

# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume IV, Issue 3

Fall 1999

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## Insert:

*Do I Have to Mow All That?*

[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)

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## Turn Off The Lights

*This article was written by Janis Jaquith of Free Union, Virginia and published by the International Dark-sky Association and is reprinted here with permission.*

Go ahead, call me cranky if you must. Or call me a pain in the neck, but my neighbors are driving me crazy. No, they're not noisy and they don't borrow tools and not return them. It's the lights.

Let me explain. I live way out in the boondocks of Virginia. Or, at least, I used to. I built the first house in this untouched paradise, feeling guilty about chopping down soaring hickories and oaks to make room for myself out here. For a few years, all I saw from my house was mountains and woods and pond.

Except at night.

At night, I saw a black velvet sky hung thick with fat stars. I saw the nebula in Orion's sword, all seven sisters of the Pleiades, the north star, the broad, jagged path of the Milky Way. Incredible. Like a planetarium, but without the entrance fee.

Even while lying in bed at night,

I could look across the room at my window and see a tall rectangle of stars. This was a miracle I never grew tired of. I have routinely seen the big dipper reflected in the glassy surface of the pond. Well, you can imagine how I felt a while back, when I rushed through dinner in order to stand on my front porch and have a look at the Hale-Bopp comet.

You see, my patch of paradise has become a sprawling neighborhood, with three houses visible through the trees, just beyond shouting distance. During daylight hours, they all but disappear. Nighttime is another story.

My neighbors, like me, have escaped to this rural area from densely-populated suburbia. Unlike me, my neighbors are afraid of the dark. They illuminate their houses on all sides with blinding floodlights.

*Continued on page 3*



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.

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

You can also visit us at: [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)

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**A  
WORD  
FROM THE  
PRESIDENT  
ON:**

# Stream Valleys: Corridors of Life

The sound of a rippling stream flowing over rocks, clean and fast, soothes and relaxes us, especially after a summer like the one that just ended. A walk along one of these streams, with tall trees overhead and the sounds of singing birds around us, helps alleviate the stresses of our modern lives. But when we walk beside one of these streams in our urban areas, or even in a suburban community, we are just as likely to find tons of trash and, in areas of building growth, silt and mud. Intuitively, we know this isn't right and that something must be done about it.

Fortunately, there is a growing recognition that healthy stream corridors are healthy for us. The Keep Loudoun Beautiful program has done a phenomenal job over the years cleaning up Loudoun's streams. Several groups, including the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the Audubon Naturalist Society, the Izaak Walton League and the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, are all working to keep our streams healthy. The State of Virginia has created programs that not only encourage landowners not to remove vegetative buffers from stream valleys, but will actually pay people to plant trees and shrubs alongside streams.

Last year the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, like many others, began planting trees in stream valleys to create riparian buffers. Research shows that these buffers are one of the most important defenses for maintaining water quality. Riparian buffers filter nutrients and other pollutants, lower water temperature, improve aquatic habitat,

*Continued on page 3*

*A Word...Continued from page 2*

stabilize stream banks, improve air quality and enhance recreation and wildlife. Healthy stream valleys are home to nesting birds, mammals, and fish.

This year, water has been on everyone's minds more than ever before. But let us all remember that there's more to water than what comes out of the tap, and pitch in to help care for our wild waters as well as conserving the tame stuff.



— Joe Coleman

# Help Wanted

We Need You!

Volunteers are needed to:

- Lead workshops and field trips
- Staff the LWC booth and display at special events
- Assist during regular programs – set up displays and equipment, greet visitors, answer questions
- Provide assistance with newsletter production and mailing
- Fill vacant committee positions – Backyard/Schoolyard Habitat, Fundraising, Membership, Public Relations

If you would like to volunteer, please call one of the Officers, or the Committee Chair responsible for the activity you are interested in.

*Lights... Continued from page 1*

In suburbia, this is a good idea. Floodlights deter burglars. Out here in the boondocks, far from the road, your neighbors are too far away to see someone skulking around your house. If anything, the floodlights make a burglar's work easier, revealing the window you've left open or the ladder at the back of your house.

So, here I am, settling onto the bottom step of my front porch, when I look up and, squinting into the glare, I count five floodlights blazing at me from these three houses. One of the houses is reflected in the pond that separates us, so there are, effectively, six lights. I feel as though I'm being interrogated, and wonder what crime I have committed to deserve this.

Unwilling to give up, I cover my eyes with my hands for a few seconds, allowing my pupils to dilate, and then raise my forearm to eye level, trying to block the lights from all three houses. I am moderately successful. I think I see the comet. It looks like a smeared star with a suggestion of a tail.

My heart heavy with exasperation and a kind of grief, I give up and go back in the house. Big deal. A blurry star. My sky struck days are over.

But wait. A few days later, I pull into my driveway in the early evening. As I leave my car, lugging a bag of groceries toward the house, I am overtaken by the rich blackness of the evening. And by the heavy splattering of silver stars. A miracle has happened: my neighbors houses are dark, invisible.

And high above the treetops I see it: this imposing, show-off star, a feathery white peacock trailing an extravagant tail that grows longer and longer as I stand there in the chill stillness, hugging the bag of groceries. And I am profoundly grateful to witness this, grateful to be alive and in this place at this moment.

Some of the best things can only be seen when you turn the lights off.

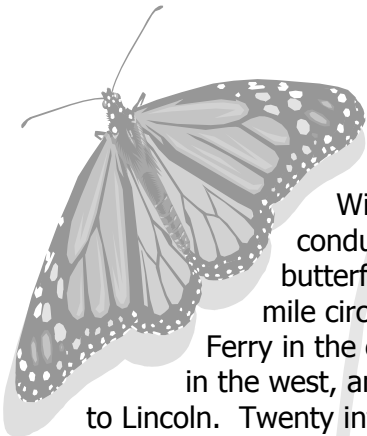
I should probably tell my neighbors how much their lights bother me, or, better yet, how much they're missing. Alas, I am a coward and would rather have them see it in print than tell them face to face. And so, the next time I make a wish on the first star of the evening, I know what I'll wish for. More stars.

— Janis Jaquith

For additional information about the International Dark-sky Association refer to their web page at:

<http://proxima.astro.virginia.edu/~pai/ValDA>

# The Results Are In...



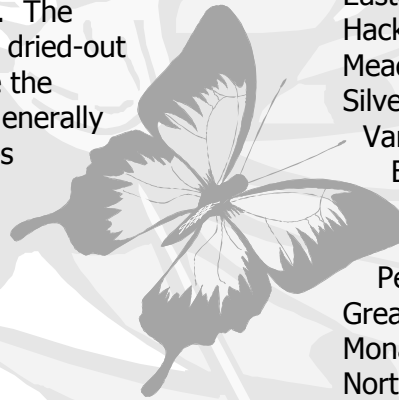
On August 7, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy conducted its third annual butterfly count comprising a 15 mile circle stretching from White's Ferry in the east to the Appalachian Trail in the west, and from Point of Rocks south to Lincoln. Twenty intrepid observers braved 90 degree weather to count 39 butterfly species and over 2,100 individuals, data which will be turned into the North American Butterfly Association for their long-term study of butterfly health and habitat. While this summer's drought had a large impact on several butterfly species which were not seen at all or in very small numbers, there were an extraordinary 615 Tiger Swallowtails. The observers visited areas as diverse as dried-out wetlands and formal gardens. While the largest number of butterflies were generally seen in gardens, one of the best sites turned out to be a very dry ridge covered in thistle and other wildflowers.

The 20 observers were:

- |                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Bob Lyon, compiler | B. Berge     |
| T. Avery           | J. Coleman   |
| L. Bowman          | S. Denman    |
| P. Daley           | C. Griffin   |
| N. Erwin           | D. Harrelson |
| D. Griffin         | G. Hopkins   |
| B. Hopkins         | C. Miller    |
| S. Kerns           | D. Rininger  |
| R. Parrino         | S. Sollinger |
| N. Rutkaus         |              |
| and W. Watkins.    |              |

The butterflies seen:

Pipevine Swallowtail:	7
Zebra Swallowtail:	10
Tiger Swallowtail:	615
Black Swallowtail:	14
Spicebush Swallowtail:	119
Orange Sulphur:	24
Clouded Sulphur:	20
Cabbage White:	441
American Copper:	3
Banded Hairstreak:	1
Gray Hairstreak:	11
Red-banded Hairstreak:	2
Spring (Summer) Azure:	8
Eastern-tailed Blue:	40
Hackberry Butterfly:	1
Meadow Fritillary:	48
Silvery Checkerspot:	8
Variegated Fritillary:	25
Buckeye:	1
Viceroy:	2
Red-spotted Purple:	5
Pearl Crescent:	35
Great Spangled Fritillary:	8
Monarch:	36
Northern Pearly Eye:	4
Silver Spotted Skipper:	125
Horace Dusty Wing:	2
Wild Indigo Dusky Wing:	3
Common Sooty Wing:	6
Hayhurst's Scallop-wing:	1
Checkered Skipper:	3
Least Skipper:	23
Sachem:	86
Dun Skipper:	8
Zabulon:	15
Peck's Skipper:	10
Tawny-edged Skipper:	6
Little Glassy-wing:	1
Fiery Skipper:	2



# LOUDOUN STREAM MONITORING PROJECT

## Classes and Programs

The water quality of Loudoun County's streams is integral to the well-being of local wildlife and is an indicator of overall ecosystem health. Most of Loudoun County's streams support diverse communities of aquatic life, but in the nation's third-fastest growing county, these irreplaceable resources are under daily threat of destruction and need constant vigilance. Streams and shoreline habitats provide shelter, forage, and movement corridors for local animals and many of the migratory species that make their seasonal journeys across our landscape.

Stream Monitoring classes are taught by Dave Harrelson of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; and Cliff Fairweather of Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). As our volunteer base grows, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, in partnership with ANS, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and the North Fork Goose Creek and Catoclin Watershed Committees, plans to establish stream monitoring teams for every watershed in Loudoun County. These programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Please join us for one of our sessions.

They are educational, good for the environment, and fun for the entire family.

### INTRODUCTION TO STREAM MONITORING AND MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION

**Sunday, September 26 (12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.)** Leesburg Public Safety Center (police station), 65 Plaza St., NE, Leesburg. *Sign up required.*

This session will begin with our *Living Waters* slide presentation to introduce you to Loudoun's streams and the creatures that live in them. The program continues with instruction on identifying benthic macro-invertebrates, boneless creatures that live under flowing water. 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 session is classroom only.

### MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I

**Saturday, October 9 (10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)** Leesburg Public Safety Center (police station), 65 Plaza St., NE, Leesburg. *Sign up required.*

Benthic macro-invertebrates, boneless creatures that live under flowing water are important indicators of aquatic ecosystem health. Learn how to identify the major groups of these organisms, including aquatic insects and crustaceans, to the taxonomic level of order (*e.g. Ephemera* or *Mayflies*). This session will be in the classroom with an optional field trip to a nearby stream.

### STREAM MONITORING PROTOCOL PRACTICUM

**Saturday, November 6 (10:00 a.m. - 12:00)** Meet in the parking lot of the Smithsonian Naturalist Center on Sycolin Road, near Leesburg airport. *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.

### SAVING OUR STREAMS AND STREAM VALLEYS

**Saturday, November 13** Mills Community Center. *Sign up required.* Please refer to the back cover for details.

### MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I

**Saturday, November 27 (1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.)** Location to be determined. *Sign up required.*

Please see description above. This session will include classroom instruction and a field trip to a nearby stream, weather conditions permitting.

## 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:

Stream Monitoring Project  
 c/o Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District  
 30-H Catoctin Circle, SE  
 Leesburg, VA 20175

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

**Street:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

If neither of those streams are available are you willing to help monitor a site

**List the Classes and Dates you are interested in:**

Class	1st Choice	2nd Choice

**List the Stream you are interested in monitoring:**

1st Choice	2nd Choice

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 us with some of our administrative functions (typing, maintaining our database, or record-keeping)? q Yes      q No

**For more information on any of the programs please contact:**

- Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District (703) 777-2075
- Loudoun Stream Monitoring Project — Fred Fox (540) 554-4844
- Audubon Naturalist Society — Cliff Fairweather (703) 803-8400

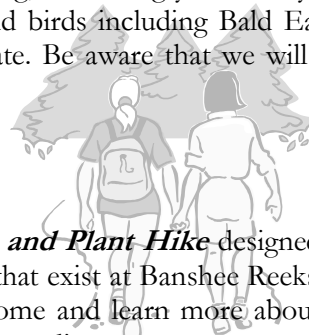
## *Young Naturalist's Programs*

*Space is limited for all of these programs.*

Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot.

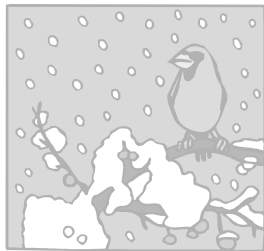
**Saturday, September 19, 3-6 p.m. at Banshee Reek's Park** Take a *Family Hike at Banshee Reeks* with one of the LWC volunteer naturalists at Banshee Reeks Park outside of Leesburg, VA. Bring your family for a fun hike at Loudoun County's newest park. Explore the 700 acres; see wildlife and birds including Bald Eagles and Red-Headed Woodpeckers. Families with children are encouraged to participate. Be aware that we will be covering a good deal of territory, so this hike may not be suitable for small children.

CONTACT: Phil Daley (540) 338-6528



**Saturday, October 9, 3-5 p.m. at Banshee Reeks Park** This is a *Tree and Plant Hike* designed for interested 8-12 year olds that will focus on learning more about the plants and trees that exist at Banshee Reeks. At this time of year the forest should be colorful and the weather crisp and cool. Come and learn more about all the living things at the park. Come prepared for cool fall temperatures and to hike some distance.

CONTACT: Phil Daley (540) 338-6528



**Wednesday, October 20, 4-5:30 p.m. at the Rust Library** You're not the only one *Getting Ready for Winter*. Explore how wildlife survives the winter. What changes occur in mammals, amphibians and reptiles as the cold weather begins? How do birds know when to leave? How do they find their way when migrating? Where do animals find food and shelter and how do they stay warm? Learn how YOU can help wildlife survive the long, dark, cold winter. This program is intended for 4-6 year olds. Parents are asked to accompany their children.

CONTACT: Barbara Lupfer (703) 777-2925

**Saturday, November 6, 2-3:30 p.m. at Banshee Reeks Park** Explore *Nature's Recycling*. You know about recycling your bottles, cans and newspapers. Now find out how Mother Nature recycles with a hand on, close-up look at insects, plants, fungi and other members of Nature's recycling crew. This program is designed for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

CONTACT: Susanne Ortmann (540) 338-6997

**Watch for the exciting programs  
we have scheduled for the year 2000!**

**Get up-to-date information on our website:**

**[www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)**

*Your help and suggestions are always appreciated!*

## *Young Naturalist's Page*

Are you looking for ways to help wildlife? Maybe a project that you can do yourself rather than sending off donations to some distant office or writing letters to people that you have never even seen? You can make a difference right in your own backyard.

Small patches of green like your backyard are critical to the survival of our native wildlife and to some of our temporary visitors such as migrating songbirds and butterflies. A backyard doesn't seem like much space **BUT** think of the possibilities of linking hundreds of yards together! How about thousands of yards? How about millions of yards?! The yards would be like a giant quilt stitched together and spread across North America. This patchwork of gardens would provide invaluable resting, feeding and living areas for wildlife.

Two well known programs that can help you get started are:

National Wildlife Federation's **Backyard Wildlife Habitat** Program. An informational brochure and application form can be obtained by calling (703) 790-4434 or by accessing the NWF's web site at <http://www.nwf.org/habitats>

Humane Society of the United States' **Urban Wildlife Sanctuary** Program. Information can be obtained by calling (202) 778-6132 or by accessing the HSUS web site at <http://www.hsus.org>

There are three things that all living creatures need: food, water and shelter. You should look at your backyard from a wild animal's point of view and try to provide for their basic needs: a water source (dish, birdbath, pond, etc.), shelter (birdhouses, brush piles, bushes, etc.) and food (flowers, bushes, trees, etc.). Try and familiarize yourself with the creatures that live and travel through your neighborhood. Books like the Peterson and Audubon Society Field Guides are a good place to start. Nature parks such as Great Falls, Huntley Meadows and Banshee Reeks may be able to provide you with a list of animals and birds that have been sighted in the area. By knowing what lives in your county, you will be better able to make changes in your yard to meet their needs. There are other changes that you can make that will help. Cut down on or stop using pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers in your yard. They kill helpful animals and pollute our drinking water. Get rid of those "bug zappers". They kill all insects, beneficial ones as well as annoying ones (Did you know that "bug zappers" spray bacteria though the air when the bugs are killed...bacteria that is harmful to people?). Turn off outside lights or hook them up to timers or motion sensors. Outside lights disorient night flying insects and other creatures and keep us from being able to see the night stars. Stop doing all that mowing! It is noisy, uses up energy resources, causes pollution and leaves your yard a barren wasteland as far as critters are concerned. At the very least have your family invest in a push mower or better yet, let a portion of your lawn grow wild. See the new brochure *Do I Have to Mow All That* for more helpful tips.

You will be very surprised at how small improvements in your backyard can make a HUGE difference to the animals and birds trying to survive in your neighborhood.

— Leslie Sinn





# MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Space is limited for most of these programs.**

Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot.

**HAWKS AND OWLS: THEIR NATURAL HISTORY AND MIGRATORY HABITS – Wednesday, September 15, 7:30 p.m. at the Rust Library.** Lois Martin, raptor specialist, rehabilitator, and educator, will bring a red-shouldered hawk, a red-tailed hawk and a screech owl to this slide show. Lois will discuss the natural history of owls and hawks in our area. Hawk migration is in full swing in September, and many of them not only stop over to feed and rebuild their strength, but stay the entire winter and swell the number of hawks we see.

**BIRDING BANSHEE: A BIRD WALK – Saturday, September 18, 8 a.m.** Join Jack Hugus and LWC for a bird walk at Banshee Reeks in search of red-headed woodpeckers and fall migrants, including warblers and hawks. Bring binoculars. SIGN-UP REQUIRED CONTACT: Joe Coleman (540) 554-2542

**WILDLIFE MAPPING: A WORKSHOP AT BANSHEE REEKS – Saturday, October 2, 9 a.m.** Help the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in its program to collect data and map the locations of animals in Virginia. Participants in this all-day workshop sponsored by LWC will learn habitat and species identification, and mapping skills and standard data submission. Bring field guides, binoculars and wear appropriate outdoor clothes (we will go out rain or shine). **There is a \$15 fee for supplies.** SIGN-UP REQUIRED CONTACT: Joe Coleman (540) 554-2542

**SNAKES: FEARS VERSUS REALITY - Tuesday, October 19, 7:30 p.m. at the Rust Library.** Donielle Rininger, a naturalist for Environmental Studies at Airlie, will describe the lives of the snakes in our region and discuss the fears they inspire. Besides slides, she will bring some live representatives and describe what kind of habitat they prefer and why. This program is co-sponsored by the Rust Library.

**NATURE WALK AT BANSHEE REEKS – November 6, 3 to 6 p.m.** Join Phil Daley as he explores this natural jewel at the height of fall, observing some of the creatures that call Banshee Reeks home. If the winds are right we may see different varieties of raptors as they soar overhead. SIGN-UP REQUIRED CONTACT: Phil Daley (540) 338-6528

**SAVING OUR STREAMS AND STREAM VALLEYS: A WORKSHOP ON KEEPING OUR WATER CLEAN AND HEALTHY – Saturday, November 13 at the Mills Community Center in Ashburn.** The workshop will begin with a panel on keeping soil out of our streams, then what you can do to protect your stream valley." In the afternoon we will visit a couple of locations on Broad Run, Loudoun County's most threatened watershed, to explore what can still be done to save it. Attend any portion of or the entire workshop. SIGN-UP REQUIRED CONTACT: Joe Coleman (540) 554-2542 or Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District Office (703) 777-2075

**NATURE WALK AT BANSHEE REEKS – Saturday, December 4, 9 a.m. to noon.** We will explore this 700-acre nature preserve as winter sets in. Woodpeckers and foxes, hard to find when vegetation is thick, will be easier to spot, and there may be hawks and vultures soaring overhead. SIGN-UP REQUIRED CONTACT: Joe Coleman (540) 554-2542

**THIRD ANNUAL CENTRAL LOUDOUN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – Sunday, December 26, 1999.** Join us as we participate in the National Audubon Society's 100th Christmas Bird Count. Participants are divided into teams and sent into the field to count every wild bird they can find. No experience is necessary, anyone interested in nature and the world around us is welcome - amateurs are teamed with experienced birders. If you are interested in participating for portion of or the whole day contact Joe Coleman at (540) 554-2542 to register and receive additional information.

**LOOK**  
New Brochure Enclosed

Address Service

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Purcellville, VA 20134-2088



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