Hahitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume III, Issue 1 Winter 1997/1998

Hazardous Roads Ahead

We try to save wildlife habitat. We try to feed and protect the wild creatures sharing our space. But every time we drive down the road, we see their bodies by the roads. Sometimes, try as we may, we're responsible ourselves for the fox or the deer dead by the highway.

What can we do, except slow down?

Don't provide a tempting site by throwing litter such as apple cores from cars.

Take note of the times that present high risk.. About half of the car/deer encounters occur between October and January, when the deer are evading hunters, mating, and establishing feeding grounds.

Be alert when you see woods on one side of the road and a food, shelter, or water source on the other side.

Roads are battlefields for animals (as well as for some drivers) and account for more animal deaths and mutilations than any other single agent. Squashed animal corpses are so common on our roads that they are almost as accepted as white lines and street signs. Most of them are squirrels and rabbits, though sometimes the coat color betrays a fox or raccoon, or perhaps a cat or a dog. To understand why, we need to understand wildlife behavior.

Wild animals move about to find food, water, and shelter by following the contours of the ground. They share established trails with each other and adapt to many different terrain and conditions. People, on the other hand, like to go straight from one point to another in the shortest distance possible. When animals cross highways, they are not prepared to encounter our scent-free, fast-moving automobiles.

Slow-moving animals like toads, turtles, and snakes stand little chance against what is overhead traffic, but it is surprising how often these animals become the walking wounded rather than flattened corpses. Darting squirrels, never quite sure of which way to go, are more often killed outright. Mammals like groundhogs, foxes, raccoons,

skunks, and rabbits are common casualties, frequently hurt rather than killed, and they often drag themselves off the road to lie up in their den, either to die slowly or to recover in due course. Deer make their impact felt, but drivers either leave them where they lie injured or stop and don't know how to help. Birds suffer considerable losses on the roads, especially in spring when caterpillars that have fallen from overhanging trees lie invitingly exposed on the tarmac.

What can you do to help prevent road kills?

When driving on highways, pay close attention to road signs advising of wildlife crossing zones. Slow down in those areas, especially in the early morning and early evening hours, and stay alert. If you spot an animal (usually by the light reflecting in its eyes) slow down further and be prepared to stop and yield the animal the right-of-way. Often automobile headlights blind a wild animal, and it may become disoriented. Give it time to recover its vision and move on.

What can you do after the fact?

If you come across or are the cause of a car victim, don't create a worse accident by jamming on your brakes or swerving, both natural instincts. Use your hazard-warning lights when you do stop. Remember that the animal is frightened as well as injured and therefore unnaturally aggressive, and will probably need treatment for shock. Park your vehicle between the animal and oncoming traffic if you can, and at night direct your headlights so that you can see and be seen. Never run to the animal's aide. For the sake of the animal and any bystanders, your whole attitude must be calm and reassuring.

If the animal is trapped under a vehicle or its wheels, do not try to move the vehicle but jack it up carefully to release the animal, which might want to remain hiding underneath for security or from shock even if it is not

(Continued on page 3)

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.

Numbers At a Glance:

Joe Coleman President	(540) 554-2542
Anne Hocker Vice President	(540) 668-6414
Leslie Metzger Treasurer	(540) 554-2403
Diane Gilliam Public Policy	(540) 554-2228

Leslie McCasker (540) 338-2133 Wildlife Hotline & Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator

Loudoun Soil & (703) 777-2075 Water Conservation Stream Monitoring Program

Newsletter Staff:

Barbara Holland, *Editor* Leslie McCasker, *Layout*

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A Word from the President

With the kind permission of the Parks and Recreation Department, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has visited the future Banshee Reeks park several times. In its topography and history, it is a fine example of Virginia's northern Piedmont, varying from upland forests to Goose Creek, meadows, ponds, and wet forests. Each habitat is home to many flora and fauna and is large enough to sustain wildlife that needs space.

In July we watched two kestrels chase off a considerably larger red-tailed hawk that had strayed too close to their nest. In August we found butterflies, caterpillars and wildflowers, and otter tracks on a sand bar in Goose Creek. On a planning visit before our November field trip we watched a northern harrier criss-cross a field covered in goldenrod, hunting. On a forested slope we found the most impressive series of beaver ponds we had ever seen, at least nine of them, one with a dam almost six feet high. That same evening I saw a black bear.

Banshee Reeks is a delightful property, with two miles of creek frontage, open fields, and hundreds of acres of mature forest. It is as rich an example of Virginia's Piedmont as can be found, and worth preserving. Roger Harrison, president of the Loudoun chapter of the Izaak Walton League, told the Board of Supervisors that if we do not keep Banshee Reeks as it is, there might not be any place in eastern Loudoun in 20 years to go see the stars without the glare of lights.

Except for building a small naturalist center, Banshee Reeks should be maintained in its current condition. Students should have a chance to visit and explore its wonders, and see how land may be kept healthy and plentiful. And in a time of tight budgets, this path will be the county's least expensive project.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy would be pleased to form a partnership with the county to seek a grant for a biological inventory of Banshee Reeks' flora and fauna and help in the stewardship of this special place. If you have not yet walked its fields and forests, join us for a trip.

Thank You!

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy would like to recognize and thank **Karin Scott** for volunteering her time and talents to design and produce the *Habitat Herald* newsletter during the last two years.

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badly injured.

Sometimes you will come across an animal at night which has simply been dazed by headlights and only needs a chance to recover its night vision in the darkness. In the case of an owl this could take up to a half an hour in a safe place. If you are driving at night, do watch for nocturnal animals and if possible give them a chance to cross safely out of the way by stopping and turning off your headlights (leave your parking lights on, so that you can be seen).

As with all rescue situations, if you feel unable to deal with it yourself you should get hold of someone who can. If a deer is injured in the road it usually needs more than one person to lift it and move it out of harm's way or into a vehicle, but it also needs handling by someone who understands deer. If, as so often happens, your car has hit a deer at night on a country road, if possible get someone else to contact the police while you watch the animal. The police have plenty of experience with this type of situation and will be able to provide the appropriate assistance.

Most important of all: slow down and pay attention.

Stream Teams Celebrate First Year

Leaving their Wellingtons and macro-invertebrate ID keys at home, Loudoun Stream Monitoring Project volunteers gathered November 8 to celebrate the success of the project's first year. More than 40 stream monitors, spouses and children shared a potluck supper at the Loudoun Valley Community Center in Purcellville.

Following the feast, LWC president Joe Coleman praised the program organizers and volunteers for their enthusiastic efforts collecting critical data for assessing the health of the county's streams. After participants were awarded Clean Water Bug certificates, the group enjoyed a slide show of the teams working together during the year's monitoring sessions. Pat McIlvain of the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District led the group on a whirlwind tour of the 10 monitored watersheds. Against a collage of USGS maps of the county, Pat described each site, noting features that impact water quality such as horse and cattle farms, housing developments, sewage treatment plants, road construction and riparian buffers. Gem Bingol and Cliff Fairweather concluded the evening with a reading of "Mayflies," a poignant poem from Joyful Noise. The warm and wonderful evening, like the life of the mayfly, ended too soon.

— Maria Ruth

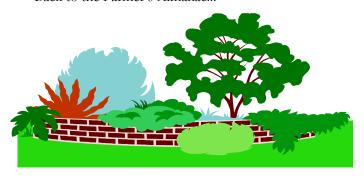
Do Woolly Bears Really Know?

Some people swear by the Old Farmer's Almanac. Some swear by the woolly bear, and peer carefully at him marching across the roads in the fall, to check the width of that brown band in his middle.

Woolly bears are called "woolly worms" to our south, and in some places "hedgehog caterpillars," because they curl up into a bristly ball when disturbed. They have 13 sections, all covered with thick tufts of hair. Why do they cross the road? They're looking for a place to spend the winter, under leaf litter or a flap of tree bark. In the spring they come out and go back to eating grass, clover, plantain, dandelions and cabbage. Then they make a cocoon from their own fur held together with silk, and two weeks later step forth as handsome Isabella tiger moths with boldly striped wings. Female moths lay their eggs in clusters on herbaceous plants, the small caterpillars hatch in four or five days, and life goes on.

As we all learned, if the middle brown band is wide, the winter will be easy. If the road-marchers are mostly or all black, order some extra stove wood. Alas, it doesn't work. The woolly bear doesn't forecast, it just records. The variations of black and brown apparently reflect the weather it's already known, not the weather to come.

Back to the Farmer's Almanac...



Neighbor Problems? Get Certified!

Some of us who offer a bit of food and shelter in our landscape get in trouble with the neighbors, who consider it mess rather than habitat. It might help to get certified under the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program, post their official sign, and explain our purpose to the Jones'. Maybe even persuade the Jones' to join us.

The NWF web site is www.nwf.org/nwf/habitats. There you can learn all about the program and print out order forms for an information kit, an application form for certification, or an official sign to tell the world why your yard — or even your balcony — isn't shaven and shorn.

Wildlife Encounters

As the county's human population grows and spreads over the space, people often find themselves face to face with the original inhabitants. Reports have come in of a mountain lion in the western hills, and bears seem to crop up everywhere.

Bears are usually seen in the spring and early summer, when young males, like other males of a certain species, refuse to ask directions and wind up in the wrong neighborhood. These are not grizzlies, but the good ol' American black bear, a relatively benign creature unless you have him cornered or leave your apiaries unprotected. There have also been reports of bears entering stables to feast on the aromatic pleasures of sweet feed. Try containing the odor with metal garbage cans, which will discourage rodents and raccoons too.

If you see a bear, and it is not in your kitchen or other inconvenient location, grab a camera (but keep your distance) instead of calling 911. Law-enforcement authorities can only respond with massive shows of force, which may look good to the neighbors but only terrifies and possibly corners the bear, forcing an otherwise unnecessary confrontation. Black bears are not searching for snacks of kids playing on streets. Make sure it has an escape route, then show him or her your displeasure at having your territory invaded by banging pot lids, waving and yelling or squirting with a hose. One family removed a bear from the back porch by cracking the sliding door and aiming a radio out through it, tuned to a rock station at full blast, but some might consider this unnecessarily cruel. Whatever steps you take, don't appear to threaten the cubs if mom is around. Keep your family and pets inside and give the confused animal a chance to leave.

Bears are traditional residents of the Blue Ridge and Piedmont river basins, and we should have the largeness of spirit to share the place with them. Two-legged predators are much more dangerous.

If you truly have a nuisance bear situation and have sustained frequent damage, call the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to ask the help of their bear biologists; their main number is 804-367-1000.

Other visitors you might not want include snakes. They sometimes take up residence for the winter in crawl spaces under houses, particularly those with stone foundations. These are primarily blacksnakes, harmless

and beneficial rodent-catchers. When we lived in an old log home years ago, we had an enormous blacksnake who liked to curl up on top of the water heater in the cellar as the nights became cooler. The only one who objected was the plumber, who discovered the shed skin when attempting to fix frozen pipes. The first year I lived in the county, I killed a

blacksnake that was exploring my screened porch. I was plagued with mice all spring.

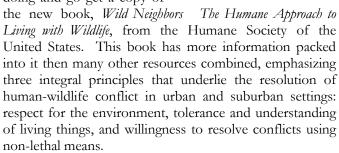
If you cannot live with the thought of reptiles sharing the secret recesses of your home, try placing tubes of window screening, wide enough for the snake to pass through, in any visible holes in your foundation. They should be long enough to almost, but not quite, touch the ground. These are one-way doors. The snake will leave at night to forage, and find a floppy contraption blocking his re-entry. Please don't do this if we are anticipating a severe drop in temperature, as the snake may not have time to find another resting place before freezing to death.

Chimney caps will discourage them from dropping into your fireplace, an unnerving situation even if you like reptiles.

— Anne Hocker

A Must Read

Stop what you are doing and go get a copy of



This book is a short course on how to live with wildlife. It briefly details the most commonly encountered species, listing their usual living habits and habitats, public health concerns, and common problems and solutions. Wild Neighbors is a must read in this age of increasing development and neatly manicured lawns.

Stream Monitoring Classes and Programs

The water quality of Loudoun County's streams is integral to the well-being of local wildlife and can serve as an accurate indicator of overall ecosystem health. Most of Loudoun County's streams support diverse communities of aquatic life. Streams and their associated shoreline habitats provide shelter, forage, and movement corridors for local animals, and are also used by many of the migratory species that make their seasonal journeys across our landscape.

As our volunteer base grows, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, in partnership with the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS), the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and the North Fork Goose Creek Watershed Project, plans to establish stream monitoring teams for every watershed in Loudoun County. This program is made possible, in part, by a grant to ANS from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, financed through sale of Chesapeake Bay license plates.

LOUDOUN'S STREAMS AND YOU

Wed., January 28, 1998, 7:30 p.m. at the Middleburg Community Center.

Loudoun County is blessed with healthy streams. Join Cliff Fairweather of the Audubon Naturalist Society as he describes with slides and an exhibit, the kinds of animals you can find in a healthy stream. We will also discuss what *you* can do to protect our streams.

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I

Section 1: Sat., January 31 (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) at the Smithsonian Naturalist Center. Sign up required.

Section 2: Sat., February 21 (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) at the Purcellville Library. Sign up required.

Benthic macro-invertebrates, those boneless creatures that live under flowing water, are important indicators of the health of a stream system. Learn how to identify the major groups of these organisms, including aquatic insects and crustaceans, to the taxonomic level of order (e.g. Plecoptera or stoneflies).

The class on January 31 will be classroom only, the class on February 21 will combine both classroom and field instruction, weather permitting. When registering, specify the session you are interested in and an alternate.

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION II

Stoneflies: Tues. Jan. 20 (7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.) at the National Wildlife Federation.

Mayflies: Thurs. Feb. 12, (7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.) at the National Wildlife Federation.

Caddisflies and Megaloptera: Tues. Feb. 24, (7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.) at the National Wildlife Federation.

Beetles and Flies: Thurs. March 12, (7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.) at the National Wildlife Federation.

Field Session: Sun. March 15, (1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.) Location To Be Announced.

The Audubon Naturalist Society is offering a series of four weekday evening workshops and one Sunday afternoon field session to learn identification of common macro-invertebrate families. Each session will concentrate on the families in one or two orders and is intended for experienced monitors (i.e., participated in at least two monitoring sessions) who have completed class and field Macroinvertebrate I classes or have equivalent training/experience.

Advance registration is required. Loudoun County stream monitors can register by calling the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District at 703-777-2075. These workshops will be held if at least ten people register within five weekdays of the first session, so please register as soon as possible. All four classroom sessions will be held at the National Wildlife Federation Laurel Ridge Center, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, Virginia. The field session location will be announced later.

MONITORING PROTOCOL PRACTICUM

Saturday, March 21 (10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) at the Purcellville Library. Sign up required.

Using the data collection protocol developed for the ANS Water Quality Monitoring Project, participants will learn how to gather abiotic data (temperature, pH, and several habitat assessments) and use a D-frame net to collect stream organisms. The practicum will be conducted at a stream in Loudoun County.

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION: REVIEW AND QUIZ

Wednesday, April 8 (7:00 - 9:30 p.m.) Location To Be Announced. Sign up required.

Saturday, April 25 (10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) at the Smithsonian Naturalist Center. Sign up required

Before being sent into the field, participants in the Stream Monitoring Project are asked to demonstrate their ability to identify aquatic macroinvertebrates by taking a quiz using preserved specimens. Macroinvertebrate ID sheets and keys can be used to complete the quiz. Participants who decline to take the quiz will still be assigned to a team to assist with data collection, but only those who have taken and achieved a particular score on the test will identify macros for data recording. When registering specify the section you wish to take.

RECLAIMING OUR LOCAL STREAMS IN EASTERN LOUDOUN

Saturday, March 28 (10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) Location To Be Announced. Sign Up Required.

We will visit a stream which, while in relatively good shape, is threatened because of increasing development in its watershed. We will discuss what is needed to ensure that it does not deteriorate further and what can be done to return it to its former health.

PROTECTING LOUDOUN'S STREAMS AND WATERWAYS

If you are interested in becoming a stream monitor, please fill in the following form and mail it to: the Stream Monitoring Project, c/o Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District Office, 30-H Catoctin Circle, SE, Leesburg, VA 20175 or call (703)777-2075.

Name:					
Street:					
City, State, Zip:					
Phone:	(H)	(W)			
List th	ne Clas	ses and Date	es you are in	terested in:	
Class	1st Choice			2nd Choice	
-					
List t	he Stre	am you are ii	nterested in	monitoring:	
1st Choice		2nd Choice			
If neither of those streams are ava		•			
willing to help monitor a site designated by the Project?			q Yes	q No	
Are you interested in being one of our Team Leaders?			q Yes	q No	
Would you be interested in helping some of our administrative function					
maintaining our database, or record-keeping)?			q Yes	q No	

Teaming with Wildlife

Teaming With Wildlife, the fish and wildlife diversity initiative, is a national conservation effort to extend protection to wildlife that isn't considered "game." The funding would come from dedicated user fees on outdoor recreation equipment and supplies, ranging from backyard bird feeders to sport-utility vehicles to binoculars..

For over 50 years, hunters and anglers have been glad to pay user fees on their gear and the results are impressive. Populations of sport fish and game have rebounded and millions of acres of habitat have been preserved.

With the growth of nature tourism, it makes economic as well as conservation sense to extend the scope of the program to include a diversity of species that are just to look at, not to kill. As more people from an increasingly urbanized world want to look at wildlife, our existing protected areas won't be enough. Teaming With Wildlife would provide Virginia with roughly \$7.6 million a year for more lands, waters, trails and educational programs, responsibly managed, for both wildlife and watchers.

Governor Jim Edgar (R) of Illinois recently endorsed TWW, bringing the list of governors up to 14. Ours is not among them. Write to him.

On November 6, Senator Murkowski (R-Alaska), chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, spoke on the Senate floor in support of TWW. According to Jeff Waldon, chairman of the Virginia chapter of The Wildlife Society, Murkowski supports our goals but is concerned about the number of retailers that would support the dedicated user fee.

Waldon says, "It is very important that letters be written to our congressional delegation, particularly Senator Warner." However, in order to broaden our legislative support, we must also broaden the list of supporting retailers. He suggests that we include a letter with our Christmas order from Orvis, L.L. Bean, REI, Cabela's, etc., urging them to support TWW.

For more information about TWW, contact the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 444 N. Capitol St., NW, Suite 544, Washington DC 20001; (202)624-7890.

The web site of the Virginia Coalition for TWW is www.vt.edu:10021/forestry/faculty/fwiexchg/fwdfi/index.html.

Jeff Waldon's e-mail address is fwiexchg@vt.edu.

Round Hill, VA 20141

We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!

Your membership fees and donations make it possible for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to sponsor many wonderful programs, presentations and field trips such as Stream Monitoring, Bird Walks, School Yard Habitat, Live Wolves, Hawk Identification, Wildflowers, Butterflies & Butterfly Gardening, and Bugs 101, to name just a few. We thank you for your continued support and participation.

q Additional Donation \$

IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER, PLEASE JOIN US. IF YOU ARE, PLEASE BRING A FRIEND.

Yes, I would like to join the Louin	ıdoun Wildlife Conservancy, and h	nelp keep the county a place where	people and wildlife can live harmony.		
Name:					
Street:					
City, State, Zip:					
Phone:	(H)	(W)			
Membership Fees:					
q \$10 Student	q \$75 Corporate	Please mail to:			
q \$20 Individual	q \$200 Individual Lifeti		ldlife Conservancy		
g \$30 Family	q \$300 Family Lifetime	19410 Ebenezer	19410 Ebenezer Church Road		

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, January 20, 1998, 7:30 p.m., CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: PROTECTING OUR NATURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES at the Purcellville Library. Timothy Lindstrom, of the Piedmont Environmental Council, will explain how conservation easements can protect our natural and historical resources and benefit all of us, while providing financial incentives for property owners. We will also learn what you need to do if you want to place a conservation easement on your own property.

Wednesday, January 28, 1998, 7:30 p.m., LOUDOUN'S STREAMS AND YOU at the Middleburg Community Center. Loudoun County is blessed with healthy streams. Join Cliff Fairweather of the Audubon Naturalist Society as he describes with slides and an exhibit, the kinds of animals you can find in a healthy stream. We will also discuss what *you* can do to protect our streams.

Saturday, February 21, Noon to 1:30 p.m., IDENTIFYING HAWKS at the Smithsonian Naturalist Center. Liam McGranaghan will describe how to identify the hawks we are likely to see during the field trip that immediately follows this class. He will describe how you can identify a hawk from their field marks, their behavior and the calls they make. Sign up required - Call Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542.

Saturday, February 21, 1998, 2:00 p.m. to dusk, IDENTIFYING HAWKS: A DRIVING FIELD TRIP Peter Stangel will again lead us on one of our most popular field trips as we drive the back roads of Loudoun County to find and identify the many hawks, and hopefully an owl or two, who winter over here. (Rain date, Sunday, February 22) Sign up required - Call Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542.

Tuesday, February 24, 1998, 7:30 p.m., BEAVERS: NATURE'S MASTER BUILDERS at the Rust Library. While beavers are wonderful to watch as they create new wetlands, sometimes they build their wetlands in places that intrude on our properties and create conflicts. John Hadidian will describe their natural history and ways to minimize the conflicts. This program is co-sponsored by the Rust Library.

Saturday, March 7, 1998, 3:00 p.m. to dusk, THE BEAVERS AT BANSHEE Banshee Reeks, a future Loudoun County Park, includes among its many natural wonders, a wonderful complex of beaver ponds. We will visit this complex and discuss the importance of beavers in the natural world. Banshee Reeks includes rich meadows, upland forests, and wet forest along its two miles of Goose Creek frontage. It is as fine an example of Virginia Piedmont as one can find in Northern Virginia and is worth a visit. Sign up required - Call Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542.

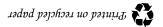
Saturday, March 14, 1998, 10:00 a.m., BECOMING A BIRDER at the Smithsonian Naturalist Center. Interested in becoming a birder? John Chambless, noted local birder and leader of our popular Spring and Fall bird walks, will explain how to get started in birding. He will explain how to identify birds in the field, including using their various songs. He will also describe some more common bird identification problems, what to look for in a pair of binoculars, and which books you might want to add to your library. Sign up required - Call Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542.

Tuesday, March 17, 1998, 7:30 p.m., WETLANDS: A DISAPPEARING BUT INVALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCE Location to be Announced. Gene Whitaker, an expert on wetlands, will explain what a wetland is and why they are so important to all of us. He will also describe different programs to restore wetlands, including what you can do.

Later this year: Stan Shetler will present a program on Spring Birds and Wildflowers and lead a walk for us.

Michael Hayslett will explain what a vernal pool is and how this rapidly disappearing habitat is important.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY OF THE PROGRAMS MENTIONED ABOVE PLEASE CALL JOE COLEMAN AT 540-554-2542.



The date on your mailing label indicates the year your membership expires.