



# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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## Conservation Advocacy: Working to Benefit Wildlife and People

by Alysoun Mahoney

*"We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it."*

Wendell Berry

As human residents of Loudoun County, which is growing at the second-fastest rate in the United States (after Williamson County, Texas), we are displacing wildlife and there's just no way around it. But this same exceptional growth, combined with our proximity to the nation's capital, also positions us to serve as a model for development strategies that balance benefits for wildlife and people.

### Why Advocate for Conservation?

You may have heard some of the reasons why global conservation matters as much to people as to wildlife. For example, the fact that freshwater wetlands not only hold more than 40 percent of all the world's species and 12 percent of all animal species, but also contribute trillions of dollars annually in water purification and flood-control services. That birds, insects and other wildlife contribute \$300 billion annually in pest control and pollination services that support world agriculture. That when the drug diclofenac caused massive death of India's vultures, the resultant increase in that nation's health care costs totaled \$34 billion.

Photo by Liam McGranaghan

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# President's Message

by Nicole Hamilton

We decided to focus this issue on conservation advocacy. It's something that we don't talk a lot about, yet it permeates everything we do. Ultimately being the voice for wildlife is about sharing what we love, engaging others in the wonder and mystery, and inspiring our friends, neighbors and family members to see the wild outside our windows.

So, as volunteers and people with passion, we lead field trips and set up programs. We count birds and spy with you on frogs and toads. We kneel down to the height of a six year old to admire a dragonfly. We ready the soil and dig in the dirt to restore habitat to its native excellence. Through all this, at public events and at home, we talk and share – together we discover this amazing, layered fabric of life that we are a part of.

Conservation advocacy has a formal state as well, however, and it shows up in the position papers we write, the testimony we give at public hearings, the action alerts we send, and the coalitions that we participate in. A lot of work goes into developing these public stances and we are so thankful to have Alysoun Mahoney at the helm, focused on this area and making sure that our positions are data-driven.



As part of this, our membership numbers really matter. We are often asked by local leaders, "how large is your membership?", and the higher the number, the more seriously we are taken, the louder our voice and the greater impact we make. So, if you have ever wondered if your \$20 or \$30 membership makes a difference, it certainly does! We keep our membership donations low, not because we don't need the funding, but because we want to make sure that being a member is accessible to people across our community and those who want to stand with us can do so easily.

Jane Goodall once said, "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." Once we love something we can't do anything but want to share it and fight for it. I hope that as we head into fall, you will renew your membership, join if you are not already a member, or gift a membership to a loved one and help expand our reach. Your membership makes a difference and every voice counts. Let's raise our voice, for together we roar!

Hand in hand, making a difference with you,

Nicole

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

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board meets the first Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Nicole Hamilton. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's office number is 703-777-2575.

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### ■ *Conservation Advocacy, continued*

Conservation matters to people as much as to wildlife at our county level, too. Local wetlands are essential not only for the survival of wildlife species like Jefferson Salamanders and Wood Frogs, but also as the “kidneys” that filter our water and keep it safe for us to drink. Remember when 400,000 Toledo, Ohio, residents went for days this summer without safe drinking water? Healthy wetlands are key to controlling the source of such crises – toxic algae fed by phosphorus runoff – which is increasingly serious around the Chesapeake Bay and across the United States. Healthy bee populations, which pollinate many of our crops, help western Loudoun generate more than \$1 billion in annual agricultural and tourism revenue. Red foxes help balance small mammal populations and thereby help reduce incidence of human Lyme disease. Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures consume road kill and other wildlife carcasses – clean-up work that would otherwise be done by thousands of maggots or millions of bacteria. And natural environments generally contribute to human physical and psychological health: studies show, for example, children with more nature near their homes have a higher sense of self-worth and fewer behavioral conduct disorders, and that children and adults concentrate better after spending time in nature.

## How does Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Advocate for Wildlife and People?

### Habitat Conservation

Habitat loss through destruction, degradation and fragmentation is the primary threat to wildlife survival across the U.S. and here in Loudoun. Our advocacy focuses on promoting balanced development and pollutant controls that can help conserve both wildlife habitats and resources for people.

**Water:** Throughout Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s nearly 20-year history, we have worked to conserve habitat by helping protect our water supply, organizing teams of citizen scientists to conduct stream monitoring and buffer planting. In the advocacy sphere, nearly 15 years ago, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy helped build the coalition of organizations that became Loudoun Watershed Watch. Recently, we have supported Loudoun staff initiatives to promote the “pollution diet” established in December 2010 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), limiting the amount of phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment entering the Chesapeake Bay. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has also been among nearly 200 Clean Water Coalition member organizations to co-sign a series of letters requesting federal support for Chesapeake Bay watershed conservation.



**Pesticides:** Promoting pesticide reduction is a key way that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy works to prevent habitat degradation.

In spring 2012, when the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors introduced an action plan to combat Lyme disease and decided to use the bifenthrin-based pesticide Talstar to reduce tick numbers at county parks, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy was among the first to speak out about the toxicity of the pesticide to bees, aquatic life and other non-target species including humans, as well as the lack of evidence that such pesticide spraying reduces the incidence of human Lyme disease. From late 2013 through early 2014, a team of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteers focused intensively on the park pesticide issue releasing a position paper, speaking at Lyme Commission meetings, reaching out to the

Board of Supervisors and conducting press interviews. In July 2014, the Lyme Commission formally announced its recommendation based on two years of surveillance data, not to spray pesticides in any county parks this year – a recommendation with which the Board of Supervisors agreed. This outcome was consistent with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy recommendations, which called for an emphasis on data collection, education and communication to combat Lyme disease.

Meanwhile, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy was also among nearly 100 institutional co-signatories to a Save-Bees.org online petition calling on the EPA to impose an immediate moratorium on neonicotinoid pesticides.

**Gardening for Wildlife:** Complementing our direct advocacy for habitat conservation, our Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary program, which has certified more than 1,000 acres of Loudoun’s public and private land, requires participants to sign a Healthy Yard Pledge that includes conserving water, protecting water quality, reducing pesticide use, removing exotic invasive plants, and planting native species. Similarly, our Monarch Campaign has helped county, schools, churches, businesses, parks and farms plant Monarch Waystations – gardens offering milkweed and nectar plants the threatened Monarch butterfly needs to survive.



■ *Continued on page 4*



**Conservation Advocacy, continued**

*The Woods Road, realigned with wildlife taken into consideration*  
© Jim Clark

**Roads:** Another way Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has worked to conserve habitats and potentially save taxpayers millions of dollars is by advocating for emphasis on road maintenance in low-traffic locations, rather than new road development.

For more than five years, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has led an initiative to protect precious wetlands and prevent fragmentation of the White Oak forest in Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, in the face of plans to realign and expand The Woods Road. Although that project is now scheduled to proceed, the voice of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members and friends helped decision-makers refine the original road development plans to lessen adverse habitat impact.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has also joined partner organizations on the Loudoun Preservation and Conservation Coalition in supporting a bill, now signed into law, providing specific goals for Virginia Department of Transportation maintenance of the rural gravel road network in Loudoun. This law includes a provision for maintaining roadside trees in all rural, agricultural and historic areas along the county's 330-mile network of rural roads, thereby helping provide shelter and food to many different kinds of wildlife.

**Light and Noise:** Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy also encourages policy-makers and fellow citizens to think expansively about wildlife and habitat conservation by advocating for limits on light and noise pollution in addition to protections for water, soil and air. For example, in the lead-up to the Board of Supervisors' vote on expanding Franklin Park field lighting, we issued a public letter questioning the Department of Planning analysis conclusion that because the project involved no clearing and grading, wildlife habitat impact was not required. We shared examples of scientific

research regarding the adverse impact of artificial lighting on many wildlife species. We provided research suggesting artificial lighting leads to a higher risk of human infection from vector-borne diseases due to a combination of changes in human behavior and prevalence of vector species.

### Fresh Approaches to Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy promotes fresh approaches to the direct human-wildlife conflicts that are ever more frequent as townhouses and office parks replace Loudoun's forests and fields.

We have been speaking up for vultures, the target of nearly annual harassment efforts by Leesburg and other Loudoun

towns in cooperation with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services, which have frequently used pyrotechnics and periodically hung dead vultures to frighten away living vultures. Through our public education and information initiatives, we have highlighted why we should think twice before using any methods to drive vultures away because of the critical role vultures play in our ecosystem and the fact that while vulture numbers may swell

in winter, they will decline again as non-resident birds migrate north. Through our action alert program, we have mobilized Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members and friends to write local decision-makers, demanding that if vultures absolutely must be dispersed, then at least the harassment should be carried out through humane and non-lethal methods. Several towns have decided to forgo any form of vulture harassment, while Leesburg still conducts harassment but assures residents no vultures are being killed in the town (when dead vultures are utilized, they come from a location outside Leesburg). This year, we have begun meeting with Town of Leesburg decision makers, presenting specific ideas for management actions like targeting vulture

attractants through improved waste control and using low-cost perch deterrents like motion activated sprinklers – methods that are not only more humane, but have also been shown to be highly effective.

We also respond to increasingly frequent inquiries from community members seeking advice to help with wildlife advocacy in their homeowner associations, schools and churches. We point inquirers to official information about laws on wildlife management, and to wildlife rescue and humane organizations that offer information about handling particular species. Inquirers sometimes use this information to educate their entire communities about the importance of living in harmony with wildlife. This spring, for example, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy member Carolyn Whisman



*Living in harmony with wildlife*  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

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## ■ Conservation Advocacy, continued

wrote to us: "Nothing makes our day more than looking out our window and catching a glimpse of a gorgeous red fox running across the lawn. However, after several experiences, we've learned that not everyone grew up with nature, learning to appreciate it as we have. Many are fearful." We helped Carolyn locate information about red and gray foxes to share with her community. She then wrote: "We have since worked with our homeowner association, and they published an article in our monthly newsletter explaining why fear of our foxes is almost completely groundless. We now hope to publish more articles, helping our community understand, appreciate and enjoy our wonderful wildlife. We take seriously the part we can play in being good stewards of nature's gifts, and being good neighbors to our animal friends."

## How Can YOU Help Loudoun County's Wildlife and People?

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is making a difference for wildlife and people through our advocacy work. As our county's human population grows, we need more people like YOU to help us maintain and expand our efforts.

- **Don't have much time?** No problem! Each contribution matters whether it's writing one letter, finding one research paper or attending one local government meeting.
- **Don't have a science background?** No problem! You can contribute in many ways through writing, graphic design, social media or general analytical or organizational skills.
- **Don't like politics?** No problem! We work to depoliticize wildlife and habitat issues. Our focus is on sharing scientific facts and helping to inspire an appreciation of wildlife.
- **Inspired to join our advocacy work?** Contact [www.loudounwildlife.org/Volunteer.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Volunteer.htm).

*"We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road – the one less traveled by – offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth." ~ Rachel Carson*

## Conservation Advocacy – what some of our recent partners and volunteers are saying:

**"P**eople often feel they have to fight nature, when in truth we heavily rely on the free services that nature provides – like food and oxygen – for our own survival. Wild Ones was organized to encourage less land assigned to relatively lifeless lawn and more land associated with healthy ecosystems, supporting bees, butterflies, birds, and humans. Even a reduction of 20 percent of lawn, planted with American natives like coneflower and aster, would help us all. I partner with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to help promote goals like this."

~ Donna Williamson, Wild Ones - Blue Ridge Chapter

**"H**elping with Loudoun Wildlife's advocacy effort has been a great learning experience. While I've always been intuitively against widespread use of chemical pesticides, assisting with research for the Conservancy's position paper on Lyme disease prevention gave me a more detailed knowledge of the specific harm that pesticides do, not only to targeted insects, but also to other insects, children, pets, birds, mammals, soil and aquatic organisms living in the biome unlucky enough to be exposed. It's a good feeling to know that by working to defend all life forms against such exposure, we are spreading thoughtful awareness that may result in a less polluted world."

~ Sally Snidow, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Volunteer

**"W**orking with a Loudoun Wildlife

Conservancy action group was educational and inspiring. A small team of dedicated individuals, working with Loudoun Wildlife's partner network, made a difference in getting the attention of the Loudoun County government and the Lyme Commission, and helped them make the prudent decision to rely on facts and a practical approach to dealing with Lyme disease, instead of spraying poisonous pesticides in public parks. This was a fantastic example of how we can all make a difference when we put our minds together and focus on a goal."

~ Chris Bledsoe, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Volunteer

**"A**t school I study the environment, especially focusing on human interaction with the natural world so when I heard about plans to spray Loudoun parks for ticks, I recognized the potential harm this action would have. I worked alongside other Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy members to bring to the Loudoun Lyme Commission's attention available research regarding spraying chemicals for ticks, which consistently show a lack of evidence for any resulting decrease in Lyme disease as well as myriad environmental risks."

~ Michael Carter, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Volunteer

**"I** realized I had an emotional investment in my Monarch Project... And I will never look at the natural world, big or small, the same again. Part of being connected to nature and the outdoors, is knowing how much you don't see... (The Monarch) let go, lifting off like he had been flying his whole life. He was above the trees in the time it took my heart to reach my throat."

~ Ed Felker on raising his first Monarch butterfly

Educate  
Inspire  
Resource





## Announcements

### Snickers Gap Hawk Watch Needs Your Help

Every fall thousands of hawks migrate south, many of them following the Blue Ridge Mountains on their journey. There are several official hawk watches in Virginia which monitor their numbers from year to year. The closest one, manned solely by volunteers, is the Snickers Gap Hawkwatch, on the border of Loudoun and Clarke County. It is affiliated with the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), which compiles the migration data of over 200 such sites located in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Typically, about 12,000 raptors are counted at Snickers each season.

The Snickers Gap Hawk Watch season officially begins September 1 and continues through November 30. Counters are needed as many days are still not covered. Both volunteers with experience and those willing to learn are welcome. The Hawk Watch is also a great place to observe hawks. If you would like learn how to identify them you will be sure to find regular participants on the weekend days especially between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Bring binoculars. A spotting scope is helpful if you have one.

If you would like to learn more, contact Joan Boudreau or Bob Abrams at 703-734-1238 or icepeep@aol.com or just come on up (if no one is watching when you arrive start counting!). The Hawkwatch is about 10 minutes west of Purcellville where Route 7 crosses the Loudoun-Clarke County line and the Appalachian Trail near Bluemont. The watch is adjacent to the highway (take a left at the top of the ridge on Rte 601 and an immediate right into the parking lot) and is conducted from the parking lot serving both commuters and hikers.

### 2014 Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

Have fun and make a difference at the same time – for over a century thousands of people have participated in the longest citizen science project in the world and counted every wild bird they can find on Christmas Bird Counts. The information from the more than 2,000 annual bird counts is sent to the National Audubon Society (NAS), which works with the Cornell University School of Ornithology to create a database of the sightings from which bird populations can be studied. Counters share their wonder of the wild beauty of feathered creatures with like-minded people, and sometimes find truly rare birds.

Join us for the **Eighteenth Annual Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 27**. Our count-circle has a 15-mile diameter and covers 177 square miles of Loudoun County: north to Waterford, south to Aldie, east to Ashburn, and west to Purcellville. The circle includes a number of very special natural areas such as the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, the Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project, Beaverdam Reservoir, Morven Park, Ball's Bluff, several private large estates, about five miles of the C&O Canal and Potomac River in the vicinity of White's Ferry, and much of still-rural western Loudoun County. Everyone is welcome – beginners are teamed up with experienced birders and every eye helps! After the counting is over we meet up at the Tally Rally where we find out who saw what and share stories about the day's highlights. If you are interested in participating for the whole day or just a

portion, **Sign Up Online** or contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).

#### Calmes Neck Christmas Bird Count - Sunday, January 4, 2015.

There are other Christmas Bird Counts in Loudoun County besides the Central Loudoun CBC which you can find out about by visiting [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/). The Calmes Neck CBC includes much of far-western Loudoun County as well as Clarke County. The count area includes a wide variety of habitats ranging from mountain forests to rural subdivisions to old farm fields and meadows, with the Shenandoah River running through it. If you want to help with the Calmes Neck CBC, contact Margaret Wester at 540-837-2799 or [margaretwester@hotmail.com](mailto:margaretwester@hotmail.com). Also, Joe Coleman (540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org)) and Phil Daley (540-338-6528 or [pedaley@verizon.net](mailto:pedaley@verizon.net)) are sector leaders for the Calmes Neck CBC. Phil's area includes Round Hill and north, and Joe's area includes Bluemont south to Bloomfield. If you are interested in joining either of them, please contact them directly.

To see what has been found on previous Central Loudoun counts visit [www.loudounwildlife.org/PDF\\_Files/CBC\\_Summary\\_Years.pdf](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/PDF_Files/CBC_Summary_Years.pdf); to find out what has been found on other counts or compare the Central Loudoun to other counts, visit [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/).



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg

Bald Eagles  
Photo by Donna Quinn





## Announcements, cont.

### Novice Birding Class for Children

**A**ttention young birders! Want to know how to bird like a pro? Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Youth Environmental Education Committee is conducting a class for young birders to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary for participating on bird walks and surveys – and maybe a life-long passion for birds. The class will focus on identification skills, binocular use and choice, field guides and other accessories to improve one's birding experiences. Experienced guides will lead two sessions, November 8 and 15 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship.



*Great Horned Owl*  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

Program is geared toward, but not limited to, youngsters 8-12 years old and their parents. Some binoculars will be available for use during class. Space is limited and registration is required by November 5. For more information contact Phil Daley (pdaley@loudounwildlife.org) or 540-338-6528.

### It's not too late!

**R**eport your Monarch butterfly releases at: [www.loudounwildlife.org/Monarch\\_Campaign\\_Raise\\_Release\\_Report.html](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Monarch_Campaign_Raise_Release_Report.html)

And watch us light up the map with our Monarchs heading to Mexico: [www.loudounwildlife.org/Monarch\\_Campaign\\_Raise\\_Release\\_Map.html](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Monarch_Campaign_Raise_Release_Map.html)

Thank you for making a difference!



*Monarch on Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)*  
Photo by Katherine Daniels

### View us in color:

[www.loudounwildlife.org/HH\\_Archives.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/HH_Archives.htm)



*Purple Finch*  
Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg

### Don't forget to leave your hummingbird feeders up!

**W**hile hummingbirds in winter are not common, they are not as rare as once thought. Leaving out nectar for these winter visitors may increase sightings, too.

It is recommended you fill hummingbird feeders half full, changing the nectar weekly. It may be necessary to bring the feeder in at night to keep it from freezing. If you are lucky enough to have a winter visitor, please share your sightings!

And don't worry, leaving your feeders out will not encourage Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to stay in the area. Studies have shown Rubies begin to head south when the days shorten - neither food supply nor the weather has any effect on their behavior. However, nectar will provide much needed nourishment for winter hummingbird visitors.

- [www.rubythroat.org/ResearchHummerVagrantMain.html](http://www.rubythroat.org/ResearchHummerVagrantMain.html)
- [www.carolinabirdclub.org/hummingbirds/winterhummingbirds.html](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/hummingbirds/winterhummingbirds.html)



*Ruby-throated Hummingbird*  
Photo by Katherine Daniels





# Butterfly Count 2014

by Nicole Hamilton

**A**s the day of the butterfly count approached this year, many people were asking, "Where are all the butterflies?" Across our area, other butterfly counts had already taken place and numbers were very low. Why? Well, remember last winter's polar vortex followed by a cool wet spring? Environmental factors took a toll on our butterflies and other insects.

Most of our butterflies overwinter as chrysalides or caterpillars. Some overwinter in the egg stage and a few, like the Question Mark and Comma, overwinter as adults. The harsh temperatures may have just been too much for many of them, plus the cooler spring delayed growth of necessary plants. Butterfly counts held earlier in summer revealed the impact of these conditions.

*Zebra Swallowtail  
and Butterfly Weed  
(Asclepias tuberosa)  
Photo by Donna Quinn ►*

But what about the Central Loudoun Count? Eighteen years ago, Bob Lyon tracked butterfly populations in Loudoun and determined that the first week of August is the peak for us in terms of diversity and numbers. This year the timing was particularly ideal. While the year started out slowly, by the first weekend of August we had a good count—a bit lower than some years but still decent. On August 2, 2014, we had ideal weather: sunny and warm. Eight teams manned by 76 people covered the count circle. By the time the day was done, we had spotted, identified, and tallied 3,063 butterflies across 55 different species!

With the exception of last year, which was rainy, our counts have averaged about 3,500 butterflies over the last six years. In terms of species diversity, however, our average is about 50, and this is only the second time that we reached 55 species.



*Butterfly counting  
Photo by Dave Pollack*

■ Continued on page 9





### Butterfly Count continued

The standouts this year included a Giant Swallowtail at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship and a total of 63 Monarchs, giving us an indicator Monarchs may see a modest recovery this year. Silver-spotted Skipper and Eastern-tailed Blue numbers were high: 424 and 487 respectively. We also had the highest number of Zebra Swallowtails (58) ever spotted on a count, although other swallowtail numbers were down. We saw very few hairstreaks but did have five Juniper Hairstreaks at one location. Fritillary numbers were also lower. You can look at the data and compare our results across the years by downloading our summary sheet here: [http://www.loudounwildlife.org/PDF\\_Files/ButterflyCountData\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/PDF_Files/ButterflyCountData_Summary.pdf)

We want to give a big thank you to all our team leaders for scouting their sectors, coordinating their people, gathering the data, and teaching new people about butterflies: Bob Blakney, Phil Daley, Nicole Hamilton, Dirck Harris, Jon Little, Larry Meade, Sheryl Pollock, and Tom Ramsay.

Giant Swallowtail and Swamp  
Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)  
Photo by Larry Meade

Monarch waystation  
Photo by Donna Quinn



### We also want to thank all the people who joined us for the count – spotting, identifying, and having a great time:

Teresa Barth, Ashley and Michael Brody and their children, Jo-Anne Burlew, Bill Cour, Candi and Casey Crichton, Teresa Davenport, Carol DiGiorgio, Bob and Tamie DeWitt, Thomas Dombrowski, Fred Gillis, Gail Gillis, Nancy Goetzinger, Barb Good, Tom Gray, Albert Ho, Irene Ho, Angela Ho, Caroline Kuhfahl, Jennifer Lieberman, Janet Locklear, John Magee, Donna MacNeil, Tess McAllister, Jill Miller, Laura and Liam McGranaghan, Tony Murdock, Gary Myers, Paula and Chuck Myers, Monica Neff, Kim Norgaard, Heather Olson, David Pollock, Mildred Porter, Mary Price, Laurie Proulx, Donna Quinn, Amy Ritter, Bob Ryan, Michael Seymour and family, Sarah, Jeff, Carter and Sam Steadman, Donna Travostino, Pidge Troha, Marcia Weidner, Carol and Chris White, Norma Wilson and Jane Yocom.





## Habitat Restoration

### Planting a Monarch Waystation

*“Anything else you’re interested in is not going to happen if you can’t breathe the air and drink the water. Don’t sit this one out. Do something.”*

*~ Carl Sagan*

#### Conservation advocacy in action:

- Identify an area of concern – declining Monarch populations
- Learn what we can do to help – plant milkweed and nectar plants, stop using pesticides
- Talk about it – programs, articles, blog posts, social media
- Make a difference – plant a Monarch waystation
- Inspire others – be an example

*Photos by Norman Gresley*







## Nooks & Crannies — Family Activities for Conservation Advocacy

*"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
Nothing is going to get better. It's not."*

~ Dr. Seuss

By Natalie Pien

**W**hat is conservation advocacy? It simply means protecting and preserving our environment and speaking up in support of this. All of us should be living in our world and using natural resources in a responsible way. In doing so, destruction or depletion will be avoided so that our environment and natural resources will be available for a very long time. Our behaviors (the actions each of us takes, or does not take) affect everything around us.

Maintaining a nature journal (see Winter 2013 edition of the *Habitat Herald* for tips) is a great way to make a connection with nature and develop a sense of stewardship. As Baba Dioum, a famous environmentalist, observed in a speech to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, "In the end, we will preserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught." Your nature journal can teach you many things.

### Activities:

1. In your nature journal, copy the poem below and complete it with your own thoughts:  
  
**Nature's Powers**  
Nature's gifts are all around,  
Yellow, green, red and brown,  
Mirrored water that reflex my frown,  
Butterflies flying in the dusky dawn,...
2. Make two lists: "Conservation practices we already do" / "New conservation practices we want to adopt."  
  - For the first list, try to apply your practice outside of your own home. For example, if you recycle plastic water bottles and a friend does not, offer to take their bottles home for recycling.
  - For the second list, create illustrated reminders and post on your refrigerator.
3. Participate in local habitat restoration activities. ([www.loudounwildlife.org/Habitat\\_Restoration.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Habitat_Restoration.htm), [www.keeploudounbeautiful.org/](http://www.keeploudounbeautiful.org/))
4. Organize a neighborhood clean up. ([www.cityofirving.org/kib/pdfs/HowOrgNCb.pdf](http://www.cityofirving.org/kib/pdfs/HowOrgNCb.pdf))
5. Adopt a street. ([www.leesburgva.gov/index.aspx?page=1213](http://www.leesburgva.gov/index.aspx?page=1213))
6. Participate in stream water quality monitoring. ([www.loudounwatershedwatch.org/subitem6\\_3.html](http://www.loudounwatershedwatch.org/subitem6_3.html), [www.loudounwildlife.org/Stream\\_Monitoring.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Stream_Monitoring.htm))

([www.familyfriendpoems.com/poems/nature/earth/#ixzz3ABO9w5qH](http://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poems/nature/earth/#ixzz3ABO9w5qH))

# October

**O**hushed October morning mild,  
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;  
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,  
Should waste them all.  
The crows above the forest call;  
Tomorrow they may form and go.  
O hushed October morning mild,  
Begin the hours of this day slow.  
Make the day seem to us less brief.  
Hearts not averse to being beguiled,  
Beguile us in the way you know.  
Release one leaf at break of day;  
At noon release another leaf;  
One from our trees, one far away.  
Retard the sun with gentle mist;  
Enchant the land with amethyst.  
Slow, slow!  
For the grapes' sake, if they were all,  
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,  
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost—  
For the grapes' sake along the wall.

Robert Frost

Ripened leaves

Wild grapes  
Photos by Liam McGranaghan





# 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](http://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](mailto:nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org) for additional information.*

**Plight of the Kestrel: Supporting and Monitoring This Special Raptor — Thursday, October 9, 7:00 p.m., Morven Park.** The American Kestrel is a beautiful little falcon native to the open rolling countryside of Loudoun County. These colorful hunters, about the size of a robin, can be seen perched on power lines or hovering above meadows in search of a field mouse dinner. Although kestrels are among the most common diurnal raptors in North America, their population has shown a long-term decline throughout the Northeast. Although there are several contributing factors, a significant one is the growing scarcity of nest sites. The good news is that we can help. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as Suzanne Shoemaker of Owl Moon Raptor Center and her Kestrel, Skye, help us learn more about these birds and how the placement of nest boxes in appropriate habitat can help to restore their numbers. Suzanne will also bring a Barn Owl and talk about their similar plight and the benefits of installing Barn Owl nest boxes throughout the county. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Beetle Mania — Sunday, October 19, 2:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Beetles inhabit nearly every ecological niche on the planet, first appearing about 230 million years ago, and are the largest group of living organisms known to science. Even with plants included in the count, one in every five known organisms is a beetle! They are one of the most interesting groups of insects and contain pests and beneficial species. How they have survived for so long and withstood extreme environmental events show their remarkable adaptability. Join Dr. David Furth from the National Museum of Natural History as he discusses the diversity of beetles and their impact on our world. This is a family-friendly event sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, and children over the age of five are encouraged to attend. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

## Birding Banshee

**J**oin 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](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Second Saturdays: October 11, November 8, December 13, January 10, at 8:00 a.m.**

**Fall Colors Walk — Saturday, October 25, 10:00 a.m., Raven Rocks, Bluemont.** As the days get cooler and frost is in the air, deciduous trees and shrubs put on an autumn show in all shades of red, yellow, orange, and purple. Join Carrie Blair and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a fall colors walk to the beautiful Raven Rocks overlook on the Appalachian Trail. Along the mostly level trail we'll discuss various tree species and why trees change their color in the fall. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Hummingbirds of the Mid-Atlantic Region — Sunday, October 26, 2:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Thirty years ago, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were thought to be the only hummingbird species that regularly occurred in eastern North America, and they were considered strictly summer residents. As the popularity of hummingbird feeders has brought these endearing birds into closer contact with people, there is growing awareness that these species are capable of long-distance travels far from their traditional ranges. Small numbers are now expected to spend the winter in this region, benefiting from the welfare of homeowners who go to the effort of keeping feeders filled and thawed. An ever-expanding list of species has been detected, indicating that almost any species of North American hummingbird has the potential to wander to this area. At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event, Bruce Peterjohn of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will summarize our current knowledge of the status of hummingbirds across the mid-Atlantic region with an emphasis on the wintering species. Then prepare to be surprised, because you never know what species of hummingbird may show up at your house one day! This is a family-friendly event and children over the age of 5 are encouraged to attend. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Dulles Greenway Wetlands Nature Walk — Saturday, November 15, 8:00 a.m.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a walk around the privately owned Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project near Oatlands Plantation. The Dulles Wetlands is home to a variety of birds and other wildlife and provides a unique opportunity to see nature up close and personal. Waterproof footgear, long pants and insect repellent are advised. Space is limited so register soon. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**What Happens During Hibernation? — Sunday, November 16, 2:00 p.m., Morven Park.** Ever wonder where wildlife goes in the wintertime? At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event, Merry Breed and Bobby Colicci, naturalists at Claude Moore Park, will tell us about the hibernation habits of local wildlife and what animals do during the cold of winter. This is a family-friendly event and children over the age of 5 are encouraged to attend. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**



**Birding the Shenandoah Valley — Sunday, December 7, 9:00**

**a.m. – 4:00 p.m.** Clarke County in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley is rich with excellent birding areas. Join two seasoned birders, Joe Coleman and Laura McGranaghan, on a daylong search for hawks, sparrows, waterfowl, and other seasonal birds in the northeastern sections of the Valley. We'll meet at the Snicker's Gap Hawkwatch in the Blue Ridge Mountains on the Loudoun/ Clarke County border. From here we'll move along the Shenandoah River, and visit the Virginia State Arboretum and Blandly Farm. We'll wrap up the day with a return to the Snicker's Gap Hawkwatch to see what's moving overhead. All levels of birders are welcome, and we will carpool/caravan from our meeting point to the return. This Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy trip is co-sponsored with the Audubon Naturalist Society. Members (ANS and LWC) \$34; nonmembers \$46. **Pre-registration required: Register online at [www.anshome.org/adulthoodnatureprograms](http://www.anshome.org/adulthoodnatureprograms)**; Loudoun Wildlife members should enter LWC for their member number.

**The Plight of Migrating Birds — Thursday, December 11, 7:00 p.m., Location TBD.**

A large proportion of the breeding birds of Virginia winter south of the U.S. border from Cuba to Chile. While outside of the United States, these species face many threats that they must overcome if they are to return safely. At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event, Greg Butcher, Migratory Species Coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service International Programs, will discuss the wintering habitats and geography of several migratory birds of high conservation priority and discuss several of the organizations working to reduce the threats to birds south of the border. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count — Saturday, December 27.**

Participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Started in 1899 by the National Audubon Society, these surveys are held all over the country, with the results used to better understand bird populations and dynamics. Our count-circle has a 15-mile diameter and covers 177 square miles of Loudoun's countryside: north to Waterford, south to Aldie, east to Ashburn, and west to Purcellville. This part of Loudoun County includes beautiful scenery and a variety of birds. Everyone is welcome, both beginners and experienced birders, children and adults (amateurs are teamed with experienced birders). If you are interested in participating for the whole day or just part of the day. **Sign Up Online or contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Discover Wild Loudoun! — Saturday, January 10, 2:00 p.m.,**

**Location TBD.** Loudoun County has many wonderful natural areas and parks for exploring nature. Join professional photographer Jeff Mauritzen and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we take you through a collage of photos designed to provide you with ideas on places you can visit and explore nature in and around the county. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

For up-to-date information on our programs and to sign up, visit our **website at [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org).**

## Birding the Blue Ridge Center

**J**oin 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.brce.org](http://www.brce.org). **Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org)**

**Fourth Saturdays (except December):  
October 25 and November 22, at 8:00 a.m.**

## Morven Park Nature Walk

**J**oin Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for nature walks through the rich Morven Park property as we visit woods and wetlands and discuss the flora and fauna that inhabit this park. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Sundays, October 5, November 2,  
December 7, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**



*Black Vulture*  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan



## Living with Wildlife – Groundhogs (*Marmota monax*)

by Lindsey Brookbank

Groundhogs are gentle, often times comical, vegetarians. They are celebrated on February 2 but may not be as welcome in your garden later in the year. Conflicts with groundhogs usually occur over who gets to eat the vegetables. Despite their attraction to what grows in your garden, it is possible to live in harmony with groundhogs with a bit of tolerance and preventative measures.



*Groundhog existence is one of constant vigil*  
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

In addition to symbolizing the beginning of spring, groundhogs play an important role in the ecosystem. Their defecation inside the burrow fertilizes the earth; their digging loosens and aerates the soil, and their eating habits can determine which plants will grow. (They feast on dandelions!) Abandoned burrows provide homes for other small animals, amphibians and reptiles. Groundhogs are also an important and abundant food source for large predators like hawks, owls and coyotes. Groundhogs are not considered a significant source of any infectious disease that can be transmitted to humans.

In spring and early summer, mother groundhogs may nurse their young under sheds and decks. If you spot a groundhog living under your shed, there is no cause for alarm. Groundhogs simply do not attack humans, our children or pets. If chased, they quickly

flee. We encourage you to leave them alone at least until the young are on their own which is about eight weeks after they are born. Also, it is a delight to observe the attentive care groundhogs give their young. Contrary to what you might hear, they do not undermine the foundation of a building. In fall, excluding them before they move into burrows for winter hibernation is most effective.

If you must evict a groundhog from its den, place dirty kitty litter or ammonia-sprinkled rags down the burrow (waiting at least until late summer when young have left the den). Groundhogs react to urine odor as a potential predator, causing them to leave. If burrows present a potential hazard to humans and pets, flag them with something visible, like a cone or a flag.

### To keep groundhogs out of your garden:

- Construct a visibility barrier, such as a 3-foot black plastic wall, before the woodchucks identify the area as a foraging ground.
- Put up a 3-foot mesh fence that's staked, but slightly wobbly, discouraging them from climbing. They'll also try to dig under the fence, so expand it 4 inches straight down into the ground and then bend it, extending the final 8 to 12 inches outward, away from the garden, in an "L" shape to create a false bottom. When a groundhog digs down and hits the mesh flap, he'll think he can't dig any farther and give up.
- Line your garden with pinwheels – groundhogs are timid and will be scared off when they see motion devices. Don't use Mylar balloons as they may become hazards to other forms of wildlife.
- Plant species that repel groundhogs, such as gopher plant or crown imperial fritillary.
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper around plants. Epsom salts are also reported to deter groundhogs. These treatments need to be reapplied after rain.
- Keep the ground clear of fallen fruit.

Groundhogs have many predators and their daily existence is one of constant watchfulness. Although some find groundhogs to be pests, many of us enjoy seeing these amusing furry marmots. Tolerance and understanding allow us to observe and appreciate the wildlife around us, giving new depth to our own life experiences.

### Sources

- Coexisting with Wildlife Factsheet #: Solving Woodchuck Problems, The Fund for Animals, September, 2002.
- [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)
- [www.humanesociety.org/news/press\\_releases/2013/01/tips-for-groundhog-day-013013.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2013/01/tips-for-groundhog-day-013013.html)

According to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, it is illegal in the state to trap and relocate an animal to another area. If you need an animal removed from your property, contact the Humane Society at 866-948-6263 or request an appointment at [www.humanesociety.org/forms/humane\\_wildlife\\_services\\_request\\_form.html?credit=web\\_id130160737](http://www.humanesociety.org/forms/humane_wildlife_services_request_form.html?credit=web_id130160737).





*“The truth is: the natural world is changing. And we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have and we need to defend it.”*

*~ David Attenborough*

*“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”*

*~ Chief Seattle, 1855*

*“The environment is where we all meet; where all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.”*

*~ Lady Bird Johnson*

*Photo by Nicole Hamilton*

## Please Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

***I wish to become a member of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy:***

- ☐ \$10 Student   ☐ \$20 Individual   ☐ \$30 Family   ☐ \$200 Individual Lifetime  
☐ \$300 Family Lifetime   ☐ \$75 Corporate

I wish to make a donation to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, enclosed is my check in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_  
(All contributions are tax deductible.)

Note: Memberships run from January 1 through December 31. (If you join or renew after September 1, your membership will run through the end of the following calendar year.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make your check payable to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and return with this form to:**

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





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## Your membership is their voice.

*Join, renew or donate  
to show your support  
of Loudoun Wildlife  
Conservancy today.*

**S**peaking out on behalf of wildlife in Loudoun County is the cornerstone of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Our members make the difference by helping us provide environmental and educational programming, conduct habitat restoration projects, and protect and preserve habitat through advocacy and partnerships.

Join or renew your membership today at [www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm](http://www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm) or complete the membership form located on page 15.

**Please Join or Renew Today!** Memberships start at just \$20 at [www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm](http://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.

*Turkey Vulture  
Photo by Nicole Hamilton*