



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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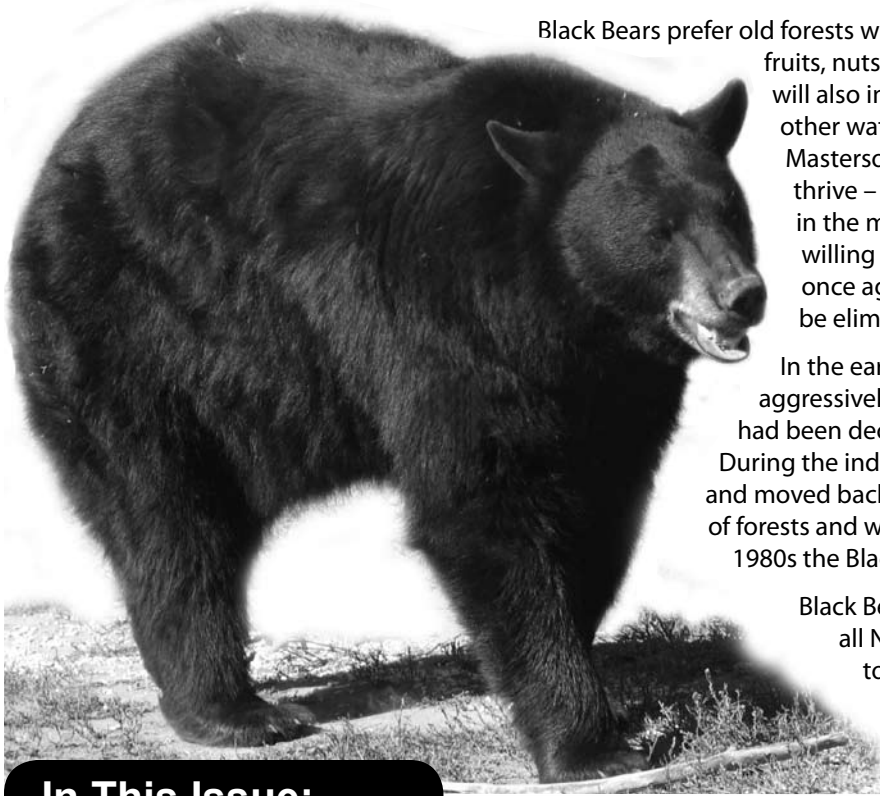
Spring 2010

Black Bears in Loudoun County

by Nicole Hamilton

Almost every spring, we have reports of Black Bear sightings here in Loudoun, and it's always quite exciting! In the last few years they have been seen in Aldie, Leesburg, Round Hill, Purcellville, and even Ashburn. Black Bears, the only species of bear in our area, are unmistakable, with females weighing around 100-180 lbs and males weighing about 150-300 lbs. In the west, Black Bears may be brownish in color, but here they are black with a beautiful thick coat.

Sightings in the spring are often of juvenile bears from the previous year venturing out to find territories to call their own. While juvenile females can establish their homes next to the mother's territory, males are forced to go further in search of new lands. They often follow streams and valleys as they look for new forest areas to make their homes. Once they have established their territory, Black Bears do not roam far, as their home range is generally 2 -15 miles, although they will travel as far as 100 miles if food becomes scarce.



Black Bears prefer old forests with a rich diversity of trees and shrubs that produce fruits, nuts and other plant material. A typical home range will also include rocky outcroppings and a stream or other water source. In the book, *Living with Bears*, Linda Masterson writes, "Black bears can survive – and even thrive – on the fringes of civilization, or sometimes right in the midst of it. The real question is whether people are willing to live with them, or whether as a species they'll once again go from wildlife to be treasured to nuisance to be eliminated."

In the early part of our American history, Black Bears were aggressively killed. By the late 1800s, their populations had been decimated throughout the eastern United States. During the industrial revolution, people abandoned farmlands and moved back into cities, which allowed the eventual return of forests and with them, an increasing bear population. By the 1980s the Black Bear population had recovered.

Black Bears have one of the slowest reproduction rates of all North American mammals. Females are not ready to breed until they are four to eight years old, and even when they start breeding, they only have a litter every two to four years. While the bears

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A Word from the President

Wetlands — Still an Endangered Resource

by Joe Coleman

After years of neglect and destruction, wetlands and their importance were finally recognized with federal and state protection about 30 years ago. The basic principal behind these laws is that the destruction (filling) of

wetlands should be avoided. If that is not possible, their destruction should be minimized, and, as a last resort, they should be mitigated or replaced.

Unfortunately mitigation has become big business. This has resulted in an emphasis on mitigation with avoidance and minimization usually slipping into the background. A number of studies concluded that most wetlands mitigation projects, and especially those undertaken by the developer onsite, are often unsuccessful. One report concluded when mitigation is necessary, wetland banks and in-lieu fee programs "offer some advantages over permittee-responsible mitigation." The reason for this is that such banks and programs are the result of partnerships and require extensive oversight over longer periods of time.

And, while wetlands banks are often the best way to mitigate wetlands, this is not always the case. Developers are allowed to purchase space in a bank and replace wetlands lost at a building site. While many of these banks provide excellent habitat for some wildlife and are generally more successful than small mitigation projects that are onsite and built by the developer, they have become an end unto themselves rather than a means to an end. They are often located in areas where land is less expensive, and buying space in the bank makes it possible for the developer to increase his profits, sometimes significantly. And, the wildlife that utilized the original wetlands is lost when the wetlands are simply mitigated elsewhere.

Until recently, local jurisdictions in Virginia had the ability to require developers to mitigate lost wetlands in the same close-by watershed. Unfortunately, a bill just flew through Virginia's General Assembly that takes this authority away from local jurisdictions. Unless there is a greater emphasis on avoidance and minimization, this will result in jurisdictions where land is at a premium and more expensive losing wetlands to areas where land is less expensive.

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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.

President	Joe Coleman	540-554-2542	jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
Past President	Nicole Hamilton	540-882-9638	nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org
Vice President	Nicole Hamilton	540-882-9638	nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org
Secretary	Rockie Fera	703-777-2905	rrfera@verizon.net
Treasurer	Michael Friedman	703-858-7692	mfriedman@loudounwildlife.org
Finance	Vacant		
Programs and			
Field Trips Chair	Laura Weidner	540-229-2816	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	Emily Cook	703-433-0263	ecook@loudounwildlife.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Donna Quinn	703-217-3544	dquinn@loudounwildlife.org
Conservation Advocacy	Andrea Soccio	703-407-0946	asoccio@loudounwildlife.org
Habitat Herald	Debbie Burtaine	571-434-0867	dburtaine@loudounwildlife.org
Community Outreach	Richelle Brown	703-946-6804	rbrown@loudounwildlife.org
Stream Monitoring	Vacant		
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
Amphibian Monitoring	Nicole Hamilton	540-882-9638	nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org



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

The only real solution to this is a stronger push for avoiding the destruction of wetlands. The preservation of natural wetlands and the conditions that create them should be our primary purpose. A thorough analysis of the wetland needs in the watershed should always be done. Geology, hydrology, species richness, and biological dynamics are some of the factors to consider and will sometimes mean that wetlands "cannot be effectively restored with present knowledge." **The National Academy of Sciences report unequivocally states: "Riparian wetlands should receive special attention and protection, because their value for stream water quality and overall stream health cannot be duplicated in any other landscape position."**

For anyone interested in this topic, I highly recommend the 2001 National Academy of Sciences report "Compensating for Wetland Loss under the Clean Water Act" which can be found online. Its Executive Summary alone has a wealth of information.

■ *Bears, continued from pg. 1*

live up to thirty years in the wild, they may only breed six times over the course of their lives. However, if food is plentiful they can give birth to two to three cubs in a season. Not all the cubs make it though. They fall from trees, drown in rivers, are hit by cars, and starve if something happens to their mother. In general, one out of three cubs dies before it is a year old. Even with slow reproduction and challenges of the first year, once bear hunting was reduced, their numbers recovered and today are considered healthy.

Black Bears are not the ferocious predators often portrayed in movies. They primarily eat plants with a preference for fruits, nuts and berries. Even though they look like serious predators, Black Bears rarely eat animals larger than ants and grubs. Less than ten percent of the bear's diet is meat, and that comes primarily from scavenging on carcasses through winter and eating insects that they dig up. In fact, their teeth are not optimized for cutting up meat or grinding foods as deer do. As a result, they need to eat a lot of tender, easily-digestible plant parts to sustain themselves.



LWC's 15th Annual Meeting

All members are invited to LWC's Annual Meeting on May 16 (location TBD). Beginning at 5:00 p.m., the evening will include

refreshments, music, a raffle, wildlife habitat exhibits showcasing local flora and fauna, and an exciting guest speaker.

President Joe Coleman will report on the state of the organization, and LWC's science fair and volunteer awards will be presented.

Join us for this fun and informative evening! For more information, visit our website or contact Helen Van Ryzin at hvanryzin@loudounwildlife.org.

Also, their feet are not designed for chasing prey. Black Bears have five toes on each foot, and their claws are not retractable. They walk and run similarly to the way we do, heel to toe. While they can sprint for short distances at speeds of up to 30 mph, they do so primarily to flee others, not to chase prey. Black Bears are built more for strength, with claws designed for digging and climbing trees.

If spring is the time of emergence, then summer is a time for mating and feeding. Mating for Black Bears generally takes place through June and July with males roaming through territories in search of females. Once the female's eggs are fertilized, they do not implant in the womb until the female is tucked away in her den for winter. If she is sick, injured or malnourished, the eggs are simply reabsorbed. This strategy enables females to forage through the fall and gives the developing young the best chance of survival.

As fall sets in, bears feed voraciously to put on weight to successfully make it through the winter. As acorns, hickory nuts, and berries ripen in late summer and early fall, Black Bears forage for as many as 20 hours per day, gaining up to five pounds per day. It takes a lot of food to gain that much weight, so bears will sometimes wander beyond their home ranges to forage. This is when we may see bears at our bird feeders or roaming through yards.

As fall ends, bears den up in hollow trees, underground burrows, and shallow caves. If all went well through fall, the embryos implant in the females and begin to grow in one of the fastest gestations known for a mammal of this size. By January or February, the cubs are born, hairless and pink and about the

■ *Continued on page 4*

■ *Bears, continued from pg. 3*

size of chipmunks. Through the winter slumber, the mother awakens long enough to greet her newborns and slip back to sleep as they nurse and grow. The cubs grow quickly and by the time they are four months old they are about the size of puppies. Throughout the winter, both males and females awaken every few weeks to eat a little, pass waste, and have some water.

Black Bears are not aggressive but are very shy and flee when they encounter people. Last year, when a Black Bear was sighted at a school in Aldie, outdoor activities were halted for a time. While this decision was made to protect the children from a potential encounter with the bear, bears rarely show aggression towards people. More often than not, any danger that could occur, results from people foolishly provoking or cornering the bear. In general, when a bear is seen in a neighborhood, it is just passing through and will get away from people as quickly as it can.

If in the forest and encountering a Black Bear, you may see other behaviors interpreted incorrectly because of misunderstanding. For example, when a bear wants to scent or see something better, it will stand on its hind legs. If a bear feels threatened, it may growl or make a mock-charge, but these are not actual acts of aggression, the bear is simply hoping to deter the intruder.

Encounters with bears are actually quite rare. Even when walking through woods, a Black Bear will likely leave before you can see it. Bears are quite observant with an excellent sense of smell. And, while their sight is a bit more nearsighted than ours, they see almost as well and in color as we do. Their hearing is much better than ours as they are able to hear in the ultrasonic range. They are also quite smart with an IQ tested to be second only to primates.

If you do happen to encounter a bear before it knows you are there, it is best to back away slowly while facing the bear, leaving it with a clear and easy escape route. If the bear seems interested in you, open your jacket, wave your arms, make noise and make yourself look as big as possible. Do not turn around and run as this could cause the bear to chase you.

Black bears are naturally very curious and this curiosity combined with their intelligence is what helps them get the most food and nutrition out of their environment as well as escape danger. They have excellent memories and can recall places where berries were years earlier. If you suspect bears are in your area, you may want to bring your bird feeders inside. Otherwise, you may not only lose some feeders but also habituate a bear to living near people, which never ends well for the bear.

Bears are wonderful wildlife to have in our natural world, and we can easily coexist with them. They require a rich and diverse habitat to thrive, and thus are indicators of healthy



habitat. When there have been sightings in Loudoun, their presence has elicited fear in some and excitement and awe in others. I remember a wonderful photo that Bob and Jody Lyon showed us of a Black Bear at their back screen door, sniffing out the scents of the house, no doubt in search of a tasty morsel. Finding no reward, the bear walked on. At our house, we had a Black Bear visit as it moved along the stream valley and through the neighborhood. I watched this large bear lick seeds out of a bird feeder. Surely, it could have crushed the feeder with its strength, but instead it licked seeds gingerly from the ports. After a few minutes, it left as quickly and calmly as it had arrived, and I removed the feeders for a few days to discourage it from staying.

Education is at the heart of teaching acceptance and tolerance for living with Black Bears. They are not to be feared but appreciated and respected. They remind us of what is wild. The more we learn about Black Bears and teach others about these magnificent creatures, the richer our county and our own lives will be.

To learn more, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has an excellent video, *Living with Black Bears*, which is highly informative, at www.dgif.virginia.gov/video/living-with-black-bears.

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Birdfoot Violet (*Viola pedata*)

by Kerry Bzdyk

One of the great joys of a walk or hike in Loudoun County in the spring is the discovery of colorful wildflowers along the path. The uniqueness and beauty of the Birdfoot Violet makes this little wildflower a welcome find. The Latin word *pedata* means “foot like” and refers to the shape of the leaves.

The Birdfoot Violet is a low growing perennial with short rhizomes that grows in most of the eastern half of the United States and in the piedmont area of Virginia, including here in Loudoun County. It blooms throughout the spring and is most easily recognized by its large, flat-faced flowers, prominent orange stamens, and very finely cut leaves that resemble bird feet. The beautiful flowers are usually one of two types: a mono-color form with lavender petals, with the upper two petals sometimes darker; and the bi-color form with the upper two petals a dark purple and the lower three petals a much lighter purple or lavender. The rhizomes spread underground to form colonies of plants, adding to their beauty. The leaves grow on 4- to 6-inch stems and are smooth and lobed into three parts. Each of these lobes is further dissected into three more parts. The flowers are 1¼ to 1¾ inches across and bloom on long stalks or peduncles. This violet will grow in a variety of conditions but prefers well-drained soil in partial shade. It will even grow in the shade of black walnut trees.

Along with providing us humans with something beautiful to see, this violet also provides wildlife with food. Bees visit to feed on the nectar (and to pollinate), and it is also a fine butterfly host plant. The Great Spangled Fritillary will lay its eggs on the stems of the Birdfoot Violet, and the newly hatched caterpillars will start eating the leaves when they hatch.

The fruit is a small green capsule about 9mm across. And many ground-feeding birds, including Northern Bob White, Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, and even the wild Turkey eat its seeds. The white-footed mouse will also feed on the seeds, and rabbits will eat the leaves.

There are over 200 species of violets distributed throughout the world, and their medicinal and culinary uses can be traced back to Roman times when they were used for making wine, syrups and vinegars. The leaves contain vitamins C and A and salicylic acid (like aspirin). They also have expectorant properties and have been used for respiratory disorders. Leaves are edible and can be added to salads and soups (as a thickener) and cooked as a leafy green. The flowers can be candied and used as a decoration or frozen in cubes to dress up summer drinks. They are sweet and slightly spicy.

Useful, beautiful, and beneficial to wildlife, the Birdfoot Violet is a welcome addition to our wild landscape in Loudoun County.

Sources:

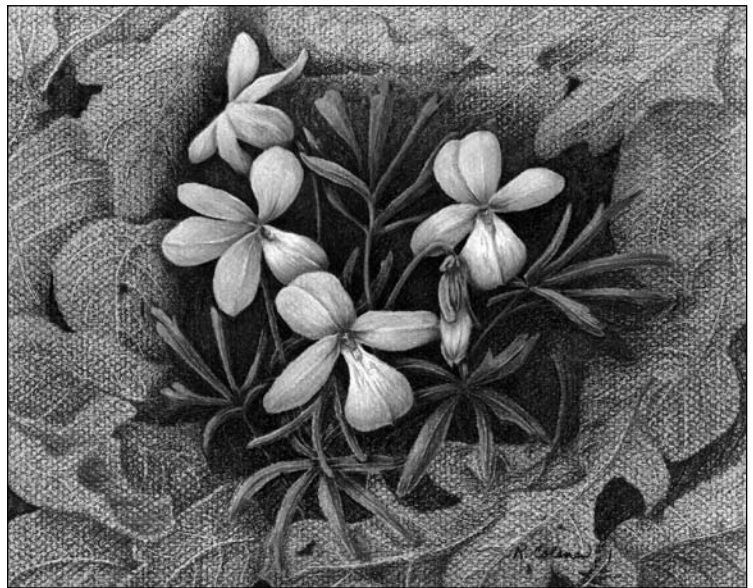
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www.ppws.vt.edu/scott/weed_id/viope.htm

Botanical art by Karen Coleman.



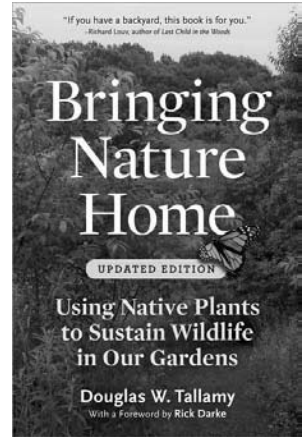
Chirps from the LWC Nature Book Club

by Donna Quinn

February 2010: *Bringing Nature Home*

by Douglas B. Tallamy

"Because food for all animals starts with the energy harnessed by plants, the plants we grow in our gardens have the critical role of sustaining, directly or indirectly, all of the animals with which we share our living spaces. The degree to which the plants in our gardens succeed in this regard will determine the diversity and numbers of wildlife that can survive in managed landscapes. And because it is we who decide what plants will grow in our gardens, the responsibility of our nation's biodiversity lies largely with us. Which animals will make it and which will not? We help make this decision every time we plant or remove something from our yards."



Bringing Nature Home is a call to action for all of us who care about the environment and a reminder of how the smallest things can make the biggest difference. Tallamy's concise report of scientific findings demonstrates without a doubt the critical importance of the role native plants play in sustaining biodiversity. Without native plants, there is no food or habitat for the animals and insects that evolved alongside them. Without food or homes, native animal species cannot survive. Often we design our gardens based on an idea of what we think will look great in our front yards, rather than considering the impact of our choices on our native residents. For all the beauty of a suburban garden, when non-natives are used and native plants are removed, the garden might as well be made of plastic. Tallamy's message is ultimately one of hope, however, and reminds us that despite the devastation we have wreaked on the environment, most species could live alongside humans if only their basic ecological needs were met. Further, that biodiversity is a national treasure to be preserved and is as important as other resources such as clean water and air. And like other natural resources, it can be restored when timely action is taken. By the simple act of planting native plants in our yards, we contribute directly to preserving the beauty of our natural habitat and protecting biodiversity. Tallamy gives us many reasons to plant native plants, and now is the time for each of us to take action by planting natives, removing invasives, and educating our neighbors to do likewise.

Armed with our asters, bee balm, and lobelias — we can make a difference! Our patchwork gardens of native flowers, trees, and shrubs will spread to become a sanctuary where humans and native species live alongside one another. *Bringing Nature Home* includes plant lists. You may also reference LWC's handout "Gardening for Wildlife Plant List". For more information, refer to LWC's website at www.loudounwildlife.org and the Virginia Native Plant Society's website www.vnps.org/index.htm.

What's Next?

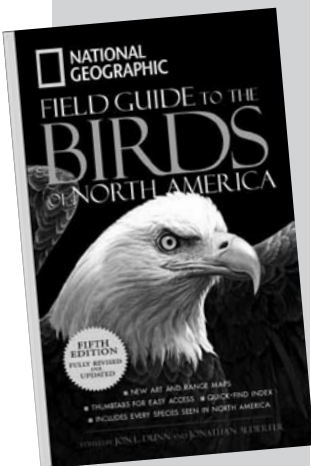
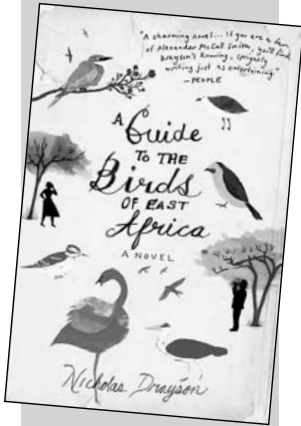
Our next reading selection is a collection of essays titled *Gathering Moss*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Yes, it is about mosses — and also the interconnectedness of all living things. Our next meeting is April 8. Sign up on the website; www.loudounwildlife.com.

Other recommended reading:

The Owl and the Woodpecker by Paul Bannick. So much more than just another bird book — it not only captures the spirit of the birds but also the soul of the naturalist and photographer.

A Guide to the Birds of East Africa by Nicholas Drayson. Charming novel about two men who compete for the heart of a woman by entering a birding competition.

National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, revised and updated. Latest edition, which includes new classifications, updated ranges, and side tabs to make locating species faster.



Summer 2010 Nature Day Camps

Kids entering grades three through seven, whether nature lovers or couch potatoes, will find lots to love about the Natural History Day Camps (June 28–July 2 and July 12–16) taking place at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve this summer. Planning is underway for two fun-filled weeks in the outdoors sponsored by LWC, the Piedmont Environmental Council, Loudoun County Parks and Recreation, and Friends of Banshee Reeks.



Banshee Reeks is located five miles south of Leesburg off Route 15. Campers will explore the woods, fields, and water 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 is only \$130 per week, and space is limited. For a quick look at last year's camp, visit www.loudounwildlife.org/blog/2008/09/nature-camp-2009-wrap-up.

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.

Brook Trout

by Erin Snook

In streams and lakes throughout the Northeast in the springtime, you may notice freshly hatched stoneflies, mayflies, and caddisflies disappearing into the mouths of the intriguing Eastern Brook Trout. The brook trout's native range is from the Hudson Bay down to the Georgian Appalachian Mountains and as far east as the Great Lakes and Manitoba, Canada.

As one of the only trout species native to many eastern states, brook trout are intolerant to slight changes in their habitat and can be found only in cold, clean, well-oxygenated creeks, rivers, and lakes. They are also territorial and quite intolerant of competition from other species. For these reasons, they are excellent indicators of stream quality. Eastern Brook Trout feed on a wide range of insects, crustaceans, mollusks, worms, fishes, and amphibians. However, they are often observed eating insects such as stoneflies, which are—not coincidentally—another water-quality indicator species. In the springtime, some brook trout, known as salters, run to the sea for a few months and may feed on a greater variety of organisms than their strictly freshwater-dwelling counterparts.

Interestingly, identifying characteristics and behavior vary greatly depending on the trout's habitat. Eastern Brook Trout are generally olive green to dark brown with green marbling on the back. The sides of the fish are lighter and are characterized by red spots with blue halos, while their bellies may be silvery-white to red. Fins have reddish coloration with black lines and white leading edges. In cold mountain streams, brook trout reach a maximum of 6 inches in four years. Those living in lakes or larger water bodies may reach 20 inches and weigh nearly 4 pounds. They generally live about 5 years.

Virginia stands out in the mid-Atlantic as home to 36 sub-watersheds with a healthy presence of stream-dwelling brook trout and 80 sub-watersheds in which populations have been identified as present but reduced. On the other hand, a 2005 study showed that regionally Virginia also had the largest number of brook trout-inhabited sub-watersheds destroyed, specifically 148.

The greatest threats to Eastern Brook Trout include high water temperatures, agricultural runoff, riparian conditions, non-native fish species, urbanization, climate change, and acid deposition. Unfortunately, since the Eastern Brook Trout is such an intolerant species, its survival largely depends on immediate and effective action on seemingly unrelated issues such as air quality, climate change, human population growth, and land development.

Thanks in part to its value as a game fish, there are several conservation efforts aimed at restoring and protecting naturally producing populations. With its "Back the Brookie" campaign, Trout Unlimited is working on a comprehensive effort to conserve and restore populations and habitat. The delicate native Eastern Brook Trout could always use another admirer and advocate on its side.





Stoneflies (*Plecoptera*)

by Mary Lopresti

While the average person (myself included) may not be able to handle the sight of a creepy-crawly such as the stonefly, many scientists and fishermen have learned to appreciate this four-winged insect.

Stoneflies experience an incomplete metamorphosis, which means, like humans, they keep close to the same body shape most of their life. After hatching from their egg, the stonefly becomes a nymph (young stonefly) and then an adult. The appearance of the nymph differs from an adult in the emergence of wing pads instead of wings and in the length of their bodies and tails. While the nymph can measure 0.5 to 5 centimeters in length and have two long tails, the adult measures up to 2½ inches long and has two short tails. They each have two long antennae, widely spaced eyes, gills found on the throat or at the base of the legs and abdomen, and three pairs of crablike legs with claws.

Many species of stonefly live on or under submerged and exposed stones in or along streams. Scientists have discovered that stoneflies are typically found living in the flowing waters of cool streams (under 77° F). Cooler, faster-moving water carries more oxygen than warm water. Like many other aquatic organisms, as water moves past the stonefly's gills, dissolved oxygen in the form of microscopic bubbles is transferred from the water to its blood.

Stoneflies help keep other insect populations in check. While a hungry stonefly may chomp on a plant once in a while, they are mainly carnivorous and feast on insects such as midges, blackflies, mayflies, and other stoneflies. They find themselves prey to salamanders, birds, and fish. Trout in particular find them exceptionally appealing.

Nymphs are very poor swimmers; therefore they use their crab-like legs to crawl along the streambed. They easily become victims of trout when they lose their footing in the current. While nymphs are available to fish year round, stonefly adults live only 2 to 3 weeks. During mating season, clouds of stoneflies congregate together above streams, frenzied in their search for a mate. Some stoneflies, after mating or laying eggs, fall spent on the water. The sight of females laying eggs in the water or in the air so the eggs drop to the water is like fast-food heaven to trout. For this reason, fishermen attempt to imitate the commotion of stoneflies when casting their lines or when manufacturing fishing lures.



Resources:

www.worldbookonline.com/pl/infofinder/article?id=ar534810&st=stoneflies

www.troutnut.com/hatch/13/Insect-Plecoptera-Stoneflies

[//streamwatch.org/bug-blog/stoneflies](http://streamwatch.org/bug-blog/stoneflies)

[//chamisa.freeshell.org/mayfly.htm](http://chamisa.freeshell.org/mayfly.htm)

[//waterontheweb.org/under/waterquality/oxygen.html](http://waterontheweb.org/under/waterquality/oxygen.html)

www.bcadventures.com/adventure/angling/bugs/stonefly/stonefly.phtml :

Article by Ron Newman

Pictures from: www.forestryimages.org



Drive for Charity - May 20, 2010

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

'Drive' for Charity on Thursday, May 20, 2010, and see 100% of your tolls returned to the community. On that day all the tolls collected on the Dulles Greenway will be donated to charity. Approximately \$233,000 was raised during last year's 'Drive' and donated to six charities: the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the March of Dimes, ECHO, the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter, Fresh Air/Full Care and Dulles Greenway Citizen Award.

E-mail Notification



Are You Missing the Monthly Email Announcements?

Around the first of each month, an email that lists our programs, activities and special announcements is sent to all LWC members. This includes programs or events that did not make it into the Habitat Herald, as well as the occasional action alert. 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.

Help Make a Difference: Join the Spring 2010 Habitat Restoration Projects

Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary

The Rust Nature Sanctuary, on the western edge of Leesburg, has a mix of different habitats on 68 acres that is home to numerous wildlife species. On Friday and Saturday, April 9 and 10, from 9 am to noon, LWC habitat restoration volunteers will help the sanctuary by removing some of the invasive and aggressive plants at both the pond and around the pollinator garden and replacing them with native plants. If you are interested in helping please contact Ann Garvey at ahgarvey@aol.com or 540-882-4405.

Leesburg's Town Branch Riparian Buffer

Last June, LWC helped the Leesburg Environmental Advisory Committee/Watershed Committee and the Piedmont Environmental Council plant 350 trees, shrubs, and native perennial plants along Town Branch. We did this to create a riparian buffer, the single most effective way to protect water quality along the stream. On Saturday, April 24, from 9 am to noon, the plants that did not survive last year will be replaced and some additional areas will be planted. If you are interested in helping please contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Waterford's Phillips Farm

In the past two years, hundreds of volunteers from LWC and the Waterford Foundation have planted a thousand trees and shrubs along the South Fork Catoclin Creek on the Phillips Farm and removed a tremendous quantity of non-native, invasive plants. To celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day, on April 22, from 3 to 6 pm, we will plant more trees and shrubs on the Phillips Farm and continue removing and controlling the invasive alien plants along the Catoclin. If you're interested in helping with this project please contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Questions about any of the above? Contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Birdathon 2010! May 1-15

**Help raise money for bird conservation
and have fun at the same time!**

- All skill levels welcome
- Great prizes for different age groups and skill levels
- Bird on your own, form a team, or come on one of our walks on International Migratory Day, May 9th, to count species.
- A fun way to get outside and identify birds while raising money for our local birds and their habitats.

Join Us!



2 Ways to Participate

1) Be a Birdathoner

- Register to be a birdathoner participant by signing up on the website.
- Gather pledges from friends, family, neighbors in support of helping birds
- Select your count day (a 24-hour period between May 1 - 15).
- Visit our website to sign up for one of the bird walks on May 9, International Migratory Bird Day
- Conduct your own count, identifying as many species as you can.
- Follow up with your sponsors to collect their pledges and mail them in to LWC by June 12.

2) Be a Sponsor

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

More information on our website - www.loudounwildlife.org



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 normally meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. All LWC members are welcome. **Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.**

Bird Walk at Sky Meadows State Park — Saturday, April 3, 8:00 a.m. LWC is partnering with the Northern Virginia Bird Club for a free bird walk for all ages at Sky Meadows State Park. The park is known for its large colony of Red-headed Woodpeckers and its diversity of birdlife. Meet in the main parking lot near the Visitor Center. Please bring binoculars; note this is a state fee area. Directions can be found at www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/sky.shtml. **Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.**

Cricket Frogs at Bles Park — Sunday, April 11, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Registration Required. Cricket frogs are very small frogs that many people may not recognize as frogs by their call, which sounds like two stones being tapped together. Bles Park is a real haven for this special frog. Class will include a discussion of cricket frogs, their habitats during the breeding and non-breeding season, their life cycles, and the ways to identify them. A walk along the trails to listen to the frogs' unique calls and hopefully to spot a few will follow. Please bring a flashlight or headlamp as well as a chair to sit on. Bles Park is located at 44830 Riverside Parkway, Ashburn. **Questions or to register: sign up on-line (www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm) or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.**

An Appreciation of Bird Song — Tuesday, April 13, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Ida Lee Recreation Center in Leesburg. Wil Hersherberger, one of West Virginia's leading naturalists and birding experts, will give a presentation on bird songs. Listen to a number of songbirds, explore how much information these birds are conveying to one another, and learn to enjoy the beauty of their songs. For directions to Ida Lee see website at www.leesburgva.gov/index.aspx?page=463. **Questions: contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.**

Bird Walk at Algonkian Park in Eastern Loudoun — Wednesday, April 14, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Join LWC on a mid-week bird walk. Algonkian Park has a varied habitat, including long frontage along the Potomac River. Admission to the park is free, there is ample parking, and comfort stations are available. Meet at the parking lot by the pool (see map at www.loudounwildlife.org).

nvrpa.org/documents/file/algonkiamap.gif). Bring binoculars if you have them. Birders of all levels welcome. **Questions: contact Bill Brown at 703-437-6277 or billbr50@msn.com.**

Nature Walk at Phillips Farm — Saturday, April 17, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Registration Required. Come to an early spring nature walk at Phillips Farm in Waterford. LWC, in partnership with the Waterford Foundation, has been working on several environmental projects on the site. John Souders, local historian, will give insight into the history of the mill and surrounding area, and Paul Miller and Phil Daley will provide information about the many natural wonders the farm offers. **Questions or to register: contact Paul Miller at 540-882-3112 or pmiller@loudounwireless.com.**

Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival — Saturday, April 17, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 18 from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Visit us at the LWC booth for displays and lots of free handouts. LWC t-shirts, hats, pins, and kits for creating your own monarch waystation will be for sale to help us raise money for our programs. For more information on the event, visit the festival website at www.idalee.org/parks/events/FlowerGarden. Anyone wanting to volunteer at the LWC booth can volunteer online or may contact Richelle Brown at rbrown@loudounwildlife.org



SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE

Join a naturalist from the Friends of Banshee Reeks and LWC 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, April 18
Sunday, May 16
Sunday, June 20
Sunday, July 18 } at 1:00 p.m.



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, April 10

Saturday, June 12

Saturday, July 10

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

Earthday@Loudoun Family Festival — Sunday, April 25, 11am - 4pm at Willow Creek Farm, Broadlands VA. This free festival will offer virtually everything for the eco-conscience, including more than 75 exhibitors, a Green Marketplace offering earth-friendly products and services, hands-on educational activities for all ages and many other entertainment options. The festival is designed to be a family-oriented event to educate Loudouners on the environmental changes happening in the local area. **For more information visit:** <http://www.earth-dayatloudoun.org>

Bird-A-Thon 2010 — May 1 - 15. LWC is again sponsoring a Birdathon this year as part of Celebrating Wings Over America. You can have fun birding and help raise money for LWC. Participating teams pick any 24-hour time-period between May 1 and May 15 for their own Birdathon. If you do not want to participate in the Birdathon, but still want to help, you can sponsor one of the teams. **Visit our web site at www.loudoun-wildlife.org for more information.**

Trilliums And Warblers — Wednesday, May 5, 9:00 a.m. Sign-up required. Spring bursts forth with incredible energy and show at the G. Thompson Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in northwestern Fauquier County. Join Dr. Emily Southgate and Carole Miller for a wildflower and warbler walk at this beautiful location on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge

Mountain. Acres of large-flowered trilliums along with a number of other wildflowers bloom in early May at the same time migrating warblers move through the area. Participants will meet in one of the parking lots in the WMA, but car-pooling from some locations in Loudoun County will also be possible.

To sign-up, contact Emily Southgate @ 540-687--8291 or ewbsouthgate@gmail.com.

Celebrating Wings Over America: International Migratory Bird Day — Saturday, May 8, 8:00 a.m. During spring, thousands of migratory birds move through North America to their nesting territories. Some will stay and nest in our area, while others will spend only a few days here replenishing their energy before continuing a journey that may be thousands of miles long. To celebrate and highlight this natural phenomenon, International Migratory Bird Day is scheduled on May 8. In recognition of the importance of healthy wildlife habitat to migration, LWC is sponsoring several 8:00 a.m. bird walks and an all-day bird survey throughout Loudoun County. **To participate in one of the walks or the survey, sign up on our website or contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org before May 6. Please bring binoculars.**

Mid-Week Bird Walk at Foxcroft School — Wednesday, May 12, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Registration Required. Join Christine Perdue Smith and Joe Coleman on one of LWC's mid-week nature trips as they explore different habitats within the Foxcroft School grounds near Middleburg. Look for spring migrants, as well as any wildflowers that are blooming. **To register and find meeting location, contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.**

LWC Annual Meeting: Celebrating Loudoun's Wildlife — Sunday, May 16, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Join us for LWC's annual membership meeting. The event will include a raffle for an original work of art; wildlife habitat exhibits showcasing the floral and fauna of our area; and an exciting program. All LWC members are invited to attend! Watch our website for more details.

Hop To It! Frogs, Toads, and Their Relatives — Wednesday, June 2, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (location TBD). Learn all you ever wanted to about frogs, toads, and other amphibians. Meet some of these creatures up close to discover some of their secrets and play some froggy games. Join us as local naturalist and storyteller, Alonso Abugattas, presents a fun and exciting children's program. **Questions contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.**



■ Continued on page 12



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

Bird Walk at Banshee Reeks and Dulles Wetlands — Wednesday, June 9, 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Registration Required. Join Joe Coleman and Mary Ann Good on one of LWC's mid-week birding trips. Meet at the Dulles Wetlands at 7:00 a.m., or meet at the visitor's center at Banshee Reeks at 9:00 a.m. Hiking footwear (waterproof if you are coming to the Wetlands), long pants, and insect repellent are advised. This walk is co-sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society. **To register or for questions contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.**

Magic of Monarch Butterflies — Sunday, June 13, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Broadlands Community Center. **Registration Required.** In February 2009, Nicole Hamilton traveled to the mountains of Mexico to visit the monarch butterfly over-wintering sites. Through video, sound, and photos, she will share this experience and provide information on how you can create a Monarch Waystation in your backyard. The Broadlands Community Center is located at 43008 Waxpool RD, Broadlands. Free family program but please sign up online. **Questions, please contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org**

Butterflies at Banshee Reeks — Saturday, June 19, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Join Jon Little for one of our free, family butterfly walks. Investigate some of the many diverse, natural areas at Banshee Reeks and identify all of the butterflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Questions: contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org or 540-882-9638.

Dragonfly Walk at Bles Park — Sunday, June 27, 10:30 a.m. Join Andy Rabin on a free, fun, and informative dragonfly walk as he visits some of the best dragonfly habitat in the county. Learn how to catch, handle, identify, and release these insects. Bring an insect net if you have one (some extra nets will be provided). Adults and children welcome. Meet at Bles Park in Ashburn (for directions www.loudoun.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=924) **Questions: e-mail Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.**



Butterfly Walk at The Blue Ridge Center For Environmental Stewardship — Saturday, July 17, 10:00 a.m. Join LWC on a butterfly walk at this beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County and watch butterflies using the summer wildflowers. The Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship is located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671, a few miles south of Harpers Ferry. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9:00 a.m. **Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.**

Birding the Blue Ridge Center



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 located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 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 visitor center. The Blue Ridge Center is located just north of Neersville, at 11611 Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671. Detailed directions can be found on the website, www.brce.org. Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Saturday, April 24

Saturday, May 22

Saturday, June 26 - (This walk co-sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society)

Saturday, July 24



Walks begin at 8:00 a.m.

Gray Tree Frogs: Enjoying The Chorus — Saturday, July 24, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Registration Required. Join us at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship for an evening with gray tree frogs. Program will include the frog's characteristics, habitat needs, and lifecycle. The evening will end with going out into the field to listen to the frogs' 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. **Class size is limited; please sign up online (www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm) or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.**

Butterflies and Dragonflies at Claude Moore Park — Sunday, July 25, 10:30 a.m. Join Nicole Hamilton and Andy Rabin for one of LWC's free, family butterfly and dragonfly walks. Investigate some of 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. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.

Butterfly Safari — Wednesday, July 28, at the Broadlands Community Center, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Families with children ages 5 and up are invited to join the fun as local naturalist, storyteller, and the co-founder of the Washington Area Butterfly Club, Alonso Abugattas, shares some wonderful facts about these winged wonders. Discover the many clever ways these delicate creatures have of surviving. The Broadlands Community Center is located at 43008 Waxpool RD, Broadlands. Free family program. **Questions: contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.**



**Questions
about the programs?**
Contact Laura Weidner at
lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.
For up-to-date information on our programs
check our web site at www.loudounwildlife.org

2009 Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

The 13th annual Central Loudoun CBC took place on Sunday, Dec. 27, 2009. LWC is thankful to all the counters, and especially the sector and subsector leaders. This was one of about 2,000 Christmas Bird Counts, part of the longest and largest citizen-science effort in the world. We also appreciate all the private and public landowners who gave us permission to visit their properties to survey the birds, which made an incredible difference in the numbers and diversity of what was found.

For those of us who went owling, the day started with promise under clear skies, a nearly full moon, and temperatures in the mid-30's at 4:00 am. Unfortunately that quickly changed as the temperature dropped to 25 at 7:00 am accompanied by a freezing fog. Roads that had been simply wet an hour before were dangerously slick. And while the fog underlying sunny skies was beautiful, it was also cold. While the temperature ultimately warmed up to the low 50's later in the day, making it a great day to be outside, most ponds remained totally frozen.

The 92 participants, including many beginner birders and ten under age 19, found 87 species, a little less than our annual average, and 28,353 individual birds, about average.



Loggerhead Shrike

The highlights of the count included:

- 1 Loggerhead Shrike found by Gerco Hoogeweg's team
- 1 Long-eared Owl found by Bob Abrams, and four Barn Owls, the most we've found since our very first year
- 2 Gray Catbirds
- 3 Brown Thrashers, a high count
- 5 Red-breasted Nuthatches in two different old pine plantations
- 38 Hermit Thrushes, a high count
- many raptors, including 30 Bald Eagles, our second highest count, and 18 Cooper's Hawks, our highest count
- several interesting sparrows, including 15 American Trees (low), 29 White-crowned (low), and 7 Chipping (a high count)
- 1 Pine Siskin and 6 Purple Finches, both way down from last year, which was an irruption year

■ Continued on page 14



■ Christmas Bird Count, continued

Two teams had seven-woodpecker days, with one team finding all seven winter woodpecker species in 40 minutes on the same farm and then finding all seven woodpecker species again later in the day. A total of 20 Red-headed Woodpeckers, a high for this count, were found throughout the county.

With most of the count's ponds frozen and the streams and Potomac in flood, it was hard to find a lot of waterfowl. To make it more challenging, several of the larger bodies of water, which do not totally freeze, were fogged in when visited early in the morning. However, the team led by Dori Rhodes saw a flock of Snow Geese flying overhead, and Gerco Hoogeweg's team located two Red-breasted Mergansers, surprisingly the first found on this count.

At the end of the day, many participants met to share experiences at Red Hot & Blue for the Tally Rally, coordinated by Mike Friedman. A variety of tasty meat and vegetarian dishes fed the hungry group.

To compare this year's count to previous years, check out www.loudounwildlife.org. To compare the Central Loudoun CBC to others, check out www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/.

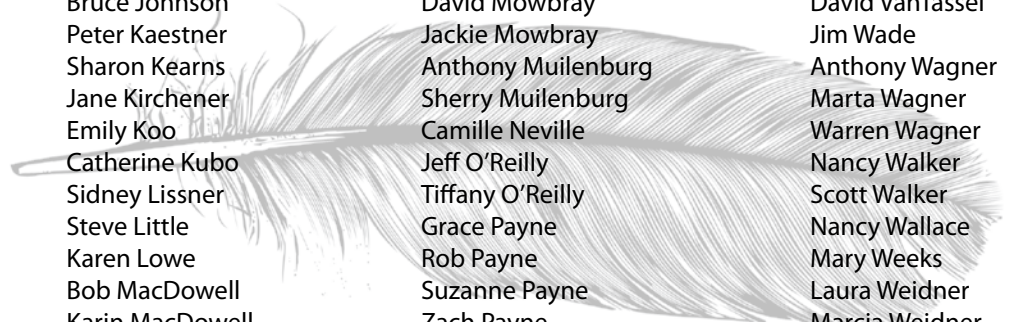
And again, thank you to all the counters:

Bob Abrams
Ana Arguelles
Dale Ball
Bill Brown
Mel Buchwald
Constance Chatfield-Taylor
Roger Clapp
Eli Clizbe
Ike Clizbe
Kent Clizbe
Anita Colvard
Jeff Cramer
KC Crichton
Ellie Daley
Phil Daley
Kate Eldridge
Cliff Fairweather
Karen Fairweather
Michael Friedman
Ann Garvey
Tom Garvey
Anne Gockel

Mary Ann Good
Carol Hadlock
Jay Hadlock
Dirck Harris
Gerry Hawkins
Bruce Hill
Robin Hoofnagle
Gerco Hoogeweg
Bob James
Patricia James
Bruce Johnson
Peter Kaestner
Sharon Kearns
Jane Kirchener
Emily Koo
Catherine Kubo
Sidney Lissner
Steve Little
Karen Lowe
Bob MacDowell
Karin MacDowell
Steve Makrancy

Tom Marshall
Nan McCarry
David McCarthy
Beth McClelland
Liam McGranaghan
Kevin McKee
Larry Meade
Carole Miller
Paul Miller
Linda Millington
David Mowbray
Jackie Mowbray
Anthony Muilenburg
Sherry Muilenburg
Camille Neville
Jeff O'Reilly
Tiffany O'Reilly
Grace Payne
Rob Payne
Suzanne Payne
Zach Payne
Christine Perdue

Donna Quinn
Tom Raque
Dori Rhodes
Debra Sanderson
Diane Schmidt
Cheri Schneck
Stanwyn Shetler
Sally Snidow
Anna Urciolo
Helen VanRyzin
David VanTassel
Jim Wade
Anthony Wagner
Marta Wagner
Warren Wagner
Nancy Walker
Scott Walker
Nancy Wallace
Mary Weeks
Laura Weidner
Marcia Weidner
Jeff Wneck



Yes, I want to Join/Renew My Membership!

Membership Benefits include:

- Making a Difference
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- Classes and Workshops
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Regular Monthly Meetings and Programs

Go online at www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm



Adventures of Zoom & Compass

"A Black Bear Did This?"

by Senia Hamoui

"It's knocked down my bird feeder twice already!" cried Abby.

"And you think it may be a squirrel?" asked Zoom, nodding to Compass.

"C'mon," he urged. "I could get us there in 20 minutes."

They rushed over to find a bird feeder on the ground, the rod that held it, broken. "It's not a squirrel that did this, Abby," Zoom stated.

"Or that," said Compass, pointing to a torn bag of dog food on the front porch.

Zoom placed her hand on Abby's shoulder. "Black bears are the only species of bear found in our area, and Virginia is considered bear country, with a healthy population here in Loudoun. They're not known to hurt anyone without being provoked, so there's no reason for alarm."

"Wait a minute! Are you telling me that a bear did this?" cried Abby.

"That's what it looks like," Compass interjected. "If you look at the Douglas Fir here, you'll notice claw marks on the bark. On the ground are animal tracks—those of a bear. And before telling you about my favorite clue," he mused, "I want to explain that bears are omnivores, with the majority or 80 percent of their diet consisting of insects, nuts, fruit, leaves and roots."

"What does their diet have anything to do with this?" asked Abby.

Compass pointed to a small pile of scat. "We could learn so much about an animal's diet from its poop," he said. "If you examine the bear's here, you'll see seeds—my guess, the very seeds from your bird feeder."

"Put so eloquently, Compass," said Zoom sarcastically.

Compass smiled and then continued, "There's no reason to be fearful, Abby. Usually, all it takes to keep the bear away is to remove the attractants. For starters, you'll have to take down your bird feeder in the spring. And you don't want to store pet food outside. Bears have a strong sense of smell, and whether it's pet food or trash, his nose will guide him to it."

"You want to make sure that you're not providing food to the bear," Zoom jumped in. "Trash should be placed in closed containers, or better yet, kept inside until ready to be disposed."

Keep in mind that bears are highly intelligent animals and may continue to return for a couple of weeks if it found food the first time."

"You know that beekeeper down the road that has an electric fence surrounding the hives?" asked Compass. "He put up the fence a few years back to keep out bears."

Abby giggled. "The kids would all say that it was to keep out Yogi Bear—I guess they were on to something."

"If you do see a bear, Abby, just stay calm and make sure it has plenty of room to escape. Back away slowly while facing the bear," explained Compass. "Don't run or make any sudden movements—it can outrun you in a heartbeat."

"If you see a bear and it doesn't see you," interjected Zoom, "calmly move away, making noise to let it know you're there."

"What if it's in my front yard, coming towards me?" Abby asked.

"You make yourself look big and make I-o-u-d noises!" growled Compass as he acted out the scenario. "The point is to make the bear feel unwelcome."

"... and these tactics really work?" wondered Abby.

"Almost always. If the bear ever attacks, fight back."

Abby swallowed hard. "Fight back?"

"You know—with rocks, sticks, your hands, whatever, really. I don't think it would ever get to that point though," Compass said with a smile.

"Black bears have a natural distrust of humans and because of this, avoid us whenever they can," Zoom explained. "Feeding the bears, directly or indirectly, will slowly erase this natural distrust, resulting in dire consequences."

"I will do my part and remove all attractants, detectives," said Abby. "And I know what to do if I ever see a bear, although it sounds like I'd mostly see its rear as it scrambles away."

"And, all over the state of Virginia, the bears and the people lived happily ever after," said Zoom and Compass with a high five.





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Volunteer for a Citizen Science Program

LWC offers many opportunities for citizens to participate in programs that promote the collection of important environmental data.

Stream Monitoring

Interested in what you might find in a stream near you? LWC works alongside the Loudoun Watershed Watch in monitoring our local streams for all types of bacterial and invertebrate life. Join a team in the search and identification of species integral to monitoring the quality of Loudoun's streams. Requires a commitment of 3-4 hours at each of three sessions between the months of April and November.

Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring

Bluebirds, some of our most beloved songbirds for their beautiful colors and cheerful songs, need our help to thrive. Join LWC's Nestbox Monitoring program and observe the nesting behavior of this magnificent species, while at the same time providing valuable census information on the local population of bluebirds.

Amphibian Monitoring

Amphibians are wonderful natural indicators of the health of streams and surrounding areas. In order to gauge just how well these fascinating creatures thrive in Loudoun County, LWC launched the Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Program (LAMP). Help monitor the health of our amphibious population through call surveys, site surveys, and migration mapping.



Bird Atlas

Participate in Loudoun County's unique bird atlas program, in which volunteers track and record the species and numbers of birds found in Loudoun. The county is divided into 75 blocks, and each of these 10 square-mile blocks is assigned to a different individual or group to ensure countywide coverage. The atlas has been an ongoing project since 2009, and is set for publication in 2014. Volunteer while you can!

 Visit the LWC website at www.loudounwildlife.org for more information and to sign up to volunteer for these rewarding experiences! 