



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Winter 2014



Giving Thanks for Ravens

by Liam McGranaghan

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)
Photo © Jim Clark

Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) belong to the family of birds known as corvids, a group that includes the smartest birds on the planet: the jays, jackdaws, rooks, and crows. Experimental studies have shown ravens have the cognitive abilities of a 4-year-old child, which makes them equally or even more intelligent than dogs and most monkeys. It is their

intelligence, and the resulting antics, that capture our hearts and attention. Ravens can be amicable, joyful, fun-loving and extremely curious. This combination also can make them a nuisance. Ravens, like their clever cousins the crow, have the ability to analyze situations and draw meaningful connections. They are skilled problem solvers.

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President's Message

Loudoun Wildlife Hires Executive Director!

by Joe Coleman

Almost 20 years ago a small group of us met in a farmhouse kitchen to talk about the greatest threat to wildlife – loss of habitat. Loudoun County's massive growth had begun, and many acres of wildlife habitat were being lost every month. While we knew growth was inevitable, we wanted to work with the county's citizens to ensure healthy and sustaining habitats would also remain. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy was founded. Our mission, the preservation and proliferation of healthy wildlife habitat, was quickly embraced and our membership grew. However, most of our membership and outreach was limited to Leesburg and western Loudoun.

In 1999 Nicole Hamilton moved to Loudoun and joined Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Concerned about the destruction of habitat in her neighborhood, she asked for a stack of newsletters and brochures to share with neighbors. Shortly thereafter, she became one of the organization's many volunteers, helping with a variety of different tasks, eventually becoming president in 2004. Under her leadership Loudoun Wildlife strengthened its roles and outreach throughout the entire county, and watched its membership grow. By 2012, when Nicole again became president, the organization's membership had grown to almost 1,000 members. At its October 2014 meeting, the Loudoun Wildlife

Conservancy Board of Directors voted to hire an executive director. The establishment of this position was driven by the organization's tremendous growth and increasing demands for protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat in Loudoun County. The board recognized that in order for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to keep pace with demand, and to demonstrate commitment to the future, we needed the leadership of an executive director. Nicole's guidance in the past and present made her the obvious choice, whereupon she resigned as president to become Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's first executive director.



Upon accepting the position Nicole said, "It's exciting seeing Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy continue to develop and grow. We often wonder how organizations became part of the community and here we are creating it. We're developing an organization that will endure and benefit future generations."

I couldn't agree more with Nicole; it's been an incredible journey! As immediate past-president, I have agreed to fill the role of president during this interim period until our next annual meeting in 2015. While we continue to be a volunteer-based organization, there are so many demands on the organization's resources that we could not manage a fraction of them without someone like Nicole pulling all of us together – Board, staff, conservancy members, allied partners, as well as volunteers. I look forward to working with Nicole as we move forward in this continuing and exciting journey.

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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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■ Ravens, continued

At one time, Common Ravens nested throughout the Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to Maine. Their numbers steadily declined as pioneers made headway to the mountains and crows and ravens were shot as vermin. The greatest reduction in their population came in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when timber barons seeking profits denuded entire mountain ranges, destroying complete ecosystems and leaving ravens without a place to live. Poisons, continued habitat loss and changing agricultural practices did the rest – raven populations plummeted. Since 1978, Common Ravens have been protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act which protects birds as well as their nests. Today, ravens are listed as endangered species in several eastern states and a species of concern in most of the others.

Historically, humans have felt a bond with ravens which is revealed in legend, poetry and literature (Shakespeare, for example). Ravens have been known as messengers between life and death and considered bad omens as well as symbols of good luck. They play an important part in the mythology of many cultures. Native American tribes such as the Tlingit and the Haida refer to the raven as the *trickster* whose role is often to both deceive and help man and his fellow creatures.

To a raven, there is nothing more tempting than a trash bag set out on the curb. Within minutes of being placed on the ground, ravens (or their cousin the crow) will arrive and toss trash out of tears they make as they seek the treats we throw away. Unfortunately, most homeowners don't embrace the mental prowess and resourcefulness of ravens, and object to the mess they have to clean up. If homeowners appreciated the intelligence of the raven, however, they would understand using a trash can with a tight-fitting lid is a simple solution. Of course, ravens that successfully obtain food by pilfering are only encouraged to seek bolder adventures. This has led to ravens learning to jump into open, parked cars to steal shiny objects or food left sitting on a seat, as well as ravens diving into open trash cans and dumpsters. At our high school, the ravens sit nearly every day on the lip of the roof over the food courtyard waiting in anticipation for last lunch to be over so they can raid the courtyard for leftovers.



Waiting for lunch to end
Photo by Liam McGranaghan



Raven with road kill
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

Being opportunist omnivores, ravens eat a wide variety of foods. They will follow coyotes or wolves to a kill to scavenge carrion. There is even evidence of ravens leading wolves to prey in order to get the leftovers and of ravens calling to other ravens to alert them to available food. Ravens can also recognize predators and will warn each other of their presence.

Raven intelligence makes them highly skilled predators. Bird eggs are favorites and ravens are known to tag-team ducks and geese to steal their eggs. One of the pair will approach a duck at the nest, causing the duck to confront the intruder. The lead raven will draw the duck away which allows the second raven to raid the nest. Young songbirds are also favorites, but ravens dine on adults as well. I once witnessed a raven flying after what I thought was a leaf in the wind, but it turned out to be a Brown Thrasher fleeing for its life. It dashed across the sky and dove into a thicket that it must have thought would offer protection. The raven simply dove in after it and captured the thrasher in its beak. Perhaps the raven had young of its own to feed and one animal life allowed another to live. Mother Nature's gifts are all precious, but she does not choose sides or make judgments.

When meat is not on the plate, ravens eat a variety of plant matter, fungi and seeds. Acorns, when in season, make a fine main course by providing calories in the form of oils, fats and sugars. In fact, corvids are one of the main distributors of acorns in the forest. Ravens, crows and blue jays all cache acorns in numbers far greater than squirrels. Undoubtedly, some of these acorns are forgotten and sprout into new trees. How many oaks grace our forests thanks to a raven?

Ravens show diverse taste in selecting nesting sites as well. In the eastern United States, cliffs and trees are the favored choices. In western states, cliffs are a preferred location, but ravens are also observed nesting on structures such as billboards, wooden transmission poles, bridges, and even city rooftops. Ravens build large stick nests lined with fur obtained from dead deer or rabbits. Nest building begins early, from

■ *Continued on page 4*



■ *Ravens, continued*

about mid- to late-January, and takes a week to 10 days to complete. By mid-February, when winter weather is at its worst, females are sitting on a clutch of 3 to 7 eggs. Incubation is shared by both male and female ravens and is surprisingly short, lasting only 18 to 24 days. The young are born helpless and naked with closed eyes. Young ravens become fully feathered after 35 to 40 days and are ready to leave the nest at that time. Fledging the nest is the most dangerous time for the young ravens (and all birds) and many young will not survive their first week out of the nest. Young ravens rely on their parents for 4 to 6 weeks before they have the skills to survive on their own. During this time, they develop their flying skills and learn about their world, oftentimes through play.



Hungry nestlings
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

and they provide ravens with an unsurpassed level of play. Bald Eagles easily dominate ravens in aerial ability and could snatch a raven out of the sky at any time. Instead, they choose to play the game, much to a raven's delight. To witness the aerial displays of these two iconic birds reminds us of the sheer joy, beauty, majesty and passion inherent in nature.

Ravens typically favor living in wild places but are learning to take advantage of the opportunities humans provide. Whether we consider them tricksters or messengers from another world, we can learn from them by observing their resourcefulness, intelligence and playful nature. So go forth and seek ravens, and give thanks for all they represent!



Raven and Bald Eagle
Photo by Liam McGranaghan

Gregarious, vocal (ravens have a huge vocabulary) and fun-loving ravens will play for hours. On the ridgetops of western Loudoun County, one can see as many as 20 to 30 young ravens in the sky at one time, especially on windy days, in full frolic. Chase seems to be the main form of play and includes amazing aerobatics involving 360 degree roll-overs, arcing dives and even flying upside down. Sometimes a lead raven will simply fall from the sky for 100 feet or more before regaining its wings and charging back into action. Add a hawk or eagle into the picture and euphoric bedlam erupts. Surprisingly, many of the raptors seem to enjoy the play as well, particularly the immature ones. Juvenile Red-tailed Hawks will power-dive out of the sky toward a lone raven or even a group of ravens only to pull off at the last second, a signal for the ravens to get involved. Soon dogfights are taking place all over the sky as ravens chase red-tails and red-tails chase ravens, their mock aerial combat utilizing barrel rolls and loop-de-loops. When a Bald Eagle gets into the mix, nothing is held back! For their size, Bald Eagles are amazingly adroit fliers,

Quick Facts about Ravens

- **Average life span:** 13 years in the wild
- **Size:** 24-26 inches, wingspan 3.8-4.7 feet, the largest perching bird in North America
- **Weight:** 2.3 lbs.
- **Group name:** flock or an 'unkindness'
- **Breeding:** mate for life
- **Clutch size:** 3-7 eggs, 1.7-2 inches, eggs are green, olive or blue, often mottled with darker green or brown, 1 brood per year
- **Did you know?** According to legend, if the ravens leave the Tower of London, the fortress and the British kingdom will fall.

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Announcements



Thank You Sunset Hills Vineyard!

A big thank you to Sunset Hills Vineyard for organizing a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy fundraiser this past September and donating \$2,000 to support our programs!

Diane and Mike Canney and their staff are champions for Monarch butterflies and the environment. Share our thanks by raising a glass of their delicious wine and toasting to healthy wildlife habitats in Loudoun County.

Visit Sunset Hills and check out their wildlife-friendly Monarch waystation, bluebird nesting box trail, pond fit for frogs, and solar-powered operations.

Sunset Hills Vineyard, 38295 Fremont Overlook Lane, Purcellville, Virginia

Mark Your Calendar!

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Spring Native Plant Sale

Your resource for locally-grown native plants

Saturday, April 18, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Morven Park

Sources you can trust to provide organic, locally grown native plants – Nature by Design, Hill House Farm & Nursery and Watermark Woods – offering an exceptional selection of native plants for your gardens.

New exhibitors:

- Garden Sculptures – recycled garden tools by Ramsey Hamilton
- Sharp Blades – Ronnie Fox will sharpen all of your small garden implements
- Rain Barrels – 50-gallon barrels from Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation
- Bluebird Houses – complete setups with pole and snake guards or just bluebird box
- Tuscarora Landscaping Choice (TLC) – organic soil amendment, also used as a deer repellent

And don't miss informative exhibits about pollinators, including Monarchs, birds and amphibians; the used books sale; the Good Grubbin' food truck; and the Audubon at Home and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy tables where t-shirts and handouts will be available.



*Monarch waystation in winter provides habitat and food for many
Photo by Laura McGranaghan*



Trees in winter
Photo © Jim Clark

Forest Stewardship Council Certified Paper

by Anne Zaleski

How we use our resources makes an impact on the world around us. As an organization, as well as individuals, we are always striving to reduce our environmental footprint.

In the past, the *Habitat Herald* was printed on 100 percent recycled paper. This paper was derived from pre-processed waste paper sourced anywhere from the paper-making process to post-consumer recycled materials. Re-using materials already extracted from natural resources is a sound practice that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy advocates. But it is also expensive and not without its own set of challenges to be green. Transforming dirty, inked and pre-processed materials into fresh paper has its own manufacturing and waste disposal concerns. Chemicals are used to strip down color, and unusable sludge needs to be disposed of. To minimize this, some of the most practical products to come from post-consumer waste include boxes and packaging items.

Going forward, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has chosen an alternate paper source that we consider equally environmentally sound. The paper you are holding is made using 10 to 30 percent recycled

materials, and most importantly, is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC has created a globally accepted set of stringent requirements to manage the world's forests and maintain their health for future generations. To have a forest or a product derived from that forest certified, guidelines are met that eliminate, among other things, habitat destruction and water pollution. One of the mission principles of the FSC is to "conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes." In addition to being an environmentally conscious choice, it also costs less. And with this savings we can now print our cover in color!

While using recycled materials is important to our consumer habits, responsible and sustainable management of our forests is fundamental to protecting this vital natural resource. We've shown our support of this initiative by using FSC-certified paper. You can show your support of the environment, too, by giving your *Habitat Herald* to a friend or recycling it when you're finished enjoying its contents.

Resources:
www.us.fsc.org

House Centipede (*Scutigera coleoptrata*)

by Kerry Bzdyk

Raising an entomologist provided our family with many interesting encounters with the natural world. One such memory involves a house centipede that had been confined to a jar for closer inspection. While it waited in the glassy jail, my daughter came across a large wolf spider which got scooped up and added to the jar. As she headed off to other activities that morning I thought that the smaller house centipede would surely be devoured by the spider. Imagine our surprise when we returned to find the house centipede looking fat and satisfied surrounded by the leftover legs of the spider. These creatures deserve a closer inspection indeed!

House centipedes are elongated, thin arthropods that belong to the class Chilopoda. They are yellowish-brown in color, have 15 pairs of long legs (one pair for each body segment), long antennae, and well developed, multi-faceted eyes. They originated in the Mediterranean, but have increased their distribution throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico and South America. They were first documented in

Pennsylvania in 1849. Although they cannot survive outdoors in the winter in our area, they find many places in our homes to stay warm. They hide in damp and dark areas like crawlspaces and basements. They have been known to live for several years and females can produce up to 150 offspring. There are six larval instars or molts and four post larval instars before the centipede reaches maturity.

House centipedes are secretive and quick, coming out at night to prey on other arthropods, such as cockroaches, silverfish, spiders and carpet beetles. They subdue their prey by injecting venom with their strong jaws. While they are aggressive predators, they do not readily bite humans and are not considered dangerous. In fact they can be considered beneficial because they prey on arthropods that we would rather not have in our homes. An over abundance of house centipedes may be an indicator of an infestation of carpet beetles or other pests. Their numbers are best controlled by removing their food source.



House centipede (*Scutigera coleoptrata*)
Photo by Nicole Hamilton

So if the house centipede's lightning speed and striking appearance have put fear in your heart up to now, consider its good side, and let it be... this harmless predator is helping to keep your home free of unwanted pests.

Resources:

- <http://bugguide.net/node/view/25>
- <http://ento.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/house-centipedes>



Photo © Jim Clark

Winter Trees

by William Carlos Williams

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.



Stacey and James, the Purcellville Water Tower Ravens

by Liam McGranaghan

While on a walk with students from one of my environmental science classes on a winter day in 2013, I heard loud, raucous and guttural “rawk, rawk!” calls coming from the Purcellville water tower. “Do you hear that? Those are ravens!” I explained to my students that a raven is much larger than a crow, has a thicker bill and a wedge-shaped tail, compared to the crow’s square tail. They also have the ability to soar, something crows are unable to do. Lesson over – or so I thought – and my class continued on.

The next morning I saw one of the ravens fly with a stick in its bill toward the top of the tower. After taking a rest on one of the armatures 200 feet above the ground, it hopped over to a set of thick cables and placed the stick next to a cable support and flew off again. I couldn’t believe it! Were ravens building a nest on the tower? Ravens typically nest on cliffs or in trees in the wild, not in a town surrounded by humans! I watched the raven bring another five sticks, each about 1 to 2 feet long, and add them to the growing nest. This was only the beginning of what would become a very memorable two-year lesson for those of us fortunate enough to witness it.

The ravens’ first nesting attempt in 2013 was a roller coaster of emotions as we joyfully celebrated when we realized the female was incubating eggs but then were equally anguished when telecommunication workers disturbed incubation during repair work. Then there was heartbreaking sadness as we lost young ravens, one by one, during the dangerous time after fledging the nest. By the time school let out for the summer, only one young raven remained. This one, however, must have represented success to the parents, for they returned to nest in this same location again the next winter.



The water tower raven family



Young raven hit by car shortly after fledging the nest

■ Continued on page 9



■ *Stacey and James, continued*

During their second nesting attempt in 2014, the community rallied to give the water tower ravens their best chance of successfully raising their young. The town helped make sure there were no workers on the tower to disturb them. Loudoun Valley High School students posted signs to make people aware of the ravens and to be cautious while driving by the nesting site. The students even named the pair in honor of two of the town's founders: Stacey and James. In their second year, Stacey and James successfully fledged all three of their young!

We're hoping Stacey and James will return for a third year on the water tower. Stay tuned with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's blog and Facebook page for updates!

- www.loudounwildlife.org/blog
- www.facebook.com/LoudounWildlife

All photos by Liam McGranaghan



"Slow" by Loudoun Valley High School students



Bringing sticks to the nest



Adult raven at Loudoun Valley High School

Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

by Julie Borneman (Watermark Woods Native Plant Nursery)

When planning winter landscaping, most of us rely on evergreen shrubs to add interest. However, there is more to winter interest than evergreen foliage. The Red Twig Dogwood, also called Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), offers something new every season, including winter.

Cornus sericea highlights spring with its clusters of white blossoms followed by small white berries. Over the summer months it has a loose, multi-stem form to support our familiar dogwood leaves. In autumn Red Twig kicks things up with stunning burgundy foliage. But winter is when the real fireworks happen. Showy red branches are revealed when leaves fall and provide a striking contrast in winter snow. Branches can also add height and color indoors to floral arrangements.

This Piedmont native shrub thrives in moist, well-drained soils with partial shade. *Cornus sericea* is a riparian species, which is often seen growing along stream banks and vernal pools. The Red Twig Dogwood can also adapt to full sun exposures or drier habitats, but added stress can leave the shrub susceptible to canker, blight and insect damage.

Red Twig Dogwoods can grow 6 to 12 feet with a similar spread. However, annual pruning can help control the size. This is a hearty shrub, which can handle being cut to the ground each spring and still grow to a significant height in a single growing season. The root system spreads readily through stolons and can form dense populations. That makes this shrub a good candidate for erosion control.

Cornus sericea isn't just a pretty face in the landscape; it also has a history of providing useful materials. Native Americans had many uses for this versatile plant. They used the bark as an additive in tobacco and dyes and also wove the stems into



Close-up of Red Twig Dogwood flowers

Red Twig Dogwood in autumn
Photos above courtesy of
www.wildflower.org

Red Twig Dogwood in winter
www.georgeweigel.net/plant-of-the-week-profiles/flowering-shrubs/red-twig-dogwood

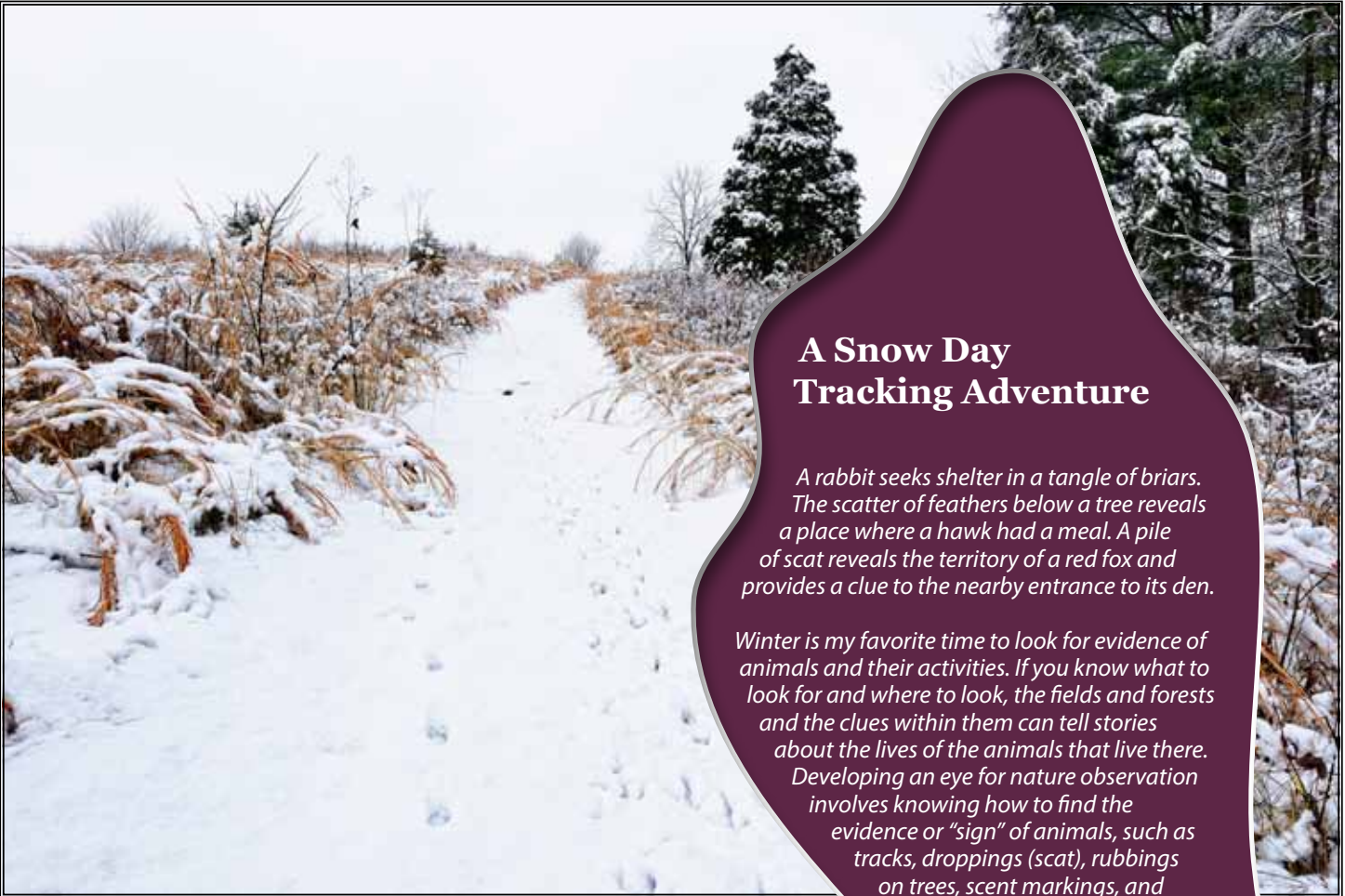
baskets. The Latin for this genus, *Cornus*, meaning horn, is appropriate since these hard branches were useful in making tool handles. With its rich history and eye-catching form, this shrub is a conversation starter as well as an attractive addition to the garden for many reasons.

Red Twig Dogwood doesn't just appeal to humans. Birds and small mammals love the berries and the leaves alone provide for over 100 species of butterflies and moths. It is a larval host plant to the Spring Azure butterfly, *Celastrina ladon*. This wide variety of visitors makes it an ideal addition to a nature lover's backyard.

With four seasons of interest, the Red Twig Dogwood is a must-have for any native plant collector. As colder temperatures arrive and you make your spring planting list, be sure to reserve a prime space for this top-performing native species.

Sources:

- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, www.wildflower.org, citation October 2014.
- Mt. Cuba Center, www.mtcubacenter.org, citation October 2013.
- United States Botanical Gardens, www.usbg.gov, citation October 2013.
- Virginia Cooperative Extension publications and educational resources, www.pubs.ext.vt.edu, citation October 2013.
- Tallamy, Doug, *Bringing Nature Home*, April 2009, Timber Press.



A Snow Day Tracking Adventure

A rabbit seeks shelter in a tangle of briars. The scatter of feathers below a tree reveals a place where a hawk had a meal. A pile of scat reveals the territory of a red fox and provides a clue to the nearby entrance to its den.

Winter is my favorite time to look for evidence of animals and their activities. If you know what to look for and where to look, the fields and forests and the clues within them can tell stories about the lives of the animals that live there.

Developing an eye for nature observation involves knowing how to find the evidence or "sign" of animals, such as tracks, droppings (scat), rubbings on trees, scent markings, and other clues. Learning how to identify these signs and how to discover their meaning opens doors to a whole new world of animal behavior.

An excerpt from
*Habitat Herald 2001
Winter, Animal
Tracks and Traces*
by Patty Selly

It's not just for snowballs!

When you wake up hearing the magical words, "Loudoun County Schools **CLOSED** all day!", and see the sight of newly fallen, sparkling snow, don't miss the opportunity to gather the family and head to the trails for a tracking adventure. Finding animal tracks and signs is exciting and offers a delightful family learning experience.

There are many guides and apps that make it easy and fun to identify what animals passed by and what they were doing while we were sleeping. So, bundle up and put on your exploring cap. Grab a guide, a camera and a notebook for sketches and to record observations. After your tracking adventure, make some hot cocoa and share your sightings with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LoudounWildlife.

**Don't wait, the snow is already melting!
See you on the trail!**



*Tracks, Scats and Signs
(Take Along Guides)*
by Leslie Dendy



*Track Finder: A Guide to Mammal
Tracks of Eastern North America
(Nature Study Guides)*
by Dorcas S. Miller



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.*

Landscape for Life — Tuesday mornings, January 6 through February 3, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Morven Park. Learn how even one home garden can begin to repair the web of life. Landscape for Life, presented by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, is a sustainable gardening course designed by the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center and the U.S. Botanic Garden. It teaches us how we can transform our home landscapes and public places into healthy refuges that benefit not only birds, pollinators and other wildlife but also the surrounding community and the Chesapeake Bay. \$50 class fee includes source materials. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Nan McCarry at geomom@lucketts.net.*

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

Sparrow Identification Field Trip — Saturday, January 24, Time and Location TBD. The clear “bouncing-ball” trill of the Field Sparrow is a familiar sound in brushy fields and roadsides. Join Larry Meade and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we survey the various sparrow species that can be seen in our region in the winter, with an emphasis on how to identify them in the field. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Searching for Birds of Prey — Sunday, January 25, 1:00 p.m. until dark. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s Liam and Laura McGranaghan, Joe Coleman and Liz Dennison on a winter raptor search. We will drive the back roads of Loudoun County with frequent stops to find and identify the many hawks, and an owl or two, who winter here. Space is limited so please register early. **Registration**

required: Sign Up Online. *Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*
Volunteer Orientation and Opportunity Showcase — Saturday, January 31, 10:30 a.m., Morven Park. Are you new to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy or want to learn more about it? Do you want to get involved in your community, but don’t have a good idea where to start serving? Do you want to meet some new friends who are as enthusiastic about the great outdoors as you are? If so, this is the event for you! In just one hour, we’ll give you a brief introduction to where we’ve been and our big plans for where we’re going. You’ll have a chance to meet one-on-one with our board chairs and project coordinators. They will go over our extensive volunteer opportunities in hopes that you will find a project (or projects!) that will utilize your skills and experience while giving you a chance to be part of our mission to bring the appreciation of nature through education to our community. Light refreshments will be served. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Hannah Duffy at hduffy@loudounwildlife.org.*

Winter Waterfowl Tour — Sunday, February 1, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Join Bill Brown and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a rare opportunity to tour local waterways to witness waterfowl in winter. We will begin at the Elizabeth Mills Riverfront Park on the Potomac, then drive to various waterways in Loudoun County to identify species and discuss habits and habitats. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Exploring Nature in Winter — Saturday, February 7, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy naturalists Phil Daley and Paul Miller on this family walk to discover and discuss how animals and plants survive the coldest months of the year. This will be a relatively easy walk during which we will examine the trees, plants, animal sign and insects we find along the trails, and hopefully discover some skunk cabbage poking its flower heads up through the mud and snow (a sure sign that Spring is on its way). We will enjoy a beautiful time to be out of doors in this magnificent setting. Directions can be found at www.brces.org. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** *Questions: Contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pdaley@loudounwildlife.org.*

Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring Program Kickoff — Saturday, February 21, 1:00 p.m., Morven Park. Janet Locklear, coordinator of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s bluebird monitoring program, will provide an orientation on nestbox monitoring and the protocol used in Loudoun for collecting and reporting data. She will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails being monitored around Loudoun, and take us through a slide show about bluebirds, their nesting habits, habitat needs and preferred foods. Tips on gardening for bluebirds will be discussed as well as the use of natural cavities and nestboxes. A typical nestbox system with predator guards will be set up for demonstration. Those interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2015 season can sign up during the meeting. Those interested in monitoring a home nestbox or trail and providing data to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy can register their trails/boxes

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: January 10, February 14, March 14 and April 11, at 8:00 a.m.



during the meeting as well. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org or contact Janet Locklear at jllocklear@loudounwildlife.org.

Loudoun Amphibian Monitoring Program Kickoff — Thursday, February 26, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Morven Park. Interested in frogs, toads and salamanders? Amphibians are not only an important indicator of environmental health, they are great fun to watch, listen to and learn about. Become a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy amphibian monitor and learn about our monitoring protocol, gear needed and species that you will encounter. Then, we'll help you identify a location to monitor or establish a survey route. This is a great activity for adults and families. New monitors will receive the Amphibian Monitoring Handbook for recording and reporting data, CD of frog and toad calls, and photographic species identification guide. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.

Morven Park Nature Walk — Sunday, March 1, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a free family nature walk as we explore some of the diverse habitats at Morven Park and encounter the interesting wildlife that use them. This time of year, certain frogs and salamanders are just starting to stir and winter bird species are still present. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.

Wildlife Camera-Trapping Program and Field Trip — Saturday, March 7, 2:00 p.m., Morven Park. Wildlife surveyor and camera-trapper Brian Balik has a passion for the outdoors and wildlife. His use of "camera-trapping" using heat- and motion-sensing cameras to detect wildlife has uncovered a number of startling things about local wildlife. Join Brian and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a discussion and actual demonstration of wildlife camera-trapping. Then you too can take part in the research to track the hidden wildlife that few Northern Virginians get to see, including coyotes, bears and river otters. Wear field clothes and hiking boots or shoes that can get muddy. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.

Creating a Habitat Garden — Sunday, March 8, 2:00 p.m., Morven Park Carriage Museum. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and landscaper John Magee, owner of Magee Design, as he shows us how to set up a habitat garden in our yards and then, if we choose, get it certified through the Audubon at Home program. Discussion will cover the four basic design principles of habitat – food, shelter, water and a place to raise young. Pollinator-friendly native plants will be emphasized. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.

Woodcock Outing at the Institute Farm — Tuesday, March 10, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Witness the incredible courtship display of the woodcock, one of our most fascinating avian residents. On this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy outing led by Emily Southgate, we will watch and listen for the woodcock's "peent" at the Institute Farm near Aldie. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact Emily Southgate at ewbsouthgate@gmail.com.

Vanishing Vernal Pools and the Amphibians That Use Them — Class March 13, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Morven Park; Field Trip March 14 or 15, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for this popular crash course on vernal pools and other seasonal

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: January 24, February 28 and March 28, at 8:00 a.m.

wetlands and their inhabitants. This hands-on training begins with a classroom session on Friday evening followed by a full-day field session on the weekend (participants pick either Saturday or Sunday for their field trip). During the field session, we will visit different local vernal pool habitats, encounter amphibians that may include Spotted and Jefferson salamanders and wood frogs, and search for fairy shrimp. Cost: \$10 members, \$20 non-members. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.

Martinis Matter for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Saturday, March 14, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m., Benjamin's Tavern at River Creek Club (RCC) — Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is the featured nonprofit for this fundraising event sponsored by RCC. Drink and raffle ticket sales help raise donations for Loudoun Wildlife. Join us for this casual social event where you can have fun, win great prizes and try the evening's signature martini, the Wild Thing! Tickets start at \$5. For more details, visit www.loudounwildlife.org/Event_Martinis_Matter.html.

Geologic Excursion! — Saturday, March 28, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Join geologist Randy Ornsdorff and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we take a geologic excursion across western Loudoun County. The geology of Virginia records more than 1 billion years of Earth history including four mountain-building events and succeeding drifting of continents. This trip will look at sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic rocks at various natural areas around the county that help geologists understand geologic history and how it impacts our lives today. The trip will require some short hikes, and participants should pack a lunch and beverage. Space is limited so be sure to register early. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.

Morven Park Nature Walk — Sunday, April 5, 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a free family nature walk through the forest as we visit wooded wetlands, look for spring wildflowers and discuss the flora and fauna that make up this forest. If you own binoculars, please bring them. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** **Questions:** Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.



Join Us in Making a Difference!

**Volunteer Orientation and Opportunity Showcase
Saturday, January 31, 10:30 a.m., Morven Park**

A one hour overview of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will highlight some of the many ways you can be part of our mission to bring the appreciation of nature to the community through advocacy, education, programs, and projects.

Light refreshments will be served. Please register for this event at www.loudounwildlife.org.

Questions? Contact Hannah Duffy at hduffy@loudounwildlife.org.



*Eastern Bluebird in winter
Photo by Laura McGranaghan*

You're Invited!

Please join us for an informal social evening – all are welcome

River Creek Club's Martinis Matter

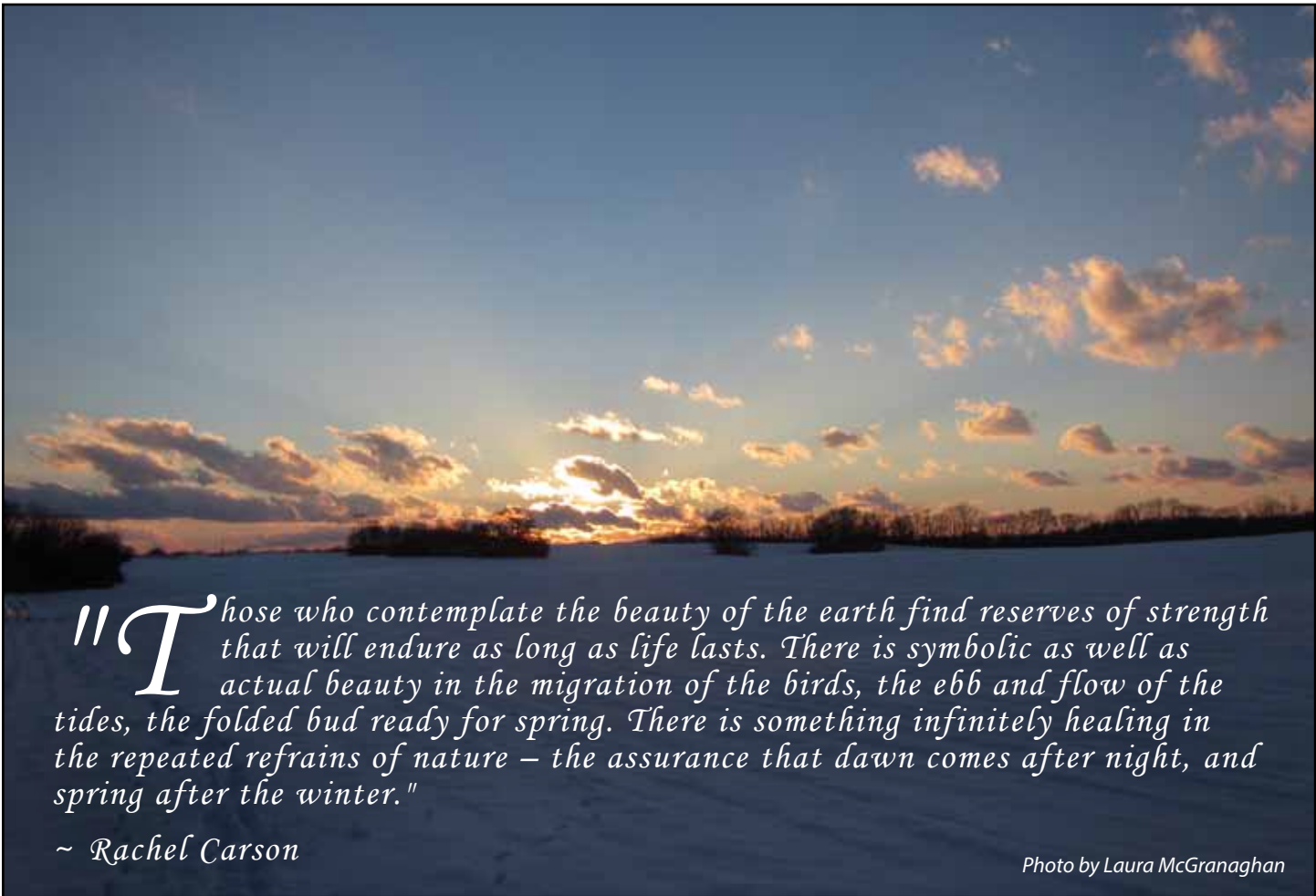
A unique fundraising event benefitting the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

~ Signature "Wild Thing" Martini ~
Great Raffle Prizes!

Saturday, March 14, 2015, 5:30-8:00 p.m.
Benjamin's Tavern at River Creek Club
43800 Olympic Blvd., Leesburg

Drink Tickets \$10, Raffle Tickets \$5 for 5 tickets, \$10 for 12 tickets, \$25 for 30 tickets
For more details visit www.loudounwildlife.org/Event_Martinis_Matter.html





"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter."

~ Rachel Carson

Photo by Laura McGranaghan

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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We Need You To Fly!

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

**The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy works hard to protect and preserve habitat so that
our area's wildlife can spread its wings and thrive.**

As we enter our 20th year as advocates for wildlife, we need your help more than ever to
soar into the future. Help us expand our educational programs, habitat restoration projects
and citizen science projects by joining or renewing today.

Your membership makes YOU a part the effort to protect wildlife and natural habitats.

Join, renew, or donate at www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm

*Ravens and Bald Eagle playing chase
Photo by Liam McGranaghan*