but at dawn the first one awakened gives the other a "cuk-cuk" call, and the two emerge from their roosts and fly off together to forage. They return to their roost cavities about an hour before sunset. Pileated Woodpeckers feed year-round almost entirely on carpenter ants that live in the central part of the tree. The ants bore in to the heartwood of diseased trees creating vertical galleries. Even when the tree appears healthy from the outside, the Pileated Woodpecker detects the movement of the ants inside and chisels in to get them. They also eat the berries of poison ivy, sumac trees, Virginia creeper, dogwood, and wild grape. Forest fragmentation along with cleaning up of old forest woodlots are the greatest threats to this, our largest, woodpecker.



■ Woodpeckers, continued from pg.5

Northern Flicker: The Northern Flicker's call is the commonly heard "wicka-wicka" and "klee-yer." No other North American bird consumes as many ants as the Northern Flicker. Unlike many other woodpeckers, they are quite comfortable foraging on the ground. Their beaks are shaped slightly differently from other woodpeckers — rather than a chisel, the beak is shaped more like a blade. This enables the bird to dig into ant mounds tunneled into the ground and reach the ants with its sticky tongue. They also use their beaks to probe into softer surfaces like rotting logs and leaf piles to catch prey. In addition to ants, the birds eat ground beetles and grasshoppers.

The breeding territory for a pair of Northern Flickers is 150 acres or more, although they defend a smaller area. Northern Flickers mate for life, and each spring they return to the same location, often using the same tree to breed. When the male and female arrive at their breeding territory, they announce their arrival with their "ke-ke-ke-ke-ke" call and giving each other vigorous head bobs along with their "frozen" pose. They nest in dead wood stumps 10–30 feet high. Because they have weak bills, they require weathered, partially rotted dead trees in order to excavate a cavity. They often excavate cavities in the same tree year after year and sometimes reuse cavities, making minor modifications. Eggs are incubated by both the male and female, and the nest is never left unattended as they take one-hour shifts. A difference with this woodpecker is that rather than bringing live food to their nestlings, Northern Flickers feed their young through regurgitation.

In winter, Northern Flickers return to their winter feeding territories and rely on berries from poison ivy, Virginia creeper, dogwood, and sumac, as well as nuts. After nesting, their cavities are often used by Screech Owls, American Kestrels, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Flying Squirrels. Northern Flickers have been in serious decline since the 1960s. As with other woodpeckers, they require large, old dead trees; thus, efforts to clean up wood lots mean a loss of habitat and food source for this bird. Competition from starlings is also thought to be causing their decline as the woodpeckers are driven out of suitable habitats by these birds.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is our most migratory woodpecker, and breeding and winter ranges do not overlap. Their breeding range is a narrow band of forest in some northern parts of the U.S. but primarily through Canada. They breed from May through June, and the young fledge in July. Throughout the summer, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers eat huge numbers of insects, including caterpillars, ants, crane flies, mayflies, beetles, yellow jackets, and hornets. Families stay together throughout the summer and then migrate southward. Virginia is its most northern range during the winter, as they span from here down through Panama and Bermuda.

During winter, they drill sap wells in living trees to get nutrients. The sap wells are first drilled in a primary horizontal row that sometimes goes all the way around the tree. If sap flows from the wells, the bird may drill more holes above the primary band, creating vertical columns of wells. They lap the sap as it flows out. It was once thought that these holes killed the trees, and foresters waged a tough fight with the birds. However, through research it was shown that the birds prefer trees that are already damaged, placing their sap wells near the scars where sap accumulates. It was shown that sapsuckers kill very few trees and prefer trees that are already fungus infected or otherwise diseased. The end of these trees already in decline was recognized as a cheap price to pay for the numerous insects the birds consume as well as the benefit the sap wells provide to the numerous other animals that also use them: 35 species of birds in addition to bats, Mourning Cloak butterfly, bumblebees, and wasps. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird in particular relies almost entirely on sapsucker wells in springtime as they make their journey northward.

Things you can do for woodpeckers:

- Stock your bird feeders: Attract woodpeckers to your yard and enjoy watching their behavior by putting out suet, peanuts, and sunflower seeds.
- Let dead trees stand: Dead trees are critical to the lives of our woodpeckers, both as sources of food and as nesting sites for raising young and later roosting.
- Leave the leaf piles: Leaves are an important place for insects to hibernate through winter and can be a great place for woodpeckers like the Northern Flicker to forage.
- Plant some berry trees and vines: While poison ivy may not be

on the top of your list, you can plant Virginia creeper, dogwood, and sumac. In many places around Loudoun County these grow naturally, so if you have a "volunteer" that shows up in your yard, you can simply let it grow.

Sources:

A Guide to Bird Behavior, Vol I, II and III, by Donald and Lillian Stokes, 1989.

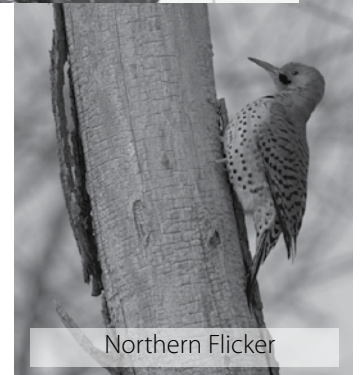
Lives of North American Birds, by Kenn Kaufman, 1996.

America's Favorite Backyard Birds, George and Kit Harrison, 1989.

Woodpeckers of North America, Frances Backhouse, 2005.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Northern Flicker

Photos by Nicole Hamilton

"Birds of Loudoun County" Serves as Foundation for Five-Year Bird Atlas Project

by Spring Ligi

Have you ever observed a bird while hiking or gardening in your backyard and wondered if the bird is common in Loudoun County or a rare treat? You don't have to wonder any longer! LWC is proud to announce the completion of the Birds of Loudoun County checklist. This list includes over 295 bird species identified in the county through September 2008, with over 110 confirmed or probable breeders. The information for this list was gathered from a variety of resources, ranging from local nature preserve and individual bird lists and Christmas/migratory bird count data to the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) report. The bird list can be found at www.loudoun-wildlife.org/PDF_Files/LWC_Bird_List_2008.pdf.

The Birds of Loudoun County list serves as the foundation for an exciting five-year Loudoun County Bird Atlas Project, organized and funded by LWC. From spring 2009 through spring 2013, members of LWC and other volunteer birders will donate their time to the atlas, with bird experts consulted for quality control. The main objective of this citizen science project is to establish a comprehensive list of birds in Loudoun County, including their dates of occurrence and distribution throughout the county. Most bird atlases are conducted at the state level and collect data only on breeding birds. The Loudoun County Bird Atlas is unique

in that the project is county-wide and will collect data year-round for both breeding and non-breeding birds.

Birds play a key role in our ecosystem and are important indicators of the overall health of our environment. Loudoun's diverse habitats, ranging from forests and wetlands to suburban parks, make this county an important breeding and wintering site for many birds. This atlas project will create a baseline of information that can be used to indicate areas in need of conservation and measure the success of future conservation activities.

To accomplish the task of collecting data, the county will be divided into blocks of approximately 10 square miles. Participants will be assigned to different blocks to ensure county-wide coverage and will use a field card to record their observations. Data processing will be handled by BBA (Breeding Bird Atlas) Explorer, a free online system hosted by the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and National Biological Information Infrastructure. A "Birds of Loudoun" booklet will be published in 2014, providing the atlas results and information on important bird areas within the county.

By actively engaging fellow citizens in data collecting, we can generate vital information for the conservation of birds and educate others about the importance of protecting the birds and their habitat. If you are interested in volunteering with this project or would like more information, please contact the Atlas Coordinator, Spring Ligi, at sligi@loudounwildlife.org. Monetary donations for the project are greatly appreciated and can be mailed to: Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, P.O. Box 2088, Purcellville, VA 20134-2088. Stay tuned for more updates!



*People and Wildlife
living in Harmony*

Please Join or Renew your membership today!

Membership Benefits include:

Subscription to Habitat Herald • Classes and Workshop • 10% Discount at Rust Sanctuary Gift Shop
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:

☐ \$10 Student *

☐ \$20 Individual *

☐ \$30 Family *

☐ \$75 Corporate *

☐ \$200 Individual Lifetime

☐ \$300 Family Lifetime

☐ Additional Donation \$ _____

☐ Renewing Member

☐ New Member

(* membership runs from January 1 - December 31)

Join, Renew, or Donate online www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm

Tree Planting a Huge Success!

by Joe Coleman



Photos by Nicole Hamilton

In spite of a forecast of impending heavy rains, over 70 volunteers met at the Waterford Foundation's Phillips Farm on November 15 and planted 300 trees and shrubs and destroyed a significant amount of invasive alien vegetation. The plantings were part of an ongoing effort to restore the riparian buffer along the South Fork Catoclin Creek. Riparian buffers are the single most effective way to protect water quality as they trap pollutants, regulate stream flow and reduce sediment and erosion, and provide excellent wildlife habitat. The volunteers who were removing invasive alien vegetation concentrated on multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, and several varieties of invasive vines.

The volunteers comprised several Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members, residents of Waterford and neighboring areas, a contingent from Booz Allen Hamilton, several Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, and a lot of people who just wanted to make a difference. They split into several groups to plant everything from pin oaks and sycamores to winterberry and elderberry and to tear out some very aggressive alien vegetation.

And volunteers who recently adopted a new stream monitoring site did a hands-on evaluation of the stream's health near the Mill. Notable improvements have been documented in

Limestone Branch at Temple Hall Farm north of Leesburg some 2–3 years following a series of riparian tree planting projects to protect and stabilize the streambank and floodplain there. We are hopeful we will see similar improvements at the Phillips Farm over time. A lot of the volunteers, after wrapping up their planting, spent some time observing the stream monitoring and learning about its importance.

Special thanks go to the Waterford Foundation, dedicated to being the best steward possible of the Phillips Farm; Jeff Wolinski, consulting ecologist, whose extensive knowledge, planning, and coordination made this project as well as a similar one on March 1 a success; and the many people who helped on the 15th as well as those who helped with all the prep work in the days and weeks before the project itself:

Dale Ball
Jill Beach
Charlie Beach
Marlena Beach
Benjamin Bean
Jeffrey Bean
Alex Behan
Jim Behan
Kristin Brace
Rhonda Chocha
Joe Coleman
Ellie Daley
Phil Daley
Linda Devlin
Ashley Engels
Rocky Fera
Meg Findley
Ben French, Troop 969

Carter French
Ann Garvey
Jean Gentry
Kate Gentry
Neil Gentry
Margaret Good
Nicole Hamilton
Craig Himelright
Tammy Himelright
Lindsay Hunt
Kim
Drew Lavan
Michelle Littlefield
Jennifer Mahlmann
Paul Miller
Bill Morris
Brandon Morris, Troop 969
Daenuka Muraleetharan

Ashley Oliver
Susan Posey
Amy Ritter
Amanda Rost
Landon Rost
Renelle L. Sagana
Cheri Schneck
Jackie Schneck
Andrew Sedlins
Sarah Shores and friend
Bronwen Souders
John Souders
Nick Strocchia
and Amy
Joe Suppers
Katelyn Thorne
Helen Van Ryzin
Joey Villari

Nancy Walker
Mimi Westervelt
Seth Wilmore
Katie Wolcott
Jake Yates, Troop 962
John Yates

Also, thanks to Den #7, Cub Scout Pack 965 of Leesburg and their families:

Ben Francis
Carol Francis
Karen Elarde
Ryan Elarde
Tony Nerantzis
Michael Nerantzis
Rose Zabela
Sasha Zabela
Wyatt Zabela

Persimmons

by Mary Lopresti



Photo by Maria Papageorgiou

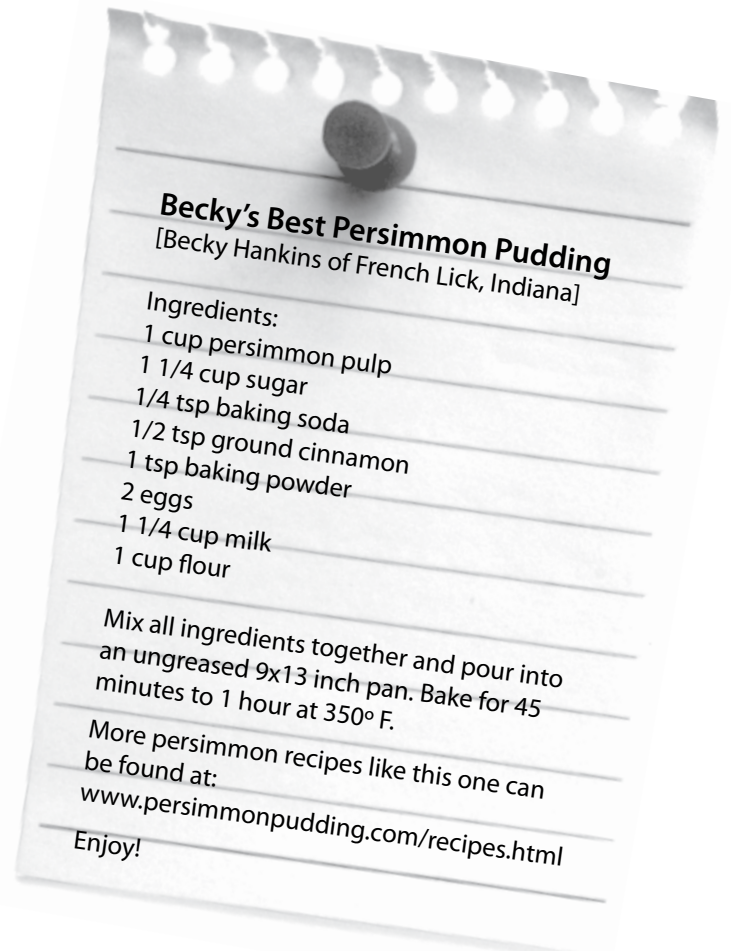
While not the most memorable Thanksgiving Day food, persimmons have left their mark on American history. During the 17th century, colonists stumbled upon persimmon trees. Yet until the Native Americans showed them the right season for harvesting, not even the adventurous Captain John Smith could stomach the bitter, astringent fruit. Before the pilgrims arrived in the colonies, Native Americans were baking loaves of bread from mixtures of dried persimmons and crushed corn; they also dried persimmons into jerky. In fact, in the language of the Algonquian Indians, their word for persimmon, "putchamin," is translated as "dried fruit."

The persimmon fruit is referred to as the largest true berry produced by a tree native to the United States. The persimmon tree, which can grow up to 80 feet tall, has hard, black wood, twisted branches, and oval, elongated leaves. Fruition, or the bearing of fruit, occurs during the summer months, and produces green persimmons, which ripen into yellow, orange, reddish-purple, or even black colored fruit. Ripening begins in autumn and can last through the winter months. Ripe persimmons have a bulgy appearance, due to the fruit forming a fleshy, slurry within the skin.

Persimmon trees can be found growing down the eastern seaboard, in the Midwest, and in California. Internationally, there are 475 species of persimmons, which are known scientifically as *Diospyros*. Only two types are native to the United States: *Diospyros virginiana* and *Diospyros texana*. Many species of wildlife dine on the sugary, sweet matured persimmon fruit,

including raccoons, foxes, coyotes, boars, skunks, wild turkeys, and opossums. The opossum loves this fruit to such an extent that the American persimmon tree is often nicknamed the "possumwood." Some ants colonize beneath persimmon trees to be close to a constant food supply of fruit fragments and seeds, which they strip clean. Butterflies and moths also use the fruit as a food plant during larval development.

Like any fruit, persimmons can be used to flavor a variety of desserts or salads. The most popular dish made with persimmons is pudding, especially in the southern part of the United States. No need to worry about not owning a persimmon tree, persimmons can be found at your local grocery store. Here is a simple recipe for your family to enjoy:





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.



Birding Banshee!

Join LWC 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.

Walks begin at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 10

Saturday, February 14

Saturday, March 14

Saturday, April 11

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 formal meeting beginning at 7:30 p.m. Contact Joe Coleman (540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org) for additional information.

CALMES NECK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – **Sunday, January 4.** There are several Christmas Bird Counts in Loudoun County besides the Central Loudoun CBC. The Calmes Neck Christmas Bird Count, which includes much of far western Loudoun County, is scheduled for January 4. This count area includes a wide variety of habitat ranging from mountain forests to rural subdivisions to old farm fields and meadows, with the Shenandoah River running through it. If you would like to join the Calmes Neck Christmas Bird Count, please contact Margaret Wester at 540-837-2799 or margaretwester@hotmail.com. (Both Joe Coleman, joecoleman@rcn.com or 540-554-2542, and Phil Daley, pedaley@verizon.net or 540-338-6528, are sector leaders for the Calmes Neck CBC. Phil's area includes Round Hill and north, and Joe's area includes Bluemont south to Bloomfield. If you are interested in joining either of them, please contact each directly.)

INTRODUCTION TO CITIZEN SCIENCE – **Sunday, January 11, noon – 3:00 p.m. Registration Required.** Join LWC at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve for a talk about the importance of citizen science and the important role that data gathered by our volunteers play in monitoring habitats and animal species locally and nationally. Learn about our different monitoring programs which include bird surveys, butterfly counts, stream monitoring, amphibian monitoring, and bluebird nestbox monitoring. Learn about opportunities for you

and your family to get involved collecting data in your neighborhood and across Loudoun County. Celebrate the accomplishments of our past volunteers, meet fellow monitors, share experiences from the field, and sign up to be a citizen scientist for 2009. Current volunteers as well as anyone interested in finding out more about our programs are encouraged to attend. **Please sign up online or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.**

SEARCHING FOR BIRDS OF PREY – **Saturday, January 17, 2:30 p.m. Registration Required.** Join Liam McGranaghan and others on a winter raptor search sponsored by LWC. After meeting at the ANS Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, we will drive the back roads of Loudoun County with frequent stops to find and identify the many hawks, and an owl or two, who winter over here. **Sign-up required – contact Laura Weidner at 540-229-2816 or lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.**

BIRDING ALGONKIAN PARK IN EASTERN LOUDOUN – **Saturday, February 7, 8:00 a.m.** Join LWC on a bird walk at Algonkian Park. This park has varied habitat, including a long frontage along the Potomac. Admission to the park is free and ample parking and comfort stations are available. Meet at the parking lot by the pool (see map at <http://www.nvrpa.org/documents/file/algonkianmap.gif>, and see the park website for directions to the park at www.nvrpa.org/parks/algonkian/). Bring binoculars. Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com, or 703-723-6926.

WOODS AND FIELDS IN THE COLDEST MONTH – **Sunday, February 8, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration Required.** Join Phil Daley as he explores the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship during winter. While many people stay indoors during the cold months, others enjoy the beauty of a season when the sky is so clear you can see forever and the sun casts the longest shadows. During this free winter hike, watch for the many birds and mammals that winter-over here and examine some of the plants to see how they adapt to temperatures that dip below freezing. The Blue Ridge Center comprises 900 acres on the west side of Harpers Ferry in northwestern Loudoun County. Meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Rt. 671 at 10:00 a.m. **To register contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pdaley@loudounwildlife.org.**

TRIP TO THE EASTERN SHORE – **Friday, February 13 through Monday, February 16. Registration Required.** Celebrate Valentine's Day with LWC on a birding trip to the Eastern Shore. The trip will start Friday afternoon at Blackwater National Refuge, MD. The next day we will explore Blackwater and nearby areas in Cambridge, MD. Later that afternoon we will drive to Ocean City and explore the coast. Sunday we will wind our way around the coast and the marshes along Broadkill Road, which is usually a good place to see Short-eared Owls. Participants may join up with the group on either Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. **Sign-up required – contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.**

SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE

Join LWC and the Friends of Banshee Reeks 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.

Sunday, January 18, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 22, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 22, 1:00 p.m.

SEARCHING FOR BIRDS OF PREY – Saturday, February 21, 2:30 p.m. Registration Required. Join us on a winter raptor search sponsored by LWC and the Audubon Naturalist Society. After meeting at the McDonald's at 2:30 p.m. in Marshall, we will drive the back roads of northern Fauquier County with frequent stops to find and identify the many hawks, and perhaps some owls, that winter over here. **Sign-up required – contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.**

BLUEBIRD NESTBOX MONITORING – Saturday, February 28, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Registration Required. Elizabeth Evans and Debra Gutenson, LWC County Coordinators for the Virginia Bluebird Society, will provide an orientation at Banshee Reeks on nestbox monitoring and the protocol used in Loudoun for collecting and reporting data. They will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails being monitored around Loudoun, and take us through a slide show about bluebirds, their nesting habits, habitat needs, and preferred foods. Tips on gardening for bluebirds will be discussed as well as the use of natural cavities and nestboxes. A typical nestbox system with predator guards will be set up for demonstration. Those interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2009 season can sign up during the meeting. Those interested in monitoring a home nestbox or trail and providing data to LWC can register their trails/boxes during the meeting as well. **Registration required — sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or call 540-822-5438.**

VANISHING VERNAL POOLS – Saturday, March 7, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at Rust Nature Sanctuary. As the hours of daylight lengthen and temperatures begin to rise, animals that have spent the winter in hibernation begin to stir. Some of the earliest to become active are certain frogs and salamanders that use vernal or temporary pools for breeding. Unfortunately, these pools—and their breeders—are facing many threats. This program will be held at ANS's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA and will include an indoor session on vernal pool ecology. This will be followed by an outdoor exploration of vernal pool habitats at the Rust Nature Sanctuary and other nearby locations. Co-sponsored by LWC and the Audubon Naturalist Society. **Registration Required:** ANS & LWC members: \$29; non-

members: \$41. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x16. For those who plan to become monitors in LWC's Amphibian Monitoring Program for the 2009 season, please register with Nicole Hamilton (nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org) and the fee will be covered by LWC.

MID-WEEK NATURE WALK WITH MIKE HAYSLETT – March 11.

Join Mike Hayslett for an exploration of one of eastern Loudoun's natural areas. While we will investigate whatever we find, we will concentrate on vernal pools and their amphibian inhabitants. For more details and to sign-up, please check our website closer to the date.

SPRING POOLS INSTITUTE – March 13, 14, 15. Registration

Required. Mike Hayslett's popular "crash-course" workshop on vernal pools will be hosted in Loudoun County this spring. This hands-on training will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Friday with background instruction indoors and examination outdoors of the unique wetland at the ANS Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg. Saturday and Sunday will be all-day field explorations, including visits to numerous vernal pools and other isolated wetlands around Leesburg, at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, and other vernal pools around Loudoun County. Optional night forays are also possible, depending

■ Continued on page 12

Birding the Blue Ridge Center

On the fourth Saturday of each month, LWC 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**

Saturday, January 24
Saturday, February 28
Saturday, March 28

Walks begin at 8:00 a.m.



■ *Programs and Field Trips, continued from pg. 11*

on rainfall. Participants will receive take-home materials and spend ample time outdoors experiencing a variety of wetland habitats. We will likely encounter four or five species of obligate wildlife fauna, including Spotted and Jefferson Salamanders, Wood Frogs and Fairy Shrimp. Cost for this three-day foray is \$49.00 for LWC members, \$69.00 for non-members (meals not included). **Registration must be completed by March 10 and is limited to 20 participants.** Full details (schedule/itinerary, what-to-bring, background info, etc.) will be provided upon registration with LWC. **To register** contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.

BEGINNING BIRDING WORKSHOP – Saturday, March 21 & March 28, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. This two-part workshop is for bird-watching beginners ages 7 and older and is led by experienced birder and naturalist, Phil Daley. Children must be accompanied by an adult. A classroom session will include learning about what to look and listen for and getting tips on identification and the best tools for doing so. This will be followed with a walk outside to see how many birds we can identify. Bring binoculars if you have them. *Questions: contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528.*

LOUDOUN AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PROGRAM (LAMP) 2009 KICKOFF – Saturday, March 21, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration Required. Join LWC at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship to kick off our 2009 Amphibian Monitoring Program! At this meeting, we will discuss the program's three different monitoring tracks: site surveys, frog call surveys, and migration mapping. We will review the monitoring protocol, answer your questions, identify frog call routes and monitoring sites, and give you the materials you need to get started. After the presentation, we will head out into the field to practice our identification skills by looking and listening for different frogs, toads and salamanders. We will look at egg masses and talk about different habitat types. This will be our chance to put our monitoring protocol into action and answer any questions you have. No experience is needed to become a monitor, just an interest in learning about our local amphibians and their habitats. Volunteers planning to monitor for the 2009 season will be provided with the program notebook, which is a complete reference for the Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Program, as well as other monitoring tools such as the frog and toad call and identification guide. **Advance sign-up is required.** To register for this orientation, sign up online or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org. Please bring a bag lunch.

BLUEBIRD PREDATOR GUARD/MAKE IT-TAKE IT WORKSHOP – Saturday, March 28. Learn how to make your own Stovepipe Bluebird Predator Guards to help protect birds from snakes and other predators. All materials provided. Cost: \$15 fee for materials required. Location and time TBD. **Registration required.** Sign up at: www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm.

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**

Sponsored by Our Partners

Rust and Broadlands Programs

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 encompass meadows, forests, and ponds where you will find a variety of wildlife and plants.



Cold Blooded Critters

Saturdays (10-11:30 am)

Ages 3 - 6 with an adult

I: March 21: Turtles

II: April 18: Snakes

III: May 16: Frogs and Toads

Fee: \$15 for the series or \$7 to drop in. Call 703-669-0000 to register.

Homeschool Day at Rust!

Bring your family to the Rust Nature Sanctuary on Friday, February 20 to see what we have to offer homeschool students. Enjoy guided nature hikes, play educational games, and learn more about our new programs designed just for homeschool groups!

The AM session will run from 9:30-11:30

The PM session will run from 12:30-2:30

Please register your family for only one session.

ANS staff will be available throughout the day to answer any questions you have about the sanctuary or the programs we offer.

Program is **free**, but please register in advance by emailing julieg@audubonnaturalist.org or calling 703-669-0000.

Free Walks at Rust!

Free nature walks for adults and older children with an interest in expanding their understanding of local nature. Call 703-737-0021 for more information.

Saturday at the Sanctuary

Naturalist-led walks with a seasonal theme, first Saturday of each month, 9-10:30 am.

Midweek Rust Rambles

Explore Rust with a naturalist every second Wednesday of each month, March through November, 10-11:30 am.

Rust Bird Walks for Beginners

Learn birding basics the third Saturday of each month, September through June, 8-9 am.



■ *Continued on page 13*

■ *Rust programs, continued from pg. 12*

Adult Nature Series: Rust Through the Seasons Explore Rust through the seasons with a naturalist. Intended for adults and children over 10. Fee: \$5.00/program - payable at the start of the walk. RSVP 703-737-0021.

Baby, It's Cold Outside!
Sunday, January 18 (1-3:30 pm)

Nature is still out there in the winter, so pull on a coat and get into it! We'll explore the basics of winter ecology and the many strategies organisms from grasses to grackles employ for winter survival.

Spring is Calling
Saturday, April 4 (9-11:30 am)

Snow might still be on the ground, but longer days mean nature is swinging into high gear. We'll roam the Rust wetlands, woodlands, and meadows for calling frogs, singing birds, emerging wildflowers, and other signs of spring's arrival.



**Winter Hikes on the Loudoun
Appalachian Trail**

Hike 1: Harpers Ferry to Keys Gap, Sunday, January 25
Hike 2: Keys Gap to Blackburn Trail Center, Sunday, February 22
Fee: \$10 each hike or \$15 for the series - payable at the start of each hike. RSVP 703-737-0021.

Broadlands Nature Center: ANS, in partnership with the Broadlands Association, is offering the following at 21907 Claiborne Parkway in Broadlands. Please inquire about cost when you call 703-729-9704 to sign up.

"Frogs and Polliwogs" Tuesday, January 13 (3-4 pm)
Ages 6-8 with adult

"Plant or Animal?" Wednesday, January 14 (11 am-12 pm)
Ages 4-5 with adult

"Wildlife In Winter" Wednesday, January 21 (10-11 am)
Ages 12 months-3 years with adult

"Hop to It" Saturday, February 7 (10:30-11:30 am)
A family program for all ages

"Valentine Eco Crafts" Tuesday, February 10 (11 am-12 pm)
Ages 4-5 with adult

"Beaks, Feet and Feathers" Tuesday, February 17 (10-11 am)
Ages 12 months-3 years with adult

"Tracks and Traces" Wednesday, March 11 (1:30-2:30 pm)
Ages 4-6 with adult

"Trees and Me" Tuesday, March 17 (10-11 am)
Ages 12 months-3 years with adult

"Jeop-Birdy" Wednesday, March 18 (3:30-4:30 pm)
Ages 8-9 with adult

Claude Moore Park Winter Nature Programs

Shake off winter's chill and enjoy the outdoors. Do some birding, check out the winter trees or have an encounter with a deer or a squirrel as you hike the forests, fields and ponds of the park. Or join CMP's naturalist-led hikes, nature programs for preschoolers and school children, scouts and others. Visit the Discovery Room and Frogshackle Cottage hands-on nature centers. Call 571-258-3700 for information about these and other activities or to register, or visit our web site at www.loudoun.gov/claudemoorespark. Here's a sample of the park's upcoming nature programs.

Hoot for an Owl (Ages 3-6)

Search for sleeping owls and discover how their eyes, ears and feathers make owls special.
Monday 1/5 or Thursday 1/15, 9:30AM-11:00AM or 12:30PM-2:00PM, \$10.50/child

Kids in Space (Ages 3-6)

Like to play among the stars and planets? Make a comet? Join us for a trip to space!
Monday 1/26 or Thursday 1/29, 9:30AM-11:00AM or 12:30PM-2:00PM, \$10.50/child

Ice Age Adventure (Ages 6-10)

Ice Age people traveled great distances and faced many challenges. Discover the animals, the lifeways of these people, and the clues archaeologists have uncovered about them.
Wednesday 1/14, 3:30PM- 5:00PM, \$10.50/child

Talking Trash (Ages 8-12)

Create a mock archaeological scenario with trash left behind and discover how archaeologists decide what's an artifact, what it tells us, and its environmental impact.
Wednesday 1/23, 3:30PM- 5:00PM, \$10.50/child

Brownies-Watching Wildlife Try-It

Saturday 1/31, 1:00PM-2:30PM, \$4.00/scout

Webelos Naturalist Badge

Saturday 2/21, 2:00PM-3:30PM, \$4.00/scout

Full Moon Wildlife Walk (All ages)

Enjoy the beauty of winter on a brisk hike in search of wildlife and their signs as they survive winter. Warm up afterwards with hot chocolate. Adult must accompany children.
Saturday 1/10, 5:00PM-6:30PM, \$4.00/person

Winter Snow—Out We Go! (All ages)

Join a naturalist to search for animals and discover how they survive the extremes of winter. Then enjoy hot chocolate. Adult must accompany children.
Saturday 2/28, 10:00AM-11:30PM, \$4.00/person

Earth Day/Keep Loudoun Beautiful Park Clean-up (All ages)

Help maintain CMP's natural beauty. We'll pick up trash, clear out alien species and more.
Saturday 4/18, 8:00AM-12:00PM, free, please register

■ *Continued on page 14*

Volunteer Appreciation

by Rhonda Chocha

This fall, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteers helped protect and promote the cause of clean water in Loudoun County. Stream monitors collected samples from six streams throughout the county in order to assess their health. Volunteers planted trees and shrubs to create a riparian buffer in Waterford. Environmental educators demonstrated stream monitoring at Family Stream Day, Lucketts River Rangers Fair, and the Phillips Farm Habitat Restoration Project. We want to acknowledge with great appreciation the efforts of Joe Coleman, President and Habitat Restoration Chair; Meg Findley, Stream Monitoring Chair; and Paul Miller, Environmental Education Chair, in leading these activities, which are covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue.

In addition, volunteers planned, organized, and led a wide variety of field trips and programs; conducted public outreach at fairs, festivals, and other events throughout Loudoun County; and helped manage the overall organization. Because Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is an all-volunteer organization, each and every accomplishment is due to the efforts of our volunteers. Thank you to everyone who contributed time, expertise, and enthusiasm to many projects this quarter:

Beth Arsenault	Bonnie Eaton	Debra Harrison	Lee Meyer	Linda Sieh
Lorrie Bennett	Pam Esparolini	Gerry Hawkins	Scott Meyer	Emily Southgate
Gem Bingol	Elizabeth Evans	Eliza Hayes	Joseph Midolo	Karen Strick
Bill Brown	Middleton Evans	Bruce Hill	Paul Miller	Lisa Taylor
Debbie Burtaine	Cliff Fairweather	Craig Himelright	Barbara Morehead	Helen Van Ryzin
Lloyd Burtaine	Meg Findley	Catie Hutchinson	Christine Perdue	Nancy Walker
Emily Bzdyk	Scott Findley	Spring Ligi	Jeffrey Pfoutz	David Ward
Kerry Bzdyk	Pam Forbes	Mary Lopresti	Robin Phillips	Lynn Webster
Rhonda Chocha	Michael Friedman	Kate Marincic	Andy Rabin	Laura Weidner
Ron Circe	Mary Ann Good	David McCarthy	Sandy Ruefer	Marcia Weidner
Joe Coleman	Otto Gutenson	Bruce McGranahan	Scott Sandberg	Katie Wolcott
Phil Daley	Jay Hadlock	Liam McGranaghan	Del Sargent	Tom Wooddell
Clarice Dieter	Nicole Hamilton	Frank McLaughlin	Cheri Schneck	Neil Woodruff
Kristine Dresser	Senia Hamoui	Debra MacLean	Sara Schwarz	William Woodruff

This list covers the period from mid-August through mid-November, but does not include those who helped with other projects listed elsewhere in this issue. We apologize if we have omitted or misspelled anyone's name. If we have, please let Rhonda Chocha know at rchocha@loudounwildlife.org or 571-246-7408.

Meet LWC's New Volunteer Coordinator

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has a new Volunteer Coordinator, Rhonda Chocha. Rhonda's professional experience spans more than two decades in several areas of information technology; she currently works as a data warehousing and business intelligence consultant. She holds undergraduate degrees in economics and computer studies. Besides a love of nature, her personal interests include art museums, cooking, and two dogs and two cats. Her former volunteerism stints include staffing information desks at several Smithsonian museums for over twelve years and bluebird nestbox monitoring. She has resided in Loudoun County for over eleven years and has the best commute in the area, namely, crossing the Potomac River on White's Ferry. She can be reached at rchocha@loudounwildlife.org.

Summer 2009 Nature Day Camps

Nature lovers entering grades three through seven will not want to miss the Natural History Day Camps (tentatively June 22 - 26 and July 6 - 10) taking place at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve this summer. Planning is under way for two fun-filled weeks in the outdoors sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Piedmont Environmental Council, Loudoun County Parks and Recreation, and the Friends of Banshee Reeks.

Campers will explore the woods, fields and waters of the preserve and learn about the plants and animals that live there. The camps will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. The cost will be only \$130 per week, and space is limited. Banshee Reeks is located five miles south of Leesburg off of Route 15.

For more information contact LWC's Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pedaley@verizon.net. More details will be provided in the next issue of the Habitat Herald and on the LWC website.



Adventures of Zoom & Compass

Too Cold for a Red Bird?

by Senia Hamoui

The cold winter wind howled and rattled the kitchen window as Amber looked out. "Red, why won't you fly south?" she worried. Many of the birds she enjoyed watching during the warmer months had already migrated, but here was Red perched on the branch of a dogwood tree in her backyard. It was cold outside and soon there would be snowfall. She had to do something to help Red. But what? And how? Wiping away a tear, she hurried to the phone and called Nature Detectives Zoom and Compass—they would know what to do!

Nature Detectives Zoom and Compass were finishing up their homework when they got the call. "We'll be there right away," they assured Amber. Compass led the way using his compass wristwatch and when they arrived, Amber was waiting for them on the front porch, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders.

"Thank Goodness, you're here!" she called out. "Please come in."

Detective Zoom pulled out her notebook. "Can you describe what Red looks like? We need to identify what type of bird he is before we can determine how to help."

"Well, he's bright red and he's got an adorable tuft of feathers on top of his head," Amber replied.

"Aaah, the famous color and crest combination!" declared Compass. "Zoom, are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yes, I am," she answered "but let's confirm our suspicion." Zoom turned to Amber and asked if Red had a black face and a red cone shaped bill.

"Yes, he does!" she exclaimed. "How did you know?" Zoom and Compass giggled. "Because it's the unmistakable Northern Cardinal," they said at once.

"So Red is a Northern Cardinal—how majestic that sounds!" Amber squealed. "Do you think it'll be hard to teach Red how to fly south? In the movie *Fly Away Home*, a man and his daughter helped train geese to migrate!"

"Cardinals were named after the robes that Roman Catholic cardinals wore," noted Compass.

"You're right about how cardinals got their name, Compass," stated Zoom, "but let's get back to the issue here. Even if we could make the movie a reality, it wouldn't do us any good. Northern Cardinals don't migrate. Instead they spend the winter in the same area year round."

"Are you sure about that?" questioned Amber.

"Yes," answered Compass. "In fact, Red is very adept to surviving the winter. There are things that you can do to help Red and other winter birds though." He paced the floor while explaining how. "You can put out bird seed on a regular basis. There are different types of feed depending on the birds you want to attract. The Cardinal enjoys black oil sunflower seeds most of all, but it also likes to eat millet, safflower seeds, and cracked corn."

"Also," added Zoom, "placing a heated bird bath outside will keep water from freezing over so that birds can drink and bathe all year long. Conifers, thick shrubs and bushes provide protection from harsh weather conditions as well as from predators such as owls, hawks and house cats."

"Zoom, you forgot to mention one of the more obvious ways cardinals and other winter birds keep warm... their feathers! Their layers of feathers keep them warm and dry and sometimes they fluff them up to trap air," Compass pointed out.

Amber smiled for the first time since they had arrived. "If Northern Cardinals stick around during the winter, does that mean I'll still get to hear their beautiful song of 'what- cheer, cheer, cheer?'"

"Yes!" replied Zoom and Compass at once. "That's just one more awesome thing about Cardinals."





Internship Program

by Karen Strick

LWC is seeking applications for the 2009 summer internship program. This program for college and graduate students provides an educational opportunity in environmental issues that impact Loudoun County and allows interns to help accomplish some of LWC's program goals. Interns in previous years have supported the stream monitoring, amphibian monitoring, and habitat restoration programs and have developed publications that were distributed at fairs and events. They have also supported the annual nature camp for kids.

Some of the projects that interns will support in 2009 include developing materials for the stream monitoring program and assisting in the data collection effort for the bird atlas — a five year program that is currently being managed by Spring Ligi. Additional responsibilities will include follow-up data analysis for International Migratory Bird Day and the Annual Butterfly Count and assistance with internal LWC operations.

The LWC internship program provides learning and training opportunities to:

- gain knowledge and understanding of environmental issues;
- learn about the operations of a non-profit organization;

- develop research capabilities and technical, field and leadership skills;
- apply knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world environmental challenges;
- be guided and mentored by environmental professionals;
- benefit from the opportunity to network with LWC volunteers and the greater Loudoun community;
- explore career possibilities in the nonprofit, environmental field.

Requirements:

- Be available from approximately May 15 – August 25 for at least 20 hours per week.
- Be pursuing a degree in a related career; for example, biology, environmental policy, environmental management, horticulture, etc.
- Participate in a face-to-face interview with LWC representatives.
- Submit a resume and cover letter detailing education, training, and skills the applicant will bring to the LWC internship program as well as how the program will enhance the applicant's education and relate to a chosen career.
- Submit two references (preferably employment).
- Submit a writing sample in the candidate's current research field or other environmental area of interest.

College juniors, seniors, and graduate students are encouraged to apply. Applications can be submitted on line at www.loudounwildlife.org/Internship_Program.html



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
P.O. Box 2088
Purcellville, VA 20134-2088

Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PURCELLVILLE, VA
PERMIT NO. 6

Please check your mailing label carefully and report any errors or changes to Michael Friedman at mfriedman@loudounwildlife.org

