



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Summer 2009

Bee Acquainted

by Emily Bzdyk

It is summertime in Loudoun County, and there are many kinds of bees that we are likely to encounter if we venture outdoors. There are some that we may not notice or know much about. By learning more about these bees, it is easier to feel comfortable around them, and appreciate their roles as pollinators. Though many people lump all bees and wasps into the same category, there are many distinct groups of Hymenoptera (bees, ants, and wasps). Bees belong in the superfamily Apoidea. Wasps, hornets, and their relatives belong in the family Vespidae, and are much more aggressive and likely to sting you if disturbed. Most bees are docile if not bothered, and will not sting unless seriously provoked. We, and the bees, are best served when we observe them and do not interfere with their lives. Observation of these fascinating creatures can be very rewarding indeed.

As you may know, the biggest reason for protecting and caring about bees is pollination. European Honeybees are probably the most familiar pollinator, but there are other bees that are very important to pollination. Bumblebees and honeybees

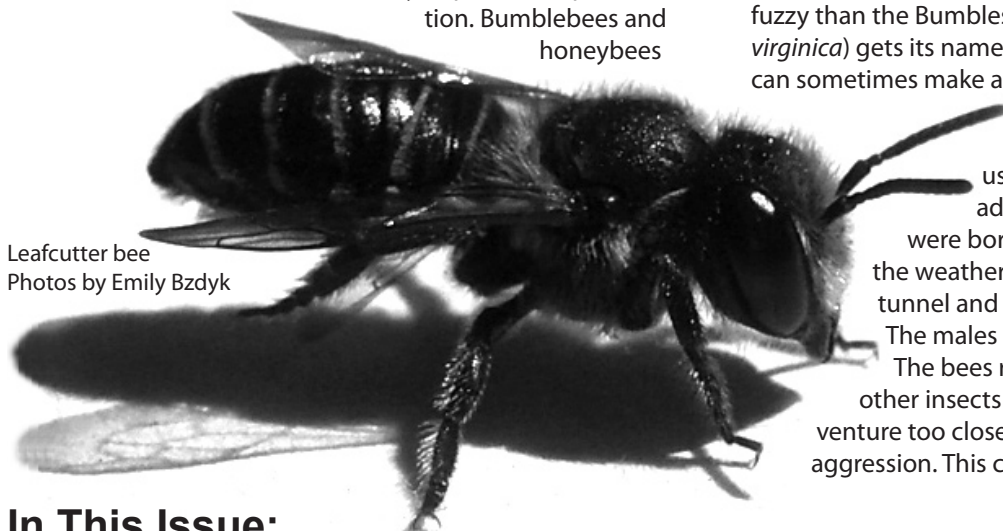
are eusocial insects, living in groups or colonies. There are also many native bees that are solitary bees. In these species all the females are fertile, only associating with other bees to mate. They usually inhabit nests they construct themselves, sometimes nearby others in nesting sites. There are no workers, and typically they produce no wax or honey. They each collect pollen and nectar to deposit in the nest with an egg. Solitary bees and the more familiar bumblebees and honeybees are a large part of the local ecosystem in their roles as major plant pollinators.

If you have ever encountered a Carpenter bee near your deck or house, you will probably remember this large, loud bee as a potentially intimidating creature. Carpenter bees look like bumble bees, but are larger and darker in color. They also have less hair on their abdomen, so they look shinier and less fuzzy than the Bumbles. The Eastern Carpenter bee (*Xylocopa virginica*) gets its name from the way it nests in wood. They can sometimes make a nuisance of themselves by boring into wooden fascia on houses. However, they do not eat wood, so damage is usually cosmetic and not structural. The adult bees overwinter in the hole they were born in, and emerge in the spring when the weather warms. The female chews a T-shaped tunnel and then patrols the surrounding area. The males also hover around looking for mates. The bees respond to movement, dive-bombing other insects that they perceive as rival males that venture too close. Their curiosity is often interpreted as aggression. This combined with their rather clumsy flying



Leafcutter bee evidence

Leafcutter bee
Photos by Emily Bzdyk



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A Word from the President — *Unintended Consequences*

by Joe Coleman

On June 15, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy asked the Board of Supervisors to turn down the Kincora Village request for a special exception to build a recreational complex.

Early in June many of us were excited to hear about the possibility of a minor league baseball team being located in Loudoun County along Rte 28. However, our excitement quickly turned to dismay when we learned the stadium was being used to bring inappropriate development to the northwestern portion of the Rte 28 transportation corridor. Not only is it proposed that the stadium be built on steep and moderate slopes (something expressly prohibited in the county's Revised Comprehensive Plan), but also there is the potential of the complex severely impacting the largest Great Blue Heron rookery in Loudoun County. There are an estimated 50 nests in a rookery that appears to be less than 1,000 feet from the proposed recreational complex on the large wooded flood plain. Because Great Blue Herons are especially sensitive to human activity at the beginning of their nesting season and will often abandon their nests when humans get too close to them, many states limit activity around rookeries.

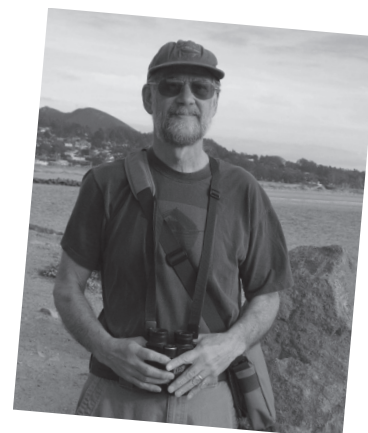
It is also disturbing that the developer and Loudoun County Parks and Recreation are proposing a trail system on the flood plain. If this is well used, as anticipated, it can be an additional cause for the Great Blue Herons to abandon their nests.

The proposed development will require the removal of ecologically important forests, including rare forested wetlands and mixed hardwood forests that the County Forester judged worthy of protection when a similar special exception application was submitted two years ago.

And, development on steep and moderately steep slopes can lead to an increased risk of erosion and sedimentation and the consequent degradation of water quality in the Broad Run and downstream watersheds, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Human actions often have unintended consequences and cause irreparable damage to the natural world. This is especially true when decisions are made quickly and without sufficient research and thought. LWC is working to prevent this from happening in this area.

For more information on this proposed development, which hopefully will be rejected by the time you read this, see the more comprehensive article in this issue of the Habitat Herald. For even more information, please visit our website.



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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 Joe Coleman.

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■ *Bee Acquainted, continued from pg. 1*

abilities can lead to some alarming experiences. However, as is the case with all male bees, they do not have a stinger and are harmless. The females are usually too busy with collecting pollen and nest-making, but if captured they can deliver a painful sting. Once the nest is complete, the female creates partitions and lays 1 – 20 eggs in with the pollen stores for the grubs to feed on when they emerge. After feeding, they pupate, and the adults break free in midsummer. They remain living in the hole where they will hibernate for the winter.

Many people allow bees to nest in or near their homes because they are important pollinators. However, if the bees are damaging valuable wood, there are some things a homeowner can do to solve the bee problem. Painted wood is less attractive to bees, and may dissuade them from starting a nest. If there is already an established nest, blocking the hole is not usually a good solution because of the bees' preference to nest in or near their birthplace. Discouraged bees may bore their way out, or bore more holes nearby, which can cause more damage. A good solution is to provide the bees with an alternate nest site, such as a beam of soft wood.

The mining bees of the family Andrenidae are also important pollinators. In the early spring, the bees emerge from their burrows in the ground in search of pollen. A tiny individual I found while hiking in March was a solitary bee probably from the genus *Andrena*. The female digs a hole in sandy soil and after mating lays an egg that will hatch and feed on the pollen she collected.

The Alfalfa Leafcutter bee (*Megachile rotundata*) is one of my personal favorites. Like the honeybee, it is a cultivated European species and an important pollinator of alfalfa and carrots. The bee gets its name, once again, from its nesting



Andrena Miner bee

behavior. I noticed these bees' activities in my yard before I ever saw them. The female selects a small hole or crevice to serve as a nest site. She cuts circular pieces out of the edge of a leaf and uses them to create cells within her nest. The collected pollen goes in with one egg. The larvae feed

on the pollen and pupate the next spring. The female bees are capable of stinging, and both males and females can use their strong leaf-cutting jaws for self-defense if squeezed or antagonized. These bees are managed for pollination where they are induced to nest in drinking straws or drilled holes. Mason bees (*Osmia* spp) are in the same family as leafcutter bees. They are also good pollinators of early fruit flowers in the spring, and are increasingly cultivated to augment the work of European Honeybees. Like the leafcutters, the female selects a small hole or cavity, then collects a provision of pollen. She lays one egg and then seals it off with mud, giving the bee its common name.

Sweat bees or halictid bees (*Halictidae*) are ones most people are probably familiar with. These small bees are attracted to the salt and moisture in human perspiration, and often will give a small sting when squeezed accidentally in the fold of an elbow or knee. Like other solitary bees, many sweat bees nest in the ground or in wood, and collect pollen, which they leave in the nest cavity to feed their larvae. Some sweat bees are eusocial or partially so with queens and workers. Sweat bees can often be very beautiful, with striking metallic green hues. They are very valuable pollinators because many engage in a behavior called sonication or "buzz pollination". They contact the flower and use their flight muscles to vibrate it, stimulating the release of pollen. Blueberries and watermelon benefit from this tactic.

The European Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is an introduced species, and it is very important in the pollination of food crops. There are many debates and discussions regarding the roles of honeybees and other solitary bees as pollinators. Relying on a generalist honeybee to pollinate so many different plants opens us up to a weak spot. Honeybees are increasingly susceptible to things like Colony Collapse Disorder, which honeybee numbers are declining and the cause is uncertain. As the bees struggle, we struggle to solve the problem of food production. There are many ways in which native bees more effectively pollinate certain flowers. Bumblebees and mining bees wake up earlier in the spring than honeybees, and some wake up earlier in the morning and stay up later in the evening as well. Also, honeybees recruit their sisters to only the best pollen and nectar sources, meaning crops may be abandoned. Solitary bees do not recruit, and so each bee has an equal likelihood of visiting the overlooked flowers. Varying body shape and pollen collecting methods allow different pollinators to take advantage of variations in flower shape or size. Some bees specialize, visiting only one type of flower and becoming very efficient at pollinating it. An example of this is the Squash bee (tribe Eucerini). This bee has developed special characteristics to accommodate the large pollen grains of squash plants.

Native bees are often overlooked, but they are vital to many plants and might be very important in crop pollination. Many solitary bees can benefit from your actions. They need nesting

■ *Continued on page 5*

Our 15th Annual Membership Meeting

by Nicole Hamilton

LWC's 15th annual meeting was held on May 17 and was a huge success. Over 100 members came to enjoy food catered by Mama Lucci's, chat about nature sightings, and learn about Loudoun Owls. As people arrived, Helen Van Ryzin and her daughter checked them in, handed out copies of our 2008 Annual report, and sold raffle tickets for donated artwork, books and other items.

As we finished the delicious dinner and put raffle tickets into bags, Joe Coleman began the meeting with a brief talk on the growth and development of the organization. He also presented the Audubon Naturalist Society with a check for \$500 in appreciation for the use of Rust Sanctuary and their continued partnership.

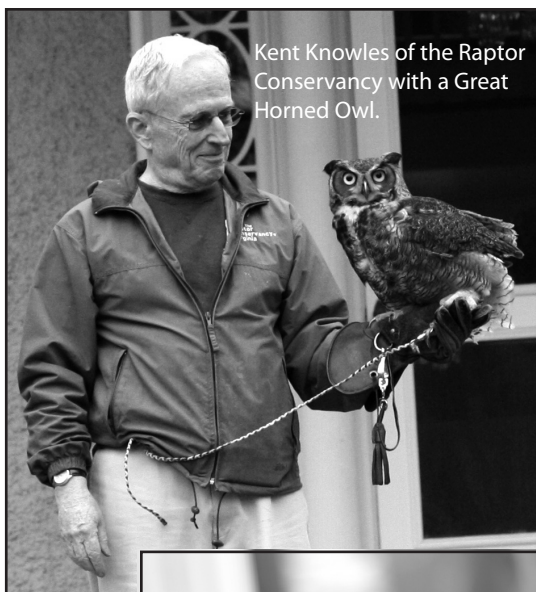
To Helen Van Ryzin's surprise, she was awarded the 2008 Bertie Murphy Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award. She was presented the award for her numerous volunteer hours to LWC as chair of the Membership Committee, for conducting annual membership appeals, and for many other supporting activities for LWC programs.

Each year LWC gives monetary awards to three students who present environmental projects in the Loudoun County Regional Science Fair. Emily Atchison, the only one available to attend the annual meeting, did a wonderful job explaining her hypothesis and findings for her project titled "Save the Wildlife: Bacteriological Remediation of Synthetic Pyrethroids."

To wrap up the business part of the meeting, treasurer Mike Friedman gave an overview of the financial health of LWC, detailed in the annual report.

The meeting was then turned over to Kent Knowles for the main program of the evening. He talked about the Raptor

Conservancy of Virginia and their wildlife rehabilitation. The Raptor Conservancy is planning to move from its current location in Falls Church, VA to a space providing larger flight cages and better facilities. Nothing is final yet, but the Banshee Reeks location could be their new home.



Kent Knowles of the Raptor Conservancy with a Great Horned Owl.

After an overview of the work at the Raptor Conservancy, Kent talked about the owls of Loudoun County and brought out six different species, all non-releasable due to injuries but serving as ambassadors for their kind in educational settings. This was a chance for people to ask questions and to see these beautiful birds up close.

Kent started with the smallest owl, the Saw-whet, even though this owl is not a year-round resident in our area. He then showed two Screech Owls – a gray-phase and a red-phase. Next, he showed a Long-Eared Owl and a Barred Owl. The Barred owl has been with Kent a long time and serves as a foster mom to baby owls

brought to the Raptor Conservancy for rehabilitation and release.

We then met a Barn Owl, followed by a Great Horned Owl named Zeus. Kent's assistant walked most of the owls around so we could see them, but only Kent could handle Zeus. The power and strength of this owl were very apparent.

The program finished with owl questions and photo opportunities.

Joe ended the meeting announcing the lucky winners of the raffle. Many

thanks to Dale Ball, Debbie Burtaine, Rhonda Chocha, Anita Colvard, Glen Cox, and Helen Van Ryzin for donating their artwork, books, CDs and other fun items for the raffle. We had over 15 raffle items and some last minute door prizes of wildlife calendars and native plants.

Thank you to everyone who came out for our annual event and a special thank-you to all who helped make it such a success.



Barred Owl

Photos by Nicole Hamilton



■ *Bee Acquainted, continued from pg. 3*

sites and flowers for foraging. Both of these can be provided by setting aside uncultivated areas of land. You can also plant a variety of nectar-producing plants so that something is always blooming throughout the season. Avoid using pesticides that bees carry back to the nest, for a bee-friendly lawn. Stream riparian buffers and hedgerows provide some of the best habitat for bees and all kinds of other organisms. You can also create artificial nest sites or provide raw materials by drilling holes in wood or leaving reeds standing or bundled.

For more information on Bees and what you can do to help: http://fairfaxaudubon.org/audubon_at_home/bees_facts.pdf

Sources:

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<http://bugguide.net/>



Celebrating International Migratory Bird Day

by Joe Coleman

Through the generous efforts of a number of experienced birders, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy was able to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) with 12 different bird walks on May 9. These walks included not only our regular birding hotspots such as Banshee Reeks and the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES), but it also included multiple locations in eastern Loudoun County, three of which were along the Potomac, several sites in the center of the county, and Wind Fields Farm near Middleburg.

The most exciting find of the day was a Black Rail at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project. Black Rails are a tiny marsh bird that is rarely heard and almost never seen whose numbers have plummeted in recent decades. Nonetheless, it was heard on both the 6 AM and 8 AM walks at the Dulles Wetlands along with two other rail species, Virginia Rail and Sora. And the people on the 6 AM walk at the Dulles Wetlands and the later walk at Banshee Reeks had a special treat as long-time member and birder extraordinaire John Drummond co-lead those walks with Mary Ann Good and Laura Weidner. John, who moved out of the area a few years ago, was in town for a few days, and kindly agreed to assist. In addition to finding 92 species at the Wetlands and Banshee Reeks, including numerous warblers and other exciting migrants, Laura and John found two Loggerhead Shrikes later in the day.

Among the more than 120 species of birds observed on May 9 was a Philadelphia Vireo at Morven Park, a Wilson's Warbler at Banshee Reeks, and Cerulean Warblers at BRCES. Other highlights of the day included an astounding 16 Solitary Sandpipers along bird-rich Hibler Road in the Lucketts area, in an area slated to become a future Northern Virginia Regional Park. Hopefully this beautiful rural area along the Potomac River will be kept as pristine and natural as it is today.

While we have been given permission to survey Wind Fields Farm for our various counts in the past, we were thrilled that Carole Miller and Emily Southgate were able to lead a walk on this beautiful and privately owned farm on May 9 as it includes acres of meadows, several ponds, extensive forest, and a

significant stretch of the Goose Creek. Hopefully more of us will have a chance to participate in future walks there as well.

The leaders of the Bles Park walk, Mike Friedman and Robert Daugherty, also visited the large Great Blue Heron rookery that lies between Loudoun County Parkway and Route 28 and were thrilled to see numerous active nests there.

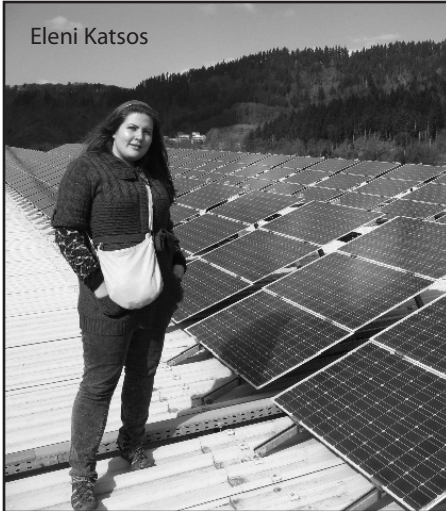
LWC also sponsors a Birdathon from May 2 to May 10 which coincides with the height of spring migration. Its purpose is to raise money for bird conservation in Loudoun County and specifically to fund LWC's five-year Bird Atlas. While all the money is not in yet, approximately \$5,000 was raised through the Birdathon.

Shrike Force, comprised of Laura Weidner, Mary Ann Good, Joe Coleman, and Liam McGranaghan as scribe, found the most species, 106. Phil Daley and Paul Miller went out on a very rainy day but still found 89 species. The highlight for the Ligi Nestlings, comprised of LWC's Atlas Coordinator Spring Ligi and her two-year-old daughter McKenzie, was to get within five feet of a singing Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

LWC would like to thank the leaders of the 12 walks and the Birdathon teams:

Dale Ball	Gerry Hawkins	Del Sargent
Bill Brown	Nicole Hamilton	Cheri Schneck
Joe Coleman	Bruce Hill	Stan Shetler
Phil Daley	McKenzie Ligi	Linda Sieh
Robert Daugherty	Spring Ligi	Turner Smith
John Drummond	Larry Meade	Bronwen Souders
Elizabeth Evans	Carole Miller	John Souders
Cliff Fairweather	Paul Miller	Emily Southgate
Mike Friedman	Christine Perdue	Laura Weidner
Mary Ann Good	Andy Rabin	

If you were not able to join us on one of our bird walks or participate in the Birdathon this year, be sure to do so next year. Everyone has a lot of fun, plus it helps LWC protect Loudoun County's birds.



Eleni Katsos

Meet the New LWC Intern

by Karen Strick

LWC is pleased to introduce this year's summer intern – Eleni Katsos. Eleni is a life-long resident of Loudoun County and is currently a student at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV. She is a rising senior and is pursuing a major in environmental science with a minor in resource management. Some of Eleni's projects include constructing a greenhouse for Shepherd University through her sustainable agriculture class and participating in a land use project where she compiled a soil survey for Hendrick's Farm, one of Shepherd's undeveloped properties, to determine suitability uses. She also installed two bee hives for educational purposes as part of the Gold Award project at Rust Nature Sanctuary. Eleni will be working in the field to support LWC's habitat restoration projects at Waterford's Phillips Farm and will be coordinating the removal of invasive alien plants at other sites around the county. Welcome Eleni!

And The Award Goes To...

Nicole Hamilton - Loudoun County's Outstanding Environmental Volunteer

by Rhonda Chocha

Nicole Hamilton was named Loudoun County's Outstanding Environmental Volunteer at the Board of Supervisors meeting on April 21. Nicole was honored for her countless hours of service to LWC in many leadership roles for over a decade. She served as president from 2004 - 2008 and substantially increased programs and communication with members, volunteers and the public. With her initiative, many of our popular programs have grown in scope, volunteers and positive outcomes.

Nicole started or strengthened many of LWC's citizen science programs, including the Bluebird Monitoring Program, the Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Program and the Annual Butterfly Count. During her tenure as president, she led several successful conservation advocacy efforts and helped increase LWC's membership fourfold, strengthening the organization's capability to accomplish our mission.

Nicole currently serves as Webmaster of the LWC website and writes an almost daily blog. She has introduced new technologies via the Web, such as podcasts and Twittering, allowing us to communicate with a broader audience. Nicole also generates a monthly email announcement and regularly authors articles for the Habitat Herald.

We are very proud of Nicole, and thank her for all she has done and continues to do for LWC and Loudoun County's environment.



Joe Coleman – Waterford Foundation Volunteer of the Year

by Rhonda Chocha

Joe Coleman was recognized as the Waterford Foundation's Volunteer of the Year for his efforts in leading LWC's habitat restoration projects and other environmental activities at the Phillips Farm. This is wonderful recognition not only for Joe but also for all the volunteers who have come out to participate in the Phillips Farm events.

The Foundation thanked Joe for his untold number of hours in Waterford this past year, volunteering his time to its preservation and protection and for enticing many others in Loudoun County to do the same. As both an active member of the Waterford Phillips Farm Committee and a founder of LWC, Joe was instrumental in forging their highly successful partnership. Their combined expertise has been essential to protection of the natural resources that are a vital part of the farm.

During the past year, more than 600 trees and shrubs have been planted on the Phillips Farm to establish a riparian buffer along the Catoctin Creek, which will help improve water quality in the creek and in the entire watershed. Under Joe's direction, LWC underwrote the cost of these plantings, and LWC members and supporters (including many Waterford villagers) got them all planted. The recruited volunteers also helped to remove invasive plants. All of this is helping to protect vital resources in the Waterford National Landmark and improving the quality of life for all of us in Loudoun County.

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■ Awards, continued from pg.6

Helen Van Ryzin - Awarded the 2008 Bertie Murphy Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award

by Rhonda Chocha

At the annual meeting in May, LWC presented the 2008 Bertie Murphy Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award to Helen Van Ryzin.

Helen was recognized for her countless hours of volunteer work in various roles for LWC in 2008. Many of her contributions were for time-consuming tasks vital to the organization's mission, but because they were behind-the-scenes, they were often unheralded.

Helen joined the LWC Board last year as the Membership Development Committee Chair and has used her professional computer expertise to improve our membership database and provide timely analytic reports to the Board.

She organized the 2008 Loudoun Wildlife Festival. This event successfully attracted a crowd who were entertained by the music, educated by the amphibian zoo, and generously donated funds for LWC's mission.

Helen participated in a variety of LWC's citizen science programs to help us track the health of habitat and native species across Loudoun County. Her involvement last year included the Butterfly Count, the Christmas Bird Count and many stream monitoring sessions to assess water quality. She assisted with both the spring and fall habitat restoration projects at the Waterford Foundation's Phillips Farm by planting trees, removing alien invasive plants, and demonstrating stream monitoring.

In addition, Helen helped with public outreach by staffing the LWC booth at a number of fairs. She contributed to the quarterly *Habitat Herald*, writing the Plant ID column for the Summer 2008 issue on the thistle. She also pitched in on the mailing team.



This award recognizes volunteer accomplishments in 2008; however, Helen's myriad activities continued to expand in 2009. She headed the committee to organize LWC's annual meeting, served on the committee to design the Annual Report, became certified as a stream monitor and, among other things, is working on the Bird Atlas project.

Congratulations, Helen, for this well-deserved recognition!



The Bertie Murphy Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award

The Bertie Murphy Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award is Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's annual award to recognize a member who has made a significant impact through outstanding volunteer efforts. It was created and named in honor of the late Bertie Murphy in 2008. Bertie Murphy was a long-time member of LWC. Between 2004 and 2007, she was our Community Outreach Chair. Bertie was not only instrumental in recruiting volunteers and getting us public exposure at fairs, public-hearing events, and programs around our communities, but she also appeared at most of these events herself. She retired from Booz Allen and left the LWC Board in spring 2007 so she could pursue her dream (at age 70!) of working with the Peace Corps to help people in other countries learn to read. She spent her last year and a half doing just that in Belize and led the charge to create a library in one of the towns. Bertie died in 2008. She was an amazing woman, always positive and smiling with a wonderful "can do" attitude. She touched us deeply, and we miss her every day. By naming this award in her honor, we hope to keep her spirit with us.

Prior recipients of LWC Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Awards

2004 Gem Bingol, Bob Lyon
 2005 Phil Daley, Leslie McCasker
 2006 Elizabeth Evans, Bertie Murphy
 2007 Joe Coleman, Nicole Hamilton



Dulles Greenway's 2009 Drive for Charity a Big Success!

This year's Dulles Greenway Drive for Charity on May 21 was the most successful to date with more than \$233,000 raised. On June 5, Trip II, the owners of the Dulles Greenway, presented five local nonprofits with checks from the money raised. LWC received a check for \$32,679. This money will be used to fund our many educational programs, such as the Habitat Herald, as well as to send several kids to this summer's Nature Camp. It will also be used to underwrite our stream-monitoring program and for our various habitat restoration projects. As a result, we should be able to plant even more riparian buffers and enhance vernal pools throughout the county over the next year. We are very appreciative of Trip II for including LWC in this event and for their ongoing generosity.

LWC Welcomes Two New Board Members



Rockie Fera

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy would like to welcome its two newest Board members - Rockie Fera, our new Secretary, and Emily Cook, our new PR and Marketing Chair.

Rockie, who has participated in several of LWC's habitat restoration projects, grew up in Alexandria and moved to Loudoun in 1970. He currently lives in Leesburg with his wife Peggy. They have three grown children and five grandchildren. Prior to retiring in 2001 from Loudoun County Schools as a principal, he was an educator for 38 years. When he's not playing tennis, Rockie also bikes and runs. In addition to his membership in LWC, he belongs to the Shenandoah Region Antique Automobile Club of America and the Isaac Walton League.

Emily is a freelance writer and full-time mother of three children, ages 9, 13 and 14. She has over 14 years of professional experience in corporate communications and public relations, as well as several years as an associate producer for a local, independent television station. In addition to her new "indoor" job in PR and Marketing for LWC, she and her family have also begun serving as Bluebird Trail Monitors for one of LWC's many trails throughout the county. Her family enjoys hiking, biking, fishing and just generally being outdoors exploring Loudoun and the DC metro area.



Emily Cook

Volunteers Needed for County Fairs

by Debbie Burtaine

Summer is here. That means LWC will soon be very busy setting up our booth at a number of fairs around the county. We are sponsoring booths at the following fairs and events:

August 22-23:	Lucketts Fair
September 19-20:	Bluemont Fair
Mid October:	Sterlingfest 2008
October 17:	Aldie Harvest Fest

These fairs offer a fantastic opportunity to volunteer for LWC and to get outdoors and talk with your neighbors. At the booth, we talk with fair-goers about the wonderful array of wildlife found in our county and about the importance of saving their habitat. We also talk about the many programs and activities that we offer and hand out lots of informational materials. In addition to volunteers to man the booth, we are in desperate need of volunteers to set up and take down the booth. With two people, set-up and take-down usually takes about an hour. If you would like to help LWC with our booth, please give Debbie Burtaine a call at 571-434-0867 or email dburtaine@loudounwildlife.org.

Why Loudoun County Should Reject the Kincora's Village Office/Recreational Complex Special Exception

by Joe Coleman and Nicole Hamilton

On June 8, the county held a public hearing to get input on a special exception that would allow a baseball stadium, several office buildings, and extensive parking on 60 acres of the larger 314-acre Kincora Village complex to be built now. The developer would like to have the other, larger plan considered later.

LWC representatives were unable to attend the public hearing because we found out about it only a few days beforehand and could not rearrange our schedules to speak. However, we did bring the special exception to our membership's attention and encouraged everyone to voice an opinion to individual Supervisors. On June 15, at the Board of Supervisors' Public Input session, we were able to attend and ask the Board to turn down the special exception.

LWC is not opposed to keynote employment uses of this property or the building of a baseball stadium in the county. In fact, we would be pleased to see more keynote employment in this area because of its positive impact on our tax base. And while we would support a baseball stadium in the county, there are other locations already identified that are more appropriate and would have less negative environmental impact. This particular location is too environmentally sensitive for this development. The Kincora proposal should only be considered as a whole because all of its components are interlinked.

LWC was deeply disappointed in the rush to make a decision without fully considering all the consequences. We can understand why the developer would push the Board of Supervisors to do this quickly. It means the developer's point of view will be the primary one heard. It also means the citizens of Loudoun County will not have an opportunity to wisely weigh in on such an important decision with such long-lasting consequences.



Great Blue Heron



Most importantly, we are concerned with this development's impact on the large Great Blue Heron rookery that is located along Broad Run. We have extensively researched Great Blue Heron rookeries and found several states as varied as Vermont, Michigan, Washington, and even British Columbia that outline the threats to Great Blue Heron rookeries and offer extensive guidance on how to avoid those threats. We passed those materials onto the Board of Supervisors, and you can view them on our website. The larger the rookery, the older it is, and the more successful it is. This rookery, the largest we are aware of in Loudoun County, contains over 50 nests and is considered a significant and irreplaceable rookery. All the studies show that human disturbance, from land development to recreation, can affect the success of Great Blue Heron rookeries. Because of the extensive close-by protected areas along the Potomac River that provide extensive habitat for feeding and shelter, it is likely that this rookery, if sufficiently protected, will continue to be successful for years.

The applicant's responses to this issue have been especially disappointing. The rookery was shown in the wrong location on the maps submitted to the Board. The rookery occupies a grove of mature Sycamores along 1,000 feet of Broad Run, starting about 3,000 feet further south than the location shown on the developer's map. We estimate that the baseball stadium construction is less than 1,000 feet from the southernmost nests in the rookery. Additionally, the developer and Loudoun County Parks, Recreation, and Community Services are proposing an extensive trail system in the flood plain. This trail system with the anticipated human activity could have a negative impact on the rookery. Furthermore, the Overview Plat shows a road, a sewer line, and a pipeline-lift building close enough to the rookery to cause damage to it. While the developer argues that components of the plan outside of the stadium area are not part of this special exception, he refers to several of these in his response to staff to show he has fully addressed all the concerns staff raised.

The way the site is being designed will lead to increased stormwater runoff. The Revised General Plan calls for no

■ Continued on page 13



Programs and Field Trips

Space is limited for many of these programs and field trips. Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot.



LOUDOUN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY BOARD MEETING – LWC's Board meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary in Leesburg. All LWC members are welcome. Pre-meeting discussion begins at 7:00 p.m., with the meeting itself beginning at 7:30 p.m. *Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.*

BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES AT CLAUDE MOORE PARK – **Saturday, July 18, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon.** Join us for one of our free, family butterfly and dragonfly walks. We will investigate the many diverse natural areas that comprise this beautiful park and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. Claude Moore Park is located at 21544 Vestal's Gap Rd. in Sterling Va. If you own binoculars, please bring them. *Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.*

BIRD WALK, TOUR AN ORGANIC FARM, AND PICNIC at THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – Saturday July 25, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Join us, rain or shine, for LWC's regular bird walk (8:00-11:00 a.m.), followed by a picnic lunch (bring your own), and a tour of the organic farm. This fun and informative event is co-sponsored by LWC and the Great Falls Group of the Sierra Club. The center is located at 11611 Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671. Directions can be found at www.brccs.org. *Questions: Contact Linda Burchfiel at 703-506-4310 or larva@attglobal.net.*

GRAY TREE FROGS – ENJOYING THE CHORUS – **Saturday, July 25, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.** Registration Required. Join us at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship for an evening with the gray tree frogs. We will learn about gray tree frogs and then head into the field to listen to their calls and try to spot a few. Please bring a flashlight or headlamp as well as a chair to sit on. Meet at the Visitor Center off of Rte 671, a little north of the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station and on the west side of the road. Regis-

tration required; please sign up at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.

MAGIC OF MONARCH BUTTERFLIES – **Sunday, July 26, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., at the Ashburn Library.** Nicole Hamilton traveled to the mountains of Mexico this past February to explore and visit the butterfly sanctuaries where our monarchs winter. What she saw was phenomenal and she will not only share this experience but also talk about the great monarch migration, their lifecycles, and their habitats, both here and in Mexico. Handouts on creating your own monarch waystation will be available as well as travel tips for those wanting to make this pilgrimage. Join us at 2:00 p.m. at the Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Road, to meet the speaker and have refreshments. This program is appropriate for all ages. *Questions, please contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

ANNUAL LOUDOUN COUNTY BUTTERFLY COUNT – **Saturday, August 1, 9:00 a.m.** Join LWC on its thirteenth Annual Butterfly Count, centered in the Waterford area. No experience is necessary; novices will be teamed with experienced leaders. Come out and have fun while contributing to butterfly conservation. Counters will visit various locations from White's Ferry in the east to the Appalachian Trail in the west to Point of Rocks in the north and south to Lincoln. Binoculars are also helpful. *Registration required; for more information or to register, sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org*

FROG CALLS: AN EVENING AT BLES PARK – **Saturday, August 8, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Registration Required.** Come out for a Froggy night at Bles Park. We will start outside discussing the five different types of frogs that live at Bles Park, and listening to recordings of their calls. As dusk comes, we will go out on the trails, listen to the different calls, and practice our identification. We hope to hear all of the different frogs and perhaps encounter some others. Please bring a flashlight or headlamp as well as a chair to sit on. Bles Park is located at 44830 Riverside Parkway. *Registration required; please sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

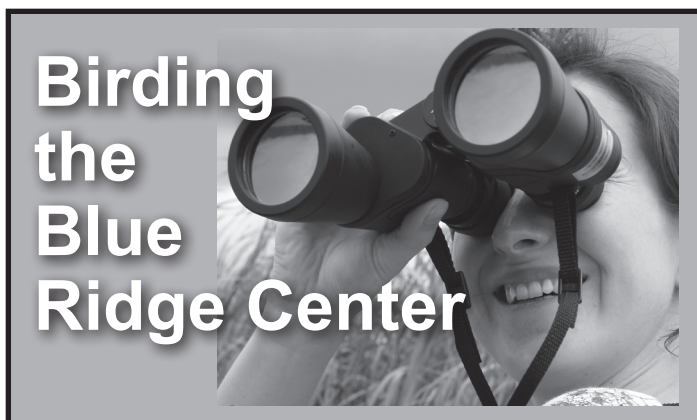
BUTTERFLIES AT THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – **Saturday, August 15, 9:00 a.m. to noon.** Join LWC on a butterfly walk at this beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. We should see butterflies nectaring in the late summer wildflowers. The Blue Ridge Center is located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671, a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9:00 a.m. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org*

MONARCH MOVIE AND PROGRAM – **Sunday, August 23, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. (location TBD).** Join us at this wonderful family program on monarch butterflies and possibly take one home! We

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, September 20 and
Sunday, October 18 at 1:00 p.m.**



On the fourth Saturday of each month (except December), LWC leads a free bird walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. This beautiful 900-acre preserve is only a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers and includes meadows in the valley and heavily forested slopes on the Blue Ridge. Meet at the Visitor Center at 8:00 a.m. off of Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671, a little north of the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station and on the west side of the road. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

Saturday, August 22,

Saturday, September 26

Saturday, October 24



**Walks begin at
8:00 a.m.**

will watch the 20-minute film, "The Butterfly King," and experience the lifecycle of the monarch from egg to caterpillar to butterfly; see the hazards they face in the milkweed patch and daily dramas that play out right in our own backyards and roadsides. Following the film, see some live monarch chrysalides. At the end of the program, a drawing will be held so that a few attendees can take home a monarch and release it after it hatches. *Questions, please contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

"TIPS ON HOW TO LEAD A NATURE WALK" CLASS AND FIELD SESSION- Saturday, August 29, (Time and Location TBD). *Registration Required.* Join Naturalist Phil Daley as he teaches a class on how to lead and/or co-lead a walk and then takes us out into the field for a demonstration walk. Phil will provide some insights, ideas, and guidance for potential walk leaders. He will also discuss the "to do and not to do" aspects of leading a successful walk. To register contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pdaley@loudounwildlife.org.

INSECT ID CLASS AND FIELD SESSION AT BANSHEE REEKS – September 5, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00p.m. *Registration Required.*

"Mysterious and little known creatures live within reach of where you sit. Splendor awaits in minute proportions." – E.O. Wilson. Join LWC and Cliff Fairweather, naturalist, for a free class and field trip exploring the mysterious world of summer's insects. The world of insects is intricate and diverse – come learn about how they fit into

the remarkable web of life – their splendor awaits! *Registration required: contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org or sign-up online.*

BLUEBIRD NESTBOX MONITORING END OF SEASON CELEBRATION AND TRAIL TALLY – (date, time, and location TBD). *Registration Required.* Say farewell to our bluebirds, tree swallows and house wrens as we celebrate another great season of bluebirds and their young. Meet fellow bluebird nestbox monitors and hear reports from trail leaders on fledgling tallies for each of the trails. *Please register online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm.*

MID-WEEK NATURE WALK ALONG THE MIDDLEBURG WALKING TRAIL – Wednesday, September 16, 8:30 - 11:00 a.m. *Registration Required.* Join Christine Perdue Smith and Joe Coleman on one of LWC's mid-week nature walks as they explore the native plants and trees at the Hill School and the varied habitats along the trail and also look for fall migrants. *Registration required; contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

BIRDING THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL AND HAWK WATCH – Saturday, September 19, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Join us as we hike along the Appalachian Trail in search of migrants in the morning, hiking a section of the trail that leads to a beautiful waterfall. Around 11:00 a.m., we will meet back at the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch for a few hours of hawk watching and, hopefully, a major push of Broad-winged Hawks. Bring a lunch and a chair. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch to car pool to the close-by hike location or join us at 11:00 at Snickers Gap. *Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com*

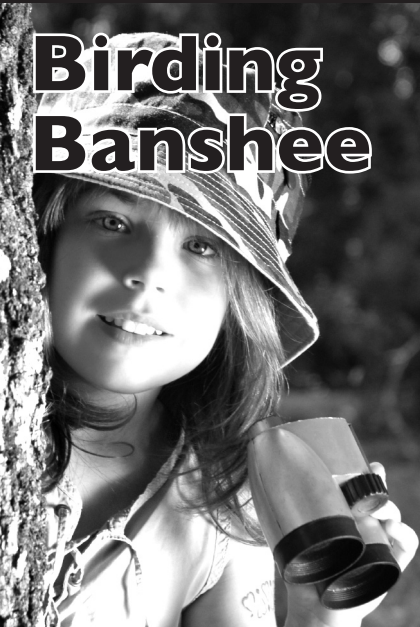
SNAKES: AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR LOCAL SNAKES – Tuesday, September 22, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., location TBD. Liam McGranaghan will present a slide show on the snakes one is likely to see in our area. He will discuss these creatures that so many of us are both fascinated and frightened of and explain why they are a valuable part of the world around us. Come at 7:00 for light refreshments and meet the speaker; the free program will start at 7:30.

AMPHIBIAN MONITORING PROGRAM: END OF SEASON CELEBRATION – Sunday, October 4, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. As our amphibians make preparations for their winter slumbers, we will gather together for an end-of-season celebration and potluck at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. After sharing a late lunch and our different monitoring experiences, we will look at the data and the other interesting information that has been gathered thus far. We will then walk to some of the vernal pools and other wetlands we visited in the spring to see what they look like now. Meet at the Visitor Center off of Rte 671, a little north of the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station and on the west side of the road. *Registration required: please sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

MYSTERIES OF MONARCH MIGRATION – Tuesday, October 13, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., location TBD. Join us for a discussion of monarch butterflies, their lifecycle and their amazing migration, an endangered phenomena due to habitat loss here and in their wintering grounds in Mexico. We will watch the excellent film, On the Wings of the Monarch and discuss monarch waystations. Monarch waystation kits will be available for those interested in starting a

■ Continued on page 12

Programs and Field Trips, continued from pg. 11



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, it is a birding hot spot. Please bring binoculars. Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Saturday, July 11
Saturday, August 8
Saturday, September 12
Saturday, October 10

**Walks begin
at 8:00 a.m.**

garden this fall that will be ready next spring. *Registration required: please sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

MID-WEEK BIRD WALK AT CLAUDE MOORE PARK IN EASTERN LOUDOUN— Wednesday, October 14, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Join LWC on a free mid-week bird walk to investigate the many diverse natural areas that comprise this beautiful park. Claude Moore Park is located at 21544 Vestal's Gap Rd. in Sterling Va. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Questions: contact Bill Brown at 703-437-6277 or billbr50@msn.com.

JOURNEY SOUTH BUTTERFLY WORKSHOP – Saturday, October 24, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 pm. Registration Required. Join us at Banshee Reeks for a free children's program and a short video on the monarch's lifecycle and great migration. Each participant will make a set of monarch butterflies to send to children in Michoacán, Mexico where our real monarchs are overwintering. The children in Mexico protect the butterflies all winter and send them back north in the spring. A follow-up program will occur next spring as the symbolic monarch butterflies are sent back here. Crafting supplies will be provided and each child will go home with reminders of the symbolic migration. Sign up online at www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.

IDENTIFYING HAWKS: A CLASS AND A FIELD TRIP TO WAGGONER'S GAP, PA. October 27 and November 1. Every fall, hawks migrate south along the Blue Ridge. On Tuesday, October 27, Liam McGranaghan, a master falconer and licensed bander of raptors, will teach a 7:00 evening class on how to identify hawks and other birds of prey in the field. On Sunday, November 1, he will lead a field trip

to Waggoner's Gap in PA, about a 2.5-hour drive. Waggoner's Gap is one of the premier hawk-watching sites in our area, and if the weather cooperates, we should see a wide diversity of birds of prey, including Golden Eagles! While the field trip will be free and one does not need to take the class to go on the field trip, there is a fee of \$10 (\$15 for non-members) for the class. *Registration required; contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org to sign up.*



Questions about the above programs?

Contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org

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

Planting Trees – Protecting Water Quality & Wildlife

by Joe Coleman and Nicole Hamilton

Because riparian buffers are the most effective way to protect water quality and are essential to wildlife, LWC has played an integral role in two major tree plantings this past spring.

Waterford's Phillips Farm

To celebrate Earth Day, LWC and the Waterford Foundation planted 327 native trees and shrubs. On Earth Day, April 22, 35 people, including three adults and 10 girls from Girl Scout Troop 3570, planted 243 of the 327 trees and shrubs, leaving us in a quandary for the follow-up project on Saturday, April 25. With about 75 people expected, including 23 boys and 17 adults from Cub Scout Pack 965 of Leesburg and a contingent from Boy Scout Troop 950, we were worried we wouldn't have enough work for all of them. Cub Scout Pack 965 knocked out their 84 trees and shrubs in no time, while the rest of us concentrated on removing invasive alien plants. Boy Scout Troop 950, working with Phil Daley and Elizabeth Evans and two of her children, removed invasives along the tributary on the far western side of the farm where we planted all the trees and shrubs on Earth Day. Others of us worked on invasives near the old stone dam.

A recent visit to the site revealed that most of the 1,000 trees and shrubs that were planted on Earth Day and last year are thriving. To ensure their continuing health, we are planning on visiting the farm every week and, if necessary, watering the plants and removing invasives around the new trees and

■ *Planting Trees, continued from pg. 12*

shrubs. Around the first of August we are going to organize a project to protect the trees and shrubs from deer, one of the greatest threats to young plants.

Leesburg

The tree planting along Leesburg's Town Branch stream on Saturday, June 6, was a great success. Gem Bingol from Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) kicked off the event with an overview of the project, describing the stream and how the riparian buffer will help improve water quality and explaining how we would plant 204 native trees and shrubs and 144 native perennial wildflower plants.

She then turned it over to Jeff Wolinski, the consulting ecologist and wetlands expert, who helped plan and select the plant species we'd be planting. He selected a great diversity of plants for this project that will not only benefit a wide variety of wildlife but also provide a more natural look to the restoration.

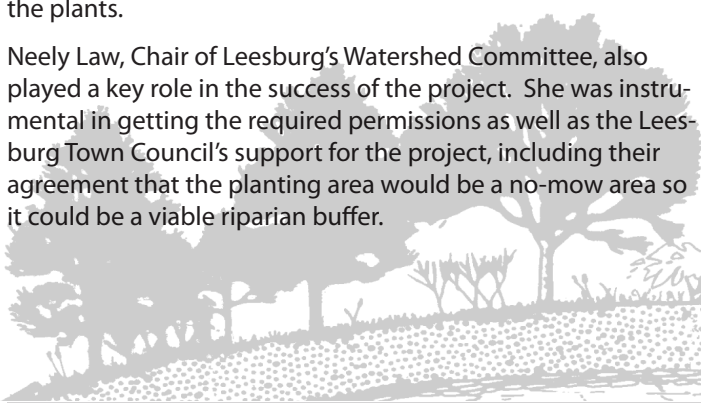
After giving a quick overview of the plants, Jeff demonstrated how to plant the trees and talked about fertilizer as well as the interrelationship between a beneficial fungus that grows in the soil and the plant roots.

Thankfully, Jeff, along with LWC's Craig Himelright and Rocky Fera and a few others, spent Friday preparing for the planting by auguring the holes for the trees, placing the trees for planting, bringing out the mulch, and doing other preparations. This pre-work made the planting straightforward, as volunteers could focus on planting the trees and mulching around them, rather than digging the holes.

On Saturday the work went quickly with over 50 volunteers from PEC, LWC, and an energetic Boy Scout Troop 998 jumping right in. Volunteers came prepared with work gloves for getting hands-on with the planting. Shovels were provided to help break up soil and put it back around the trees as they were settled into their holes. With the rain that we had the previous few days, the ground was very wet and a number of holes had filled with water overnight, making this a rather muddy job.

Eight people worked until almost 4 PM doing the final wrap-up of putting deer protectors around the trees and watering the plants.

Neely Law, Chair of Leesburg's Watershed Committee, also played a key role in the success of the project. She was instrumental in getting the required permissions as well as the Leesburg Town Council's support for the project, including their agreement that the planting area would be a no-mow area so it could be a viable riparian buffer.



■ *Kinora, continued from pg. 9*

development on steep and moderate slopes because of the extensive environmental damage such construction leads to. Not only is the stadium to be built on steep slopes, but it will also destroy the forest on the slopes and an intermittent stream that



Great Blue Heron

flows there. This will lead to substantially more stormwater runoff from this site into Broad Run. This sediment will flow from Broad Run into the Potomac and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. Upstream development and the loss of naturally forested areas are leading to the Chesapeake Bay's demise. We cannot continue to contribute to such destruction.

A recent review of stormwater regulations by the National Academy of Sciences points out how inadequate current stormwater practices are. It emphasizes that there is a direct relationship between land cover and the biological condition of downstream receiving waters, and it states that roads and parking lots can be the most significant type of land cover with respect to stormwater. The National Research Council has recently written that "increased water volume and pollutants have degraded water quality and habitats in virtually every urban stream system" and argues that "stormwater management and land use management practices must be integrated and focus ... more on the increased flow of water." By proposing to build such large and impervious structures on steep slopes, it is clear that this application does not adequately deal with the increased flow of water that will be generated, especially when one considers the inadequacies of the current regulations.

This development will lead to the destruction of forested wetlands and the fragmentation of wildlife habitat. The extensive vernal pool complex that exists on the floodplain and surrounding area will be altered, and the wildlife that currently thrives there will be severely impacted. Not only will building on forested steep slopes increase stormwater management problems, but it will also change the forested wetlands into which the stormwater will run. Forested wetlands are the rarest and most difficult type of wetlands to mitigate, and because they are special unique ecosystems that require special hydrological conditions, they take decades to grow. If Loudoun County is really committed to a no-net loss of wetlands, then the destruction of forested wetlands should never be allowed.

The environmental impacts of this development, both the 60-acre and the 314-acre proposals, are too significant to approve without a thorough assessment of the two proposals together and, in fact, are inconsistent with the *Revised Comprehensive Plan*.

Chipmunks

by Joe Midolo

In the early spring, the little critters that weathered the winter months emerge from their slumber to greet the spring. One of the most endearing of these small creatures is the chipmunk, who, unlike many of his fellow mammals, does not enter a state of slumber during the winter. The chipmunk hunkers down in his network of burrows during the frigid season, subsisting from a cache of nuts and seeds all winter long! If that doesn't create cabin fever, I don't know what does! The chipmunk emerges from his long seclusion for a much-needed stretch, and his mind turns to two things: food and romance. The chipmunk can, after a 30-day pregnancy, produce a litter of two to eight young, which will live with the parents for 2 months before moving out on their own to prepare for their own winter experience.

There are over 25 species of chipmunk, and all but one, the Asian Siberian Chipmunk (*Tamias sibiricus*), live in North America, ranging all the way from Canada to Mexico. The chipmunk's size spans from the petite 8.5in (nose to tail), 1.8oz Least Chipmunk (*Tamias minimus*) to the larger 11in, 4.4oz Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*). The Eastern Chipmunk is the one most prevalent in our area, living for up to 3 years. It usually surfaces from its den in early spring, to feast upon all manner of nuts, bugs, and berries (specifically acorns), some of which it carries back to its den inside its cheek pouches. The Eastern Chipmunk can be defensive of its den, although only actively defending 50ft of its ½-acre territory, the area surrounding the den itself. A close cousin to the squirrel, the chipmunk is defined by its reddish-brown fur and unique black and white facial and torso stripes. Another characteristic feature is the chipmunk trill, which sounds like a sharp bird-like chirp. This call is used to notify others of impending danger, as well as to attract a mate.

If you are trying to attract chipmunks, then your task should be quite simple! Chipmunks can live in any environment, from an alpine forest to a shrubby desert, where they consume anything from insects to nuts, seeds, and berries. Terrain with a heavy cover of rocks, underbrush, or logs provides an effective and attractive screen from predators, such as hawks, coyotes, or snakes. Invasive or foreign species, such as house cats, are having a negative impact on the chipmunk, over-hunting this and other small mammals to, in some cases, dangerous degrees. So remember, keep your cats indoors! Beware, however, of detrimental tunneling. While some chipmunks may choose to carve out a home within an old log, or build a nest in a nearby tree, others will dig expansive systems of tunnels that can have a negative effect on gardens, or even the structural integrity of buildings. While adorable, the chipmunk is a wild animal and should be treated as such.



Let's Count Butterflies!

LWC's 13th annual Butterfly Count takes place August 1. Teams will cover Loudoun County, looking for butterflies as they flutter through fields, woodlands, and gardens. This is a great activity for all skill levels. Whether you know your butterflies or are just getting interested, this is a great chance to see a wide variety of species all in one day. Teams are led by experienced people who share identification tips and other interesting butterfly facts. Join us for just part or all of the day — your choice. For more information and to sign up, visit our website: www.loudounwildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.



Adventures of Zoom & Compass

The Dancing Lights!

by Senia Hamoui



Nature detectives Zoom and Compass got a frantic call from Amber. She was president of the bug club at her school, and she was not prepared for tomorrow's meeting on fireflies. "Why do fireflies light up?" she had to know. "Where's the best place to look for them? And are they really flies?"

The Nature detectives met Amber at the local playground later that evening to discuss the case. "We will conduct a field investigation on our little dancing lights in the sky," declared Zoom. "By drawing on our expertise in entomology and our observations this evening, we will have you well prepared for tomorrow's meeting."

Compass looked over at Amber. "What Zoom means to say is, don't worry, the Nature detectives are on the case."

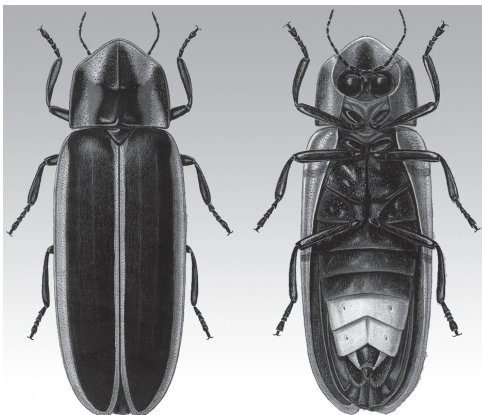
"Thanks, detectives!" exclaimed Amber. "So, what's the deal with fireflies—are they really flies?"

"No, they're not," answered Compass. "They're beetles and like other beetles, they have two pairs of wings and six legs. What makes them special, though, is their lantern."

"Lantern?" asked Amber.

"Yes. You see... their glow comes from the abdomen, and it's sometimes referred to as the lantern," explained Compass.

"You picked a great bug this month, Amber!" said Zoom with a smile. "Fireflies can be found wherever there is a good amount of water close by, and that could be around lakes, ponds, streams, and marshes. Compass and I will go to a nearby pond for our study."



Using his watch, Compass figured out the coordinates to the pond. "We'll begin our walk northwest, and then it'll be a straight shot from there," he said. "Let's do it, Zoom."

Before long, they reached the pond's edge. Fireflies zipped all around them.

"Compass," whispered Zoom as she pointed to a bush beside her. "Look at the firefly perched on this bush. I think she's sending out a light message."

"Yeah—like a Morse code!" he squealed. "And look at the firefly just a short distance behind me. He's flashing a message, too!"

Zoom took out her notebook to document her observations, and that's when she noticed a pattern. "Compass!" she cried. "Watch the firefly behind you and pay attention to its flashing—do you see that it's glowing in a series of flashes broken up with pauses in between?"

"Yeah, I do," he answered. "And if I'm not mistaken, Zoom, I think it's flying closer to us. Or maybe it's flying towards..." Immediately, they both looked to the firefly in the bush and watched as it too flashed a patterned series of glows. And then the nature detectives understood. The male firefly sends out a special series of flashes, each unique to its species, in order to attract a mate. The female of the same species waits for this special signal and then responds with her own flashes of light.

Compass and Zoom remembered reading about a predatory firefly species, one that uses mimicry in its series of flashes. The sly female copies the series of flashes from another species to respond to the call of a potential mate. When the unsuspecting male approaches, she eats him.

Compass nervously looked at the firefly in the bush and said, "I sure hope she doesn't belong to the cannibalistic firefly family of Photuris."

"Me, too," sighed Zoom.

And then it happened... the male landed close to the female and rather than eating him for dinner, they mated. The detectives jumped into the air with joy.

"I told Amber that she selected a cool bug, and now we can explain just why," said Zoom excitedly. "They're dancing lights in the sky... with a purpose!"

"Mystery solved," smiled Compass.



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
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LWC Science Fair Award Winners for 2009

by Paul Miller

On March 19 a team of five judges from the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy met at Briar Woods High School to judge the 28th Annual Loudoun County Regional Science and Engineering Fair. Among the 200 entries from Loudoun County students were three that the judges felt deserved Special Awards because of the topics which reflected themes of environmental concern.

First Place winner **Reid Nebergall**, a senior at Dominion High School, was awarded a check for \$350 from LWC for his project "Rehabilitation of Ocean Dead Zones Via Alternative Photosynthetic Pathways In Cyanobacteria." Reid's research was to determine the viability of using *Thalassiosira* (a marine cyan bacterium) as a means to rehabilitate ocean dead zones.

Second Place was awarded to **Ashley Lohr**, a Loudoun Valley High School sophomore, for her project "Butterfly Visitation on Different Colored Buddleia *Davidii* and Zinnia *Elegans*." Ashley's research suggested that butterflies visit certain flower colors by choice, not chance. This information could be used to install successful butterfly gardens. Ashley received a check from LWC for \$250 for her effort.

Emilie Atchison, a senior at Dominion High School, exhibited her Third-Place winning research, "Save the Wildlife! Bacterial Remediation of Synthetic Pyrethroids," for attendees at LWC's Annual Meeting, at which time she was awarded \$150. Emilie was able to demonstrate that adding bacteria (*Bacillus* and *Serratia*) to media containing synthetic pyrethroids, which are highly toxic to fish and bees, would help break down these pyrethroids and thus increase the health of organisms exposed to these toxic substances.

Congratulations to each of these winners for their research and interest in environmental causes!

