



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XIX, Issue 2

Summer 2014

The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)

by Emily B. Cook



The Great Blue Heron
© Jim Clark

In the back of our neighborhood we are incredibly lucky to have access to the Potomac Heritage Trail, part of which runs through deep, marshy wetlands flanked on one side by a shallow pond and on the other, the Potomac River. One of my favorite things to do on cool summer mornings is take an early morning hike to the river while the mist still rests on the pond and the sky is a pale lavender. This time of day is so peaceful and quiet with the sun just peeking up over the horizon. It's at this time of day that I can almost always depend on my friend, the Great Blue Heron, to be there waiting, carefully walking along the rim of the pond in search of his breakfast. Sometimes he is so still he goes unnoticed to those with an inexperienced eye, his shadowed profile camouflaged by the trees, cattails and rippling water. Even as I search the horizon for his familiar presence, it often takes patience to see him among the reeds.

He stands at the edge of the shoreline. His movements are awkward, yet delicate and purposeful. His head angled sharply downward, each shift in the Great Blue Heron's position is carefully calculated so that he will go undetected by the fish just below the water's surface. His long, spindly legs sometimes stop mid-stride as he holds his position for what seems an eternity before slowly continuing onward.

The Great Blue Heron is majestic and regal in appearance and is the largest in the North American heron family. Despite being an average of five feet tall with an impressive six-foot wingspan, the Great Blue Heron weighs only a slight five pounds. With a long and slender frame the heron is crowned with a thick, pointed bill and keen eyes masked with black wispy plumes that stretch past the back of his narrow, white head, resembling a

In This Issue:

The Great Blue Heron	1		
President's Message	2		
LWC 2014 - Annual Meeting	5		
Announcements	6		
New Dragonfly Website	6		
Drive for Charity	6		
Wildlife Hazards	8		
Prescribed Grazing Goats	10		
Nooks and Crannies	11		
Programs and Field Trips	12		
Backyard Mosquitoes	14		
Stinging Caterpillars	15		
Membership Renewal	16		

Continued on page 3



President's Message

What We Do (or don't do) Matters

by Nicole Hamilton

Last February, I submitted information on my garden to Monarch Joint Venture to post on its Google Map of waystations. As I went through the form, it was easy answer, after easy answer: name (yup, I know that), location (done), plants included (here's my list, all set). And then I got to this question: What inspired you to create your habitat?

Well gosh, how do I answer that in 100 words or less? The answer to that question is something you muse over with a friend while sipping a glass of chilled wine on a warm summer's evening, as katydids and gray tree frogs sound off and a chickadee splashes you from the birdbath. But I wanted to submit my garden information, so I had to distill it and think to that moment – that instant between knowing and not knowing what it meant to create "habitat" and the wonders of nature that would show up by doing so. It was that moment that inspired me.

Truth be told, I can't remember that moment; although I know it must have happened. There is always that spark like when flint strikes steel. Sometimes that spark is barely detectible, but sooner or later, it starts a fire. It could have been a book I read, or a program I went to, or a bird or butterfly that I wondered about. I know Monarchs were involved as I started raising them that very first year I planted our garden. I know Chimney Swifts that celebrated the lack of a cap on

our chimney and chattered through the summer played a role. I know Box Turtles that dug their legs into the same dirt I had touched told me tales of healthy habitat. I know bats and bees and snakes and groundhogs and opossums and lightning bugs and Luna Moths and warblers and woodpeckers and... Well, I know that at every turn I opened my eyes wider and wider, and what I saw inspired me further. But how do you tell these stories, their stories, in 100 words or less?

I couldn't, just as I can't here, but there was a quote by Herbert Ravenel Sass that is always in my mind as I garden or look out at our little patch called home: "Nature, wild nature, dwells in gardens just as she dwells in the tangled woods, in the deep of the sea, and on the heights of the mountains; and the wilder the garden, the more you will see of her."

It starts with the plants – glorious native plants. The Monarch waystation is one doorway into this wild world of ours. Audubon at Home is another. It can start small or large. The important thing is that it starts because every garden, no matter how big, makes a difference. If you have a waystation (i.e. any habitat that includes milkweed and native nectar plants), I hope you'll share your garden and inspiration with Monarch Joint Venture so we can see it on the Google Map and revel in it with you. If you don't have one, I hope you will create one. Strike flint to steel, watch the sparks fly, and soak in the wild sights and sounds of summer!



Nicole

Managing Editor: Donna Quinn
Programs Editor: Mary Ann Good
Announcements Editor: Rachel Roseberry
Photography Editor: Donna Quinn
Contributing Editors: Karen Coleman, Mary Ann Good, Lindsey Brookbank, Joanne Bradbury
Proofreaders: Karen Strick, Donna Quinn, Tracy Albert
Production: Tracy Albert
Design: Katie Hillesland
Printed by: Mr. Print, Purcellville, VA

Copyright © 2014 by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. All rights reserved. Articles and photographs are either the property of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the author and/or the photographer. Permission is required for any republication. To reprint any or all of the Habitat Herald contact Donna Quinn at dquinn@loudounwildlife.org.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) group of volunteers who share a common goal of protecting and perpetuating natural habitats for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board meets the first Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Nicole Hamilton.

President

Past President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Programs /Field Trips

Habitat Restoration

Membership

Fundraising

Youth Environmental Education

Media Coordinator

Volunteer Engagement Chair

Conservation Advocacy

Habitat Herald

Community Outreach

Stream Monitoring

Bird Population Surveys

Bluebird Monitoring

Amphibian Monitoring

Operations Manager

Special Operations

Audubon at Home

Nicole Hamilton

703-999-9000

nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org

Joe Coleman

540-554-2542

jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org

Katherine Daniels

214-733-7313

kdaniels@loudounwildlife.org

Rhonda Chocha

571-246-7408

rchocha@loudounwildlife.org

Sharon Moffett

703-431-9704

smoffett@loudounwildlife.org

Jim McWalters

703-727-5555

jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org

Angie Rickard

703-999-5145

arickard@loudounwildlife.org

Vacant

Vacant

Paul Miller

540-882-3112

pmiller@loudounwildlife.org

Vacant

Vacant

Alysoun Mahoney

703-855-4033

amahoney@loudounwildlife.org

Donna Quinn

703-217-3544

dquinn@loudounwildlife.org

Vacant

Vacant

Joe Coleman

540-554-2542

jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org

Janet Locklear

571-512-8260

jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org

Nicole Hamilton

703-999-9000

nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org

Jill Miller

703-777-2575

jmiller@loudounwildlife.org

Phil Daley

pedaley@verizon.net

Ann Garvey

agarvey@loudounwildlife.org



Great Blue Heron, continued



Great Blue Heron
© Jim Clark

thick brow. As you travel down his lanky body, his neck and chest are adorned with plumes of feathers that resemble fringe and can often look unkempt when he's at rest. His deep blue-grey body sits atop long, greenish-brown legs trimmed with deep brown feathers. I am often reminded of a butler standing at attention when I come across his upright stature and grace.

Despite his slow movements when searching the water for prey, the Great Blue Heron is an efficient hunter. His attack is fast, swift and deliberate, darting deep below the water's surface to spear his dinner. While fish constitute the vast majority of the heron's diet, they are also known to eat mice, insects and other small mammals or invertebrates such as frogs and lizards. Since the heron swallows its catch whole, it is not unheard of for a heron to choke to death due to its overzealous appetite and the occasional attempt to swallow a fish too large for its slender neck.

When in flight, the Great Blue Heron is hard to miss. They fly with great purpose and power, their necks curved into an elegant S-shape resting on their backs. With wings gracefully outstretched, the white plumage underneath easily visible and legs daintily trailing behind, the heron glides through the sky with great command and is quite a sight to behold.

Living primarily in wetland areas which provide suitable habitat as well as an abundance of fish and marine life, the Great Blue Heron is also known to frequent both salt- and fresh-water coastlines, ponds, lakes, rivers and even grasslands or agricultural areas. It is also not uncommon for them to "poach" ornamental carp or other decorative

fish from backyard landscapes as well, so don't be surprised if you see one perched on the edge of your garden resembling a statue as he looks for a meal.

While found throughout the entire United States as well as coastal areas up and down the East Coast from Maine to the very southern-most points of Florida, over half of the East Coast's Great Blue Heron population resides within the Chesapeake Bay region due to its large number of tributaries, wetlands and waterways. Herons roost in large colonies in nests made of twigs and sticks that are typically situated high off the ground in trees, but occasionally they will also nest closer to the ground, if necessary. Most herons choose to live in these colonies, or "rookeries", but occasionally a breeding pair will choose to roost in a solitary location separate from the others, though this is not typical.

Northern Virginia is blessed to have several large Great Blue Heron rookeries right here in Loudoun County – with one located near White's Ferry just south of the ferry landing and another visible from Loudoun County Parkway and Route 7 in Ashburn.

The Great Blue Heron will lay three to seven eggs sometime during late March and early April, and the eggs will incubate for approximately 28 days. Once the hatchlings arrive, they are fed regurgitated food and eventually graduate to fish brought back to the nest. A thriving Great Blue Heron rookery is an active, "chatty" community during the spring months and can be heard from quite a distance away.



An active and thriving rookery
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

The Great Blue Heron can live as long as fifteen years, given ideal living conditions. Many environmental factors can impact this number and can also have a dramatic effect on the health of an entire rookery as well. While the species' numbers have remained

■ Continued on page 4



Great Blue Heron, continued



The graceful Great Blue Heron in flight
© Jim Clark

relatively stable, with the issues of plumage hunting and insecticides impacting other heron species more dramatically than the Great Blue Heron, they are still impacted by environmental disturbances such as habitat destruction, polluted waters and disruption of the nesting rookeries. This is often the case in areas of new development where noise and traffic can cause birds to abandon the rookery in search of a more tranquil nesting location, often leaving nests and eggs mid-incubation. Fireworks and road traffic are perfect examples of this type of disturbance.

The Great Blue Heron is also impacted by other man-made pollutants and hazards. One such example is monofilament – or fishing line – and hooks cast aside after fishing. The heron, and many other animal species, suffer horrific and often life-threatening injuries or deformities when they become ensnared in the lines, unable to free themselves. Lost limbs, deep lacerations and even death have occurred to both herons and other wildlife due to monofilament injuries or the swallowing of fish hooks. Trash in general can also pose a serious threat as curious animals find themselves cut by a discarded soda can, or their head stuck inside a bottle or jar. By keeping our waterways clear of trash and debris we prevent these beautiful birds, and other wildlife, from becoming unnecessary victims to our carelessness.

It is no accident that the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy chose the Great Blue Heron as its symbol. This elegant, easily recognizable bird graces everything from our letterhead to our website to our newsletter and serves as a constant reminder of the importance of continued habitat preservation and restoration in our county. With continued efforts to clean up our environment and preserve much needed habitat, the Great Blue Heron will hopefully always glide over our landscape and be an important presence in Loudoun County.



Profile of a Great Blue Heron
© Jim Clark

Sources:

- http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/great_blue_heron/id
- <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/great-blue-heron>
- <http://birds.audubon.org/species/greblu1>



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy 2014 - 19th Annual Meeting

The big turnout of enthusiastic members attending our 19th Annual Meeting on Sunday, June 1, was shuttled in style by trolley between the parking lot and the meeting in the Winmill Carriage Museum at Morven Park. Attendees shopped at a pre-meeting native plant sale, enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, socialized, bid on silent auction donations ranging from fine art to gift certificates, and admired exhibits from our Science Fair and Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalist winners.

President Nicole Hamilton opened the business meeting with her report on the state of the organization. Highlighted accomplishments in the prior year included completion of the Bird Atlas, the inauguration of the Monarch Butterfly Campaign, and strong conservation advocacy efforts.

Members unanimously approved a proposal to incorporate the organization. Incorporation will enhance our ability to engage in fundraising activities and provide many other benefits to the organization and to members.

Nicole announced and presented a Special Recognition award to Gerry Hawkins for his contributions of expertise and time to the incorporation effort. The prestigious Volunteer of the Year award was given to Lynn Webster, for filling many roles throughout the years. Because of her outstanding efforts launching and growing the thriving Audubon at Home program, developing a cadre of Audubon Ambassadors, leading the bi-annual native plant sale, and helping build the organization by bringing in new leaders, Ann Garvey was awarded the Outstanding Leader Award.

Marcia Weidner presented awards and checks to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Science Fair winners:



Gerry Hawkins,
Special Recognition Award



Roba Clyde, Roger Tory
Peterson Award

1st Place: *The Effects of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium Laden Fertilizers on the Lifespan of the Mytilus eduli*, Izabella Valdez (in attendance)

2nd Place: *The Effect of Water Absorbing and Oil Absorbing Polymers*, Syed Hasnain

3rd Place: *An Analysis of Biosymmetry as an Indicator of Ecosystem Health due to Hydraulic Fracturing and Landfill Management*, Alexandra Sarkis (in attendance)

Mimi Westervelt spoke of the importance of educators on the career development of her stepfather, Roger Tory Peterson, and introduced the Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalist winners along with highlights of their nature journals:

Roba Clyde, K-ELL, Leesburg Elementary

Annabelle Pake, K, Frederick Douglass Elementary School (in attendance)



Good times at the
annual meeting



Annabelle Pake, Roger Tory Peterson Award

Photos by Caroline Kuhfahl

Sasha Zabela, 12, Tuscarora High School (in attendance)

Brianna King, 12, Heritage High School

The business meeting wrapped up with unanimous election of the proposed slate of new officers to two-year terms: President, Nicole Hamilton; Vice President, Katherine Benbow Daniels; Treasurer, Sharon Moffett; Secretary, Rhonda Chocha.

The featured speaker, Phil Stevenson delivered his informative talk on "Turtles of Loudoun".



Announcements

Loudoun County – Dragonfly Mecca!

Dragonflies of Northern Virginia website

by Kevin Munroe



Ruby Meadowhawk

Dragonflies, with their aquatic larvae and insect eating adults, are excellent barometers of environmental health: the electric-colored fruits of a thriving watershed. After 10 years of chasing them around Northern Virginia and exploring a long list of great parks, I've become hooked on Loudoun County's

unique and impressive natural areas. As nature geeks know, Northern Virginia is a very special place for biodiversity. Located at a nexus of north and south, as well as mountain, piedmont and coastal plain, the forests, meadows and wetlands of this area have one of the richest varieties of plant and animal species in the country. Finding over 20 species from all seven dragonfly families in just one day is possible in Loudoun. Sites like Bles Park, Whites Ford, Philips Farm, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, Willowsford Farm, and Banshee Reeks are regional reservoirs of biodiversity.

Comet Darners, Arrowhead Spiketails, Eastern Ringtails, Ruby Meadowhawks, Russet-tipped Clubtails, and Umber Shadowdragons are just a few of the less commonly seen dragonflies found right here in Loudoun. And, as of April 27, we can add St. Croix Snaketail, discovered at the McKimney Boat Launch, to the list of dragonflies and excellent dragonfly locations in this county. A rare dragonfly where ever it's found, this was the first snaketail record in Northern Virginia – and of course it was discovered in Loudoun County! This bizarre species has previously been found only in rivers along the border of Wisconsin and Minnesota, and in isolated river sites in Maryland and southeastern Virginia.

For a list of dragonfly hotspots in northern Virginia, along with everything you need to know about dragonflies and tips on how to become a dragonfly geek, please explore my new website, Dragonflies of Northern Virginia, www.dragonfliesnva.com. Also, don't miss the Dragonflies and Damselflies program on June 17 and the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Loudoun field trip on June 22. For details see the programs listing in this issue.

Dulles Greenway's Drive for Charity Raises Money for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

May 15, 2014 marked the 9th annual Dulles Greenway Drive for Charity which provides funding to five nonprofits that work to benefit Loudoun County. This year the event raised a total of \$294,500, up by more than \$25,000 from last year – and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy was honored to receive a donation of \$41,200.



Dulles Greenway reports that May 15 was their highest traffic day of the year, and the highest Drive for Charity traffic day in the past 9 years. They have raised more than \$2 million for local charities and scholarships in these past 9 years.

Last year's donation was the single largest contribution we received last year. And it looks like this will be the case again this year! These funds give all of our existing programs a boost by providing resources we need to extend and expand existing programs.

The funding from Dulles Greenway's Drive for Charity makes an impact that extends well beyond the initial contribution to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Drive for Charity is helping change the conversation of how people view, value and engage nature and the environment in which they live.

We are so thankful for the support of the Drive for Charity and the drivers who rode the Greenway on May 15!



Announcements, cont.

Youth Adventure Day at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve

Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Youth Environmental Education Committee for a fun-filled day at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve on Wednesday, August 6, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Activities include making and using cane poles for fishing in the pond, exploring the woods and fields to identify the trees, shrubs and animals in their varied habitats, and learning about stream ecology and quality analysis. This program is designed for youths ages 8 to 12. Reservations required by July 31. Enroll early; space is limited to 15 participants! For more information contact Paul Miller (540-882-3112) or Phil Daley (540-338-6528).



Wildflower meadow at Banshee Reeks
Photo by Donna Quinn

A Birding Experience for Children

A Birding Experience for Children: Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, July 18; 6:00 pm until dusk. Come learn about our bluebird trail monitoring by helping us do a weekly survey of the nest boxes, then join some of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's birders for an evening stroll looking for and listening to the birds and other interesting critters that call the Blue Ridge Center their home. Appropriate for children 8 to 12 and their families. Registration required, limited to 18 participants. For more information contact Phil Daley 540-338-6528 or at pedaley@verizon.net.



Bluebird monitoring
Photo by Donna Quinn

Audubon at Home

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."
Aldo Leopold

Create your own certified sanctuary for wildlife! Please contact agarvey@loudounwildlife.org for information on the Audubon at Home program and to schedule a visit with an Audubon at Home ambassador. We'll give you tips on how to be more environmentally friendly and help you get started on planning your pollinator garden, Monarch waystation, vernal pool or meadow. Visits frequently lead to certification of your property.



Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
– a beneficial native tree
Photo by Donna Quinn

Wildlife Hazards

by Belinda Burwell, DVM, Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

When living in close proximity to humans, wild animals become injured in various ways. At the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center (BRWC), where we rescue and care for thousands of injured native wild animals each year, we gather data on the many ways wildlife become injured.

Collisions with motor vehicles are by far the most common cause of the injuries we treat, and this is not only because these animals were crossing the road. Litter thrown from vehicles often contains food, and this attracts animals to the side of the road where they are likely to be struck. In addition, rodents feeding on litter attract the hawks and owls that prey on them, which subsequently are also struck by cars. To make matters worse, road kill itself attracts scavengers, including raccoons, opossums, skunks, hawks and eagles to the road. So it's no wonder so many animals are hit on the roads. Picking up litter and eliminating it from the roadway makes our roads safer for wildlife, as does removing any animal unfortunate enough to be killed on the roadway.

Litter itself can injure and kill wildlife, even when it is not near a road. Animals can become trapped in containers, strangled by plastic bags and rings, or develop digestive blockages after consuming non-digestible packaging that either looks like food or smells like the food it once contained. Everyone can help by ensuring trash is securely sealed in trash bags and by picking up litter. Following the three Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – is a good way to decrease the amount of trash that needs to be disposed of properly.

There is one particularly dangerous type of litter that most people never think about: discarded fishing tackle. Every year Blue Ridge Wildlife Center receives a surprising variety of species that have become tangled in fishing line or snagged by fishhooks. We've rescued owls, herons, ducks, geese, raccoons, turtles and songbirds that have this almost-invisible line wrapped around wings and legs, trapping them and strangulating their limbs. In other instances, fishing hooks have caused deep wounds and anchored animals to snagged line. These animals die a slow and painful death if not found quickly. Putting up a receptacle for discarded line and hooks at fishing locations can remind anglers of this danger to wildlife. If you find discarded fishing line or hooks while walking trails, please help protect wildlife by disposing of it properly.



Discarded fish hook

Another common hazard to wildlife is outdoor cats and dogs, which kill and injure a very large number of wild animals every year. BRWC cares for more than 300 animals injured by cats and dogs per year.

It is estimated that outdoor cats in North America kill more than a billion wild birds each year, according to research at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Va. Keeping your cats inside and preventing your dog from roaming makes you a good neighbor to the wildlife around your home.

Window strikes also injure or kill millions of songbirds each year. Depending on the situation, moving bird feeders, or using a realistic owl statue or silhouette, can help prevent these strikes. Sometimes an external film or screen needs to be put over the window to protect birds. More solutions can be found online at www.birdwatchingdaily.com/featured-stories/15-products-that-prevent-windows-strikes/.



Monofilament, or fishing line, is a deadly trap

■ Continued on page 9



Wildlife Hazards continued

Pesticides and rodenticides are a silent danger to non-target wildlife. Many people don't realize that pesticides not only poison insects, but also the birds and bats that eat them. Using less toxic alternatives to control your insect problems can save the lives of those species that help keep insect populations under control. In the same way, rodenticides kill not only mice and rats, but also the animals that eat them, especially hawks and owls. Sticky traps are a cruel way to trap rodents and will kill any animal that becomes stuck to them, including bats and snakes – the species we most commonly see stuck to these traps. Using rodent live traps or carefully placed snap traps are safer for non-target wildlife.



Sticky glue traps capture many animals and insects

Every year, a large number of sick eagles, hawks and vultures brought to the BRWC are determined to be suffering from lead poisoning through blood testing and radiographs. These animals are being poisoned by consuming small fragments of lead bullets or lead pellets in the carrion they are eating. When a lead bullet hits an animal, small fragments of lead spread out from the wound into the body of the animal. Too small to be easily detected, these toxic pieces of lead are being eaten by scavengers and hunters alike. These scavengers are much smaller than humans, weighing only 1 to 10 pounds, so eating just a few small fragments of lead is enough to cause lead poisoning and damage their nervous systems, leaving them unable to fly or even walk. If not treated, they will die. Hunters can help prevent this accidental killing of non-target species by using only non-lead ammunition.

These are only a few of the more common ways we have seen local wildlife become injured and killed. Increased awareness and prevention of these hazards can save the lives of our wildlife neighbors and make us good stewards of wildlife.

You can learn more about us and how you can help protect wildlife at www.blueridgewildlife.org



Lead poisoned Bald Eagle

The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that receives no federal, state or local government funding, and depends entirely on donations from concerned citizens, businesses and private foundations. We do not charge for any of our services, and we are completely dependent on donations to pay for food, housing and medicine for animals in need. Sick and injured animals need your help! Please visit BlueRidgeWildlife.org/donate or www.blueridgewildlife.org/donate.html to learn how you can make a donation.

Be a friend and follow Blue Ridge Wildlife Center on Facebook or webpage at www.blueridgewildlife.org for the latest updates on our rescues.

Photos provided by the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

Wildlife emergency information:
540-837-9000 / info@blueridgewildlife.org



Willowsford goats are ready for weed eating missions

Prescribed Grazing Goats

by Deb Dramby, Willowsford Farm

As spring rolls in, the emergence of the Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs remind us how a non-native species can overpopulate an area and wreak havoc. Their damage to agricultural crops and profit margins, as well as their persistence in aggravating homeowners, land them at the forefront of our minds, not to mention porches, sinks, dashboards and gardens – you name it.

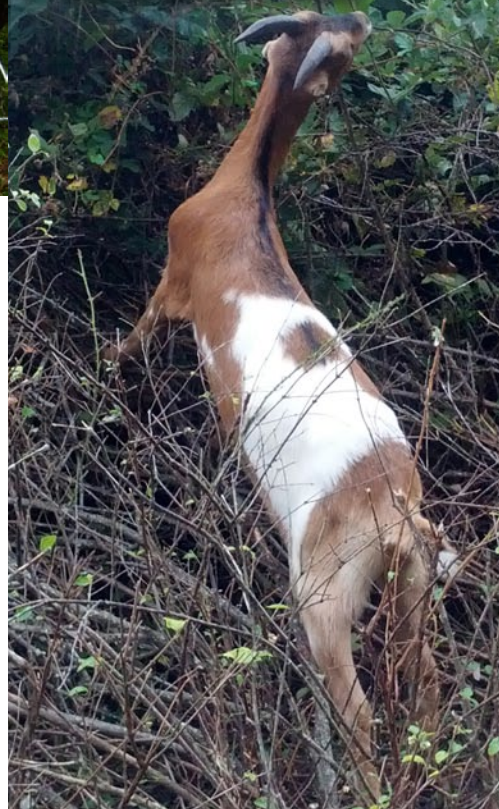
Non-native plant species with similarly invasive habits, however, are less likely to come up during the average dinner conversation in our region. Few outside of the landscaping, forestry and conservation businesses know Kudzu as “the vine that ate the south,” or that native trees and rare plants are suffering behind those fragrant Japanese honeysuckle vines. But shepherds leading herds of goats on prescribed grazing jobs may make “invasive weed” conversations mainstream.

Last summer, in their fifth year of business, a Maryland-based company close to our hearts, Eco-Goats, made front-page news when its herd was tasked with clearing

invasive and harmful plants, such as Poison Ivy, from Congressional Cemetery in historic southwest Washington, D.C. While managed grazing has been used for brush control and land clearing for centuries, the practice is popping up with more frequency today, as natural parks, historic properties and homeowners seek out chemical-free alternatives for managing problem vegetation.

Over the last year at Willowsford Farm, we’ve raised our own small herd of goats, accustomed them to travel, taught them to stay inside electric fencing, and have watched how voraciously they tackle Autumn Olive, Japanese Honeysuckle and Poison Ivy. With a few small jobs under their bellies, they are entering the 2014 grazing season ripe and ready to deploy around town and within the farm, Willowsford Conservancy and community systems to maintain clean, walkable woods and eco-systems. For most of June, they’ll be tackling Japanese Stiltgrass, Mile-A-Minute and various brambles at Morven Park in Leesburg, Va.

In addition to watching these goats defoliate, chew their cuds and intercept seed banks, we’ve noticed the magnetic force the herd possesses in terms of starting conversations, with children especially, and in attracting volunteers to farm, park and garden projects. Last summer, several of our goats participated in farm-based summer camp at the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture.



Japanese Honeysuckle, Autumn Olive, Honeysuckle, Poison Ivy, brambles... its all delicious!
Photos by Deb Dramby

They have spent much of their spring season educating students in D.C. Public Schools thanks to a beautiful partnership with DC Greens and their Growing Green Teachers programming for 2014. They’ll be returning to Arcadia this summer for more summer camp fun.

Follow the herd’s journeys at the Willowsford Farm Facebook group and Twitter @WillowsfordFarm, and contact Deborah Dramby ddramby@willowsfordfarm.com for prescribed goat grazing details, rates and scheduling.



Nooks and Crannies: The Great Blue Heron



Great Blue Heron
Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg

by Natalie Pien

Theodore Roethke won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for his collection of poetry, *The Waking*. Roethke grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, where he spent much of his childhood in the vast greenhouses filled with roses and orchids that his father and uncle owned. He also enjoyed exploring the game sanctuary his father and uncle established. One corner of the game sanctuary was swampy, and herons always nested there. Roethke wrote his memories in a poem about the Great Blue Heron. As you thoughtfully read his poem, use your imagination to picture the words in each stanza.

The Heron

*The heron stands in water where the swamp
Has deepened to the blackness of a pool,
Or balances with one leg on a hump
Of marsh grass heaped above a musk-rat hole.*

*He walks the shallow with an antic grace.
The great feet break the ridges of the sand,
The long eye notes the minnow's hiding place.
His beak is quicker than a human hand.*

*He jerks a frog across his bony lip,
Then points his heavy bill above the wood.
The wide wings flap but one to lift him up.
A single ripple starts from where he stood.*

Choose one of the following activities, or have lots of fun and do them all!

1. Color a picture of the Great Blue Heron (<http://1coloring-pages.com/coloring-page-great-blue-heron.html>) and add it to your nature journal.
2. Copy the poem into your nature journal. Add illustrations to each stanza.
3. Make a mobile of the poem. Here is a link to help you get started: www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org/

CCMMakeMobiles.pdf

Remember to continue making entries into your nature journal. Tips on how to start a journal are in the Winter 2013 edition of the Habitat Herald.



Weeds goats love to eat:

- Mile-A-Minute
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Kudzu
- Autumn Olive
- Pokeweed
- Oriental Bittersweet
- Japanese Knotweed
- Japanese Stiltgrass
- Poison Ivy
- Canada Thistle
- Tree of Heaven
- Multiflora Rose
- And many more!



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.

Questions?

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

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board Meeting — The Board typically meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. All Loudoun Wildlife members are welcome. *Contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.*

Photographing Nature — Sunday, July 6, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Morven Park. Join professional wildlife photographer Jeff Mauritzen and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a walk around the grounds of Morven Park to view nature through the lens of a camera. Jeff has been on wildlife assignments for National Geographic, Ranger Rick and Highlights for Children. Whether you are new to photography or an old pro, you'll get tips on how to train your eye to identify key elements to make more dramatic, artistically appealing nature photographs. Learn new ideas for working with light, movement, composition and focus. See how finding fresh, unique perspectives will take your nature photography to inspiring new levels. Participants are encouraged to bring a camera. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.*

Celebrating National Moth Week — Thursday, July 17, 8:00 p.m., Morven Park. Discover why moths constitute about 90% of all the Lepidoptera on the planet: not bad for a group of animals that flew with some of our most well-known dinosaurs! Join Dr. David Adamski and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in reviewing the most common moth families found in the Capitol Region. After sunset, he'll help us identify the moths that are attracted to a black light set up on the grounds at Morven Park. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.*

Birding Experience for Children — Friday, July 18, 6:00 p.m. – dusk, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Come learn about our bluebird trail monitoring by helping us do a weekly survey of the nest boxes, then join some of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's birders for an evening stroll looking and listening for the birds and other interesting critters that call the Blue Ridge Center their home. Appropriate for children ages 8 to 12 and their families; limited to 18 participants. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pedaley@verizon.net.*

Birding Banshee

Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks for the monthly bird walk at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve south of Leesburg. Because of its rich and varied habitat, it is a birding hot spot. Bring binoculars if you have them. **Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.**

Second Saturdays: July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11 at 8:00 a.m.

Butterfly Walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship — Saturday, July 19, 10:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a butterfly walk at this beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. We should see butterflies using the late summer wildflowers. The 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. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Meet at the Visitor Center. This is a family-friendly event. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.*

Let's Count Butterflies! — Saturday, August 2, 9:00 a.m. It's time for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's 18th Annual Butterfly Count. Come and have fun while contributing to butterfly conservation. You will visit locations that include butterfly gardens, sanctuaries, roadside wildflower areas and parks. We typically count over 2,000 butterflies in this single day and spot as many as 50 species. Our count circle stretches from White's Ferry in the east to the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Center in the west and south to Lincoln. No experience necessary, all ages welcome – you will be teamed with experienced leaders. There's a \$3 fee per adult that we pass through to the North American Butterfly Association, waived for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members as a member benefit. No fee for those under 18. **Registration Required: Sign Up Online** or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org

Youth Adventure Day at Banshee Reeks — Wednesday, August 6, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Youth Environmental Education Committee for a fun-filled day at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Leesburg. Activities will include making and using cane poles for fishing in the pond; exploring the woods and fields to identify the trees, shrubs and animals in their varied habitats; stream ecology and quality analysis, etc. This program is designed for youth ages 8 to 12; limited to 15 participants. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** For more information, contact Paul Miller (540-882-3112) or Phil Daley (540-338-6528).

The Magic of Monarchs — Wednesday, August 6, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., Cascades Library. Monarch butterflies make an epic migration each year – a journey that passes right through Loudoun County. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to learn about monarch butterflies, their amazing migration, and how to help them by planting a monarch waystation garden. For ages 6 & up. **Questions: Contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.**

Celebrate Butterfly Month at 868 Estate Vineyards — Sunday, August 10. 868 Estate Vineyards (Grandale Farm) has declared August Butterfly month! Come join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to help celebrate butterflies. The day will include a couple of butterfly walks and wine tastings. There will be an art show during the month featuring butterflies. There will be a small fee, and tickets will be available through 868 Estate Vineyards. More details will be posted to our website closer to August.

**Visit Us at the Lucketts Fair — Saturday and Sunday, August 16 – 17, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

Visit the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy booth at the Lucketts Fair, where we'll have a variety of free information and booklets available. We'll be talking about Loudoun's nature and wild places and have some cool nature exhibits to learn more about our local wildlife! We're happy to answer any of your questions about our programs and activities as well as general nature questions. If you've been wanting to pick up an LWC t-shirt or a copy of the new *Field Guide to the Butterflies of Loudoun County*, we'll have those for sale too. For more information about the fair, check their website: www.luckettsfair.com.

Plant Communities — Wednesday, August 27,

7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Location TBD. Plant communities are nature's natural assemblies of native species. Susan Abraham, principal of Lush Life Landscapes and George Washington University Sustainable Landscape graduate program professor, will discuss a designer's approach to using plant communities as a guide for a garden palette that benefits wildlife at this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy program. Following the science, learn why using plant communities is an important approach to assembling native plants in our home landscapes. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.

A Swift Night Out – Saturday, September 6, Time and Location

TBD. Chimney Swifts congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a dozen birds, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts. We should see over 600 birds fly in to roost in the chimney! Bring a chair or blanket, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will provide the snacks as we watch the chimneys where the birds gather and enjoy their spectacular aerial flights. This is a family-friendly event. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.

Morven Park Nature Walk — Sunday, September 7, 1:00 – 3:00

p.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a nature walk through the rich Morven Park forest and meadows as we look for the activity of late summer and discuss the flora and fauna that make up these habitats. If you own binoculars, please bring them. This is a family-friendly walk. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.

Native Plant Sale — Sunday, September 14, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.,

Morven Park. Native plants are beautiful and grow better because they are adapted for our weather conditions and soils; they also provide greater benefit to our native wildlife because plants and animals evolved together. Hill House Farm and Native Nursery (www.hillhousenativeplants.com) and Nature-By-Design (www.nature-by-design.com) will be selling plants at this sale sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. To see plants each nursery carries or to place orders ahead of time (all nursery stock is not present), visit their websites. For more information on the sale, visit our website at www.loudounwildlife.org.

Birds & Habitat at the Beagle Institute — Saturday, September 20, Time TBD. The 500-acre National Beagle Club Institute Farm has been managed for many years for rabbit habitat. This is the same habitat preferred by a variety of less common bird species in the

Birding the Blue Ridge Center

Join us on the monthly bird walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. The property includes diverse wildlife habitats, including meadows, streams and heavily forested slopes. Meet at the Education Center; bring binoculars if you have them. BRCEs is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671); detailed directions at www.brces.org. **Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org**

Fourth Saturdays: June 28, July 26, August 23, September 27 at 8:00 a.m.

area, such as woodcocks. Maintaining this transitional shrub habitat requires constant work to prevent its replacement by forest, but the rewards are great! Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to look at a variety of areas on the farm to see what species are present during fall migration and discuss the methods used to maintain the habitats, including some areas planted to native warm-season grasses.

Registration required: Sign Up Online. **Questions:** Contact Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org.

For up-to-date information on our programs and to sign up, visit our website at www.loudounwildlife.org.



Great Blue Heron feather
Photo by Donna Quinn

Backyard Mosquitoes

by Will McCarry

If you're worried about mosquitoes and other insects ruining your backyard fun this summer, there are ways to protect yourself and your family. It may seem easy to turn to pest management companies that claim to be able to stop mosquitoes (many also state they can control ticks and stink bugs) by use of outdoor residential treatments and misting systems. However, it is very important to carefully research what is being sprayed – its effectiveness as well as its risks – before exposing children, pets and the surrounding environment to potentially harmful chemicals that kill indiscriminately.

Most misting systems utilize the pesticides Pyrethrins and Permethrin. Unfortunately pesticides such as these aren't selective about which insects they target. These chemicals are harmful to all insects, including beneficial ones such as honeybees and butterflies. In addition, if you live near a body of water or fish pond, Permethrin is particularly highly toxic to fish as well as aquatic invertebrates. Fish and aquatic insects are a vital link in the food chain and many have a voracious appetite for mosquito larvae.

The EPA states on its website that it does not expect risks to humans when these chemicals are used properly. However, it also cautions that excessive use may pose a serious threat to the safety of one's family and pets and that "no pesticide should be regarded as 100 percent risk free."

Apart from environmental concerns, pest management companies recommend technicians visit your home every 21 days, which is not only unnecessary, but it exposes humans and pets, as well as wildlife, to even higher amounts of poisons. Many pesticides build up in sediment, reaching highly toxic levels with repeated sprayings. Sprayed chemicals may also drift into areas not being actively treated and contaminate surrounding areas.

Fortunately, there are many effective and environmentally friendly alternative ways to keep mosquitoes at bay during the summer months:

- Make sure all flower pots, pool covers, birdbaths, roof gutters, downspouts and pet water bowls are emptied of standing water regularly.
- Keep swimming pool water circulating and properly treated.
- Make sure all screen doors and windows are properly sealed.

We'll be providing more information on this important topic in the future. In the meantime, please think about all the consequences of pest management treatments. While we are individuals making personal decisions, our actions in backyards affect the well-being of others, as well as wildlife found in a healthy environment.

Caterpillars need pesticide free leaves to eat



▲ Monarch
Photo by Nicole Hamilton



▲ Luna moth
Photo by Laura McGranaghan

References:

- www2.epa.gov/mosquitocontrol/mosquito-misting-systems
- www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reevaluation/pyrethroids-pyrethrins.html
- www.beyondpesticides.org/mosquito/
- <http://npic.orst.edu>



Stinging Caterpillars

by Emily Bzdyk

When I was a kid, I loved raising caterpillars. It was part of my general insect obsession, which eventually led to my future as an entomologist. One summer, I found a group of Io Moth caterpillars feeding on a tree by my grandma's pool. Not bothered by the fact that the caterpillars apparently could sting, I gathered them carefully and brought them home in a small terrarium. You can probably guess where this is going... the whole colony of caterpillars escaped into my home. My parents, brother and I were all subjected to painful stings for a week as we picked up objects such as stuffed animals or dishtowels, unsuspecting of the hidden caterpillars underneath.

My curiosity as a child introduced me to one of the lesser-known defensive tactics of caterpillars. Caterpillars regularly rely on camouflage or being poisonous to eat to protect themselves, but a few can "sting." In addition to the Io Moth caterpillars I encountered, examples include the caterpillars of Saddleback, Tussock, Hag and flannel moths. Many caterpillars such as Woolly Bears have hair-like structures, which may act to deter predators. However, some caterpillars take this a step further with hollow setae like tiny hypodermic needles filled with irritating substances. The small spines of the Saddleback and Io Moth caterpillars break off, and the poison inside can contact your skin. The hairs of others such as the Tussock Moth caterpillars are simply irritating and are called 'urticating bristles.'

Io Moth caterpillars (*Automeris io*) are bright green with red and white stripes down the sides and are covered in branching green structures with black tips. The Saddleback (*Sibine stimulea*) has a similar green color but with a brown middle and green oval "saddle" shape in the center; four projections of spines stick out from front and back. The Hag Moth (*Phobetron pithecium*) and Southern Flannel Moth (*Megalopyge opercularis*) caterpillars look like little fluffy beige fluffs. Another flannel moth, the White Flannel Moth (*Norape ovina*), has a caterpillar that looks quite different, with black body, red ends and white dots. Tussock Moth caterpillars (*Orgyia* sp.) have brushy tufts of hair down the middle and longer hair on the ends; Milkweed and White-marked Tussock moth caterpillars are two examples. These are just a few of the stinging caterpillars found in our area. If you find a suspicious caterpillar, it is best to avoid touching it until you can identify it.

If you are unlucky enough to handle a stinging caterpillar with your bare hands, you may learn just how effective their defense is! Reactions can range from an itchy or irritating rash to more serious effects. Like a wasp or bee sting, some people are particularly sensitive to the compounds and will need medical treatment. Otherwise, treat it like a bee or wasp sting and apply an ice pack if swelling occurs. Itching can be treated with topical ointments. Make sure to remove any irritating hairs stuck in your skin. Unlike wasps and bees, the "stings" of these insects are passive and result only from handling. As long as you avoid contact with them, they are harmless.



Saddleback Moth caterpillar
Photo by Liam McGranaghan



Io Moth caterpillar
Photo from Wikipedia



Milkweed Tussock Moth caterpillars
Photo by Emily Bzdyk

Sources:

- www.ag.auburn.edu/enpl/bulletins/caterpillar/caterpillar.htm
- www.arkinspace.com/2011/05/stinging-caterpillars-of-united-states.html
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megalopyge_opercularis
- <http://bugguide.net/>



*People and Wildlife
living in Harmony*

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

Address Service Requested

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

Please check your mailing label
carefully and report any errors or
changes to Jill Miller at jmiller@loudounwildlife.org



Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

Be a part of the magic - join or renew today!

*If you have not yet renewed for 2014
(see address label), this will be your
last issue of the Habitat Herald!*

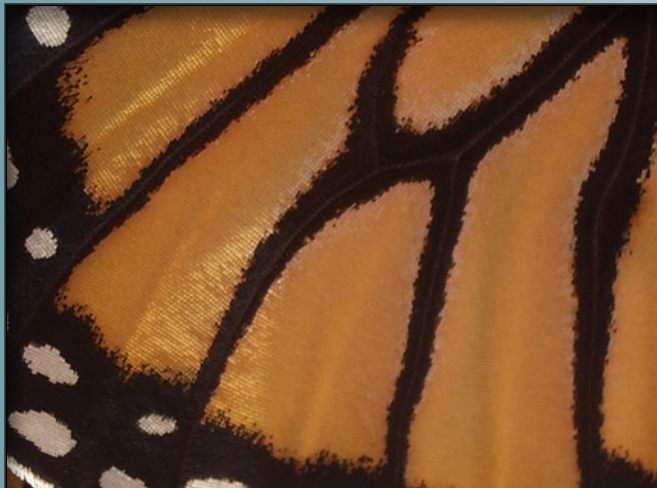


Photo by Emily Bzdyk



©Jim Clark

Please Join or Renew Today! Memberships start at just \$20 at www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm.

Your support makes a difference and helps us provide environmental and educational programming, conduct habitat restoration projects, and protect and preserve habitat through advocacy and partnerships.