

◆ HABITAT HERALD ◆

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOUDOUN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY

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THE LOUDOUN
WILDLIFE
CONSERVANCY
IS A NON-
PROFIT GROUP
OF
VOLUNTEERS
WHO SHARE A
COMMON
GOAL OF
PROTECTING
AND
PERPETUATING
NATURAL
HABITATS FOR
THE BENEFIT
OF BOTH
PEOPLE AND
WILDLIFE.

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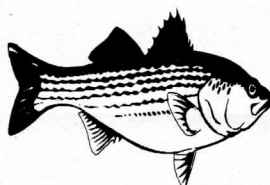
STREAM FUNDING FLOWS IN

The Audubon Naturalist Society will be receiving a grant of \$13,500 from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, financed by the sale of Virginia Chesapeake Bay license plates, to support our stream monitoring efforts. The funds will be used for a salary for Audubon Naturalist Society staff, monitoring equipment, and other essential expenses.

This will enable the program to begin actual monitoring activities this coming spring. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Dave Harrelson, Cliff Fairweather of the Audubon Naturalist Society, Pat McIlvain of the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, and Mike Kelly of the North Fork/Goose Creek Watershed

Committee are already making preparations.

Pat and Mike have been identifying potential monitoring sites for volunteers to access, to provide long-term monitoring information needed to address environmental issues in the county.



An outreach effort is being prepared to contact county personnel and town councils on the program and plans have been finalized for winter courses in introductory macroinvertebrate identification. These are scheduled at the Smithsonian Natural

History Center in Leesburg on the mornings of February 1 and 15 and the evening of March 12.

In March, Dave also plans to offer a course in habitat assessment and species adaptations. In April, he plans to conclude the series with a stream monitoring practicum. There will also be another introductory monitoring class for new volunteers in April, probably with two sessions.

The monitoring will begin in earnest the first three weeks of May. To sign up for the classes or for further information, call Pat or Mike at the Loudoun County Soil and Water Conservation District office, (703)777-2075. Dave Harrelson

WILDLIFE ASSISTANCE HOTLINE

Want to be a part of a project that's both useful and unique? The Wildlife Assistance Hotline is gearing up for next spring and needs your help.

Have you or friends or neighbors ever had a question or problem concerning wildlife and not known whom to call? Did you ever think, with all the suburban development taking over former wildlife habitat, that newcomers should be informed on coping with what they find here? Do you enjoy discussing wildlife?

And can you think of a better acronym than WAH? (Perhaps Wildlife and Habitat Assistance Telephone, or WHAT?)

We need to hear from you. If you are interested in training to supply phone help for folks who have problems with what's camped on the back steps or flying around the living room or building a nest in the chimney, please call. We'd like to make this a humane and useful program that other areas will want to copy. But first we need volunteers. If you can't tell a squirrel from a wombat, don't worry. We'll fix that.

Call Anne Hocker (540) 668-6414, or
Melissa Bell (703) 421-9509.

THE WILDERNESS

We need the tonic of wilderness, to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground.

Henry David Thoreau

REPORTING BANDED BIRDS



We are pleased to announce a new toll-free number to report the finding of banded birds, dead or alive. The program is a joint effort of the National Biological Service's bird-banding office, the Canadian Wildlife Service's bird-banding office, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Migratory Bird Management.

See a banded bird? Call 1-800-327-BAND. This is a highly useful program that enables the distribution and movement of birds to be tracked and positive and negative environmental factors identified. Your call will go into a data base and you can receive a certificate from Fish and Wildlife as an appreciation of your report.

COUNT THE BUTTERFLIES

Every July thousands of people compile a list of butterflies seen during a 24-hour period during the month. Several members have suggested that the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy participate in this program, which provides useful statistics on the state of our lepidoptera - who's up, who's down, who's making a comeback.

While it's still too early to commit to a project in July, we need input from our members on whether there's enough interest to warrant participation in this annual NABA-Xerces count. You don't need to be an expert, since amateurs will be teamed with experts.

Please let us know if you're interested.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year! Looking back on 1996, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's first full year, is extremely satisfying. We never imagined the group would be so successful and stimulate so much interest. Our membership roles have outgrown our best expectations.

The November program, Mission: Wolf, was attended by over 300 people and was definitely the high point of the year. But even without live wolves to offer, our average program attendance was about 50.

It could never have happened without your enthusiasm and support. You have clearly told the Conservancy that you care about keeping, maintaining, and even increasing wildlife habitat in Loudoun County.

We are lining up an exciting series of programs for the coming year and look forward to seeing you there. In addition, we continue to work to establish a much needed Wildlife Assistance Hotline.

Again, we would like to thank all of you for your continuing interest and support. With all of us working together, we can keep our county a welcoming home for the living creatures around us.

Joe Coleman, President

Yes, I would like to join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and help my neighbors keep the county a place where people and animals can live in harmony.

NAME _____

STREET _____

TOWN _____

TELEPHONE / HOME _____

WORK _____

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

\$20 single	\$200 single lifetime	
\$30 family	\$300 family lifetime	\$75 corporate

WINTER FEEDING OF WILDLIFE: A GOOD THING?

Many of us have taken for granted that songbirds need to be fed during the harsh winter months. We spend a great deal of money and time on just the right seed, feeder, squirrel confusers and suet concoctions. There is little to compare with a hot cup of something and watching a crimson cardinal accept your offerings over a blanket of newly fallen snow. But hold on here. What happens when you close up the house and migrate to the airport to take in that sunny winter holiday? Do the creatures accustomed to your generosity just fly off to the neighbors, or use up so much energy looking for food in the customary places that they succumb to starvation and hypothermia?

Believe it or not, there is some controversy on feeding wildlife, even birds. It has to do with questions of artificially supporting wild animals (what happens when you go away for 2 weeks) and the more frequent problem of disease transfer by animals not accustomed to feeding in such close quarters from dirty utensils (feeders).

I confess that in spite of being aware of these problems, I still do it. I can't help myself. It's just too pleasurable. I do try to adhere to the following rules, however:

1. Keep feeders clean. This means frequent washing and sterilizing with a bleach solution to kill bacteria, especially tenacious in wooden feeders.
2. Keep feeders separated to avoid big aggressive birds hogging all the food. Also, move them around occasionally to avoid spoilage buildup under the feeders, which can harm all kinds of animals.
3. Keep feeders in a spot that can't protect cats hiding in wait. Millions of songbirds are killed each year by house cats. Use high octane seed (black oil sunflower) and good suet blocks, if you feed nothing else.
4. Have a source of water all year. Best Christmas gift I ever got was an electric waterer for the birds. If the ground is covered with snow and ice, remember grit, so they can digest what you feed them.
5. Bread is not really nutritious for birds. Seeds, dried fruit, crushed eggshells (calcium & grit), shelled nuts and suet!
6. The very best thing you can do this winter is plan your next spring's landscape project to include berry and seed plants so that your wild friends can dine "au naturel".
7. Feed other critters at your own risk. Leaving cat/dog food out for your pets is an open invitation to raccoons, foxes, skunks & opossums. It is like an "EAT HERE" neon sign. Feeding deer, Canada geese, etc. can spread disease, so think about why you are doing this. Part of Mother Nature's menu in the winter contains weaker animals that can be recycled by healthier predators. Don't mess with dinner, (apologies to Boston Market).

(continued on page 4)

Winter Feeding (cont. from pg. 3)

Now that I've finished my soapbox, I'll share my favorite suet recipe. Guaranteed to provide welcome calories for your feathered pals.

Hi Protein Suet:

4 1/2 C ground beef suet (kidney is best)	3/4 C ground crackers, dried wheat bread, etc.
1/2 C hulled unsalted sunflower seed (raw)	1/4 C white proso millet (from feed store or bird feeding store)
1/4 C dried and lightly chopped wild berries, currants, raisins, etc.	
1/8 C ground oyster shell (get flakes at feed store & grind in coffee grinder or food processor)	
1 tsp. Vionate or similar animal multi-vitamin powder	

Melt suet in double boiler. Mix other ingredients in separate bowl. Allow suet to cool until slightly thickened and add to mixture. Make sure mixture is not so hot that seeds float to top. Pack into forms, recycled suet holders, plastic bowls, pine cones, or smear on dead tree branches to stimulate natural foraging.

Anne Pearse Hocker

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, Jan. 21, 7:30 p.m. at the Rust Library, Patty Moore of the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, will show us what we can do to help **Bring Quail Back** to Loudoun County.

Saturday, Feb. 1, 1:00 p.m. until dusk. Join us and Peter Stangel of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Initiative at the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for a **Hawk Identification** driving field trip. Sign up required.

Wednesday, Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m. at the Rust Library, Peter Lyttle will discuss how the **Geology of Loudoun County** affects you and the flora and fauna that flourish here.


Tuesday, March 18, 7:30 p.m. at the Purcellville Library, Dr. Sladen of *Fly Away Home* fame will discuss his life work with the swans and his efforts to bring **Trumpeter Swans** back to the East Coast.

April (date to be announced) We will have a **Wildflower Fieldtrip** and a program on wildflowers.

Tuesday, May 20, 7:30 p.m. at the Rust Library, **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**, a fascinating program including snakes, turtles, spiders, bugs, a turkey vulture and a raven.

Tuesday, June 17, TBA, Butterflies & Butterfly Gardening with Craig Tufts, National Wildlife Federation.

FOR DETAILS, CALL JOE COLEMAN (540) 554-2542

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