

Habitat Herald

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In This Issue:

- 2 A Word from the President
- 3 Have You Heard Barred Owls Recently?
- 5 Stream Monitoring Classes & Programs
- 7 Mark Your Calendar
- 9 Turning Lights Off Saves Bird Lives
- 10 Improper Trash Disposal Endangers Wildlife
- 11 Bird Nests Are Protected by Law
- 12 LWC 2002 Annual Meeting

www.loudounwildlife.org

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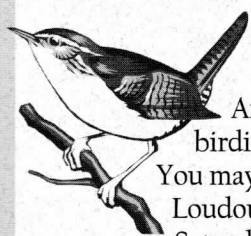
LET'S GO WILD

by Marcia Woolman

The following article appeared in MIDDLEBURG LIFE, March 2002, and is reprinted by permission of the author.

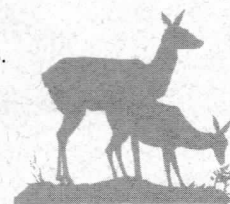
Have you ever wished to spend a day or a few hours, just away from it all? A place where you can just slip into nature and become one with her. In our busy lives solitude and quiet are such rare and precious opportunities, and yet right here in Loudoun County is a publicly owned, nature preserve that can afford just that environment. It is known as Banshee Reeks. Unfortunately, due to the current one-man staff, it is only open to small, organized groups, and by reservation. Some overnight camping is being permitted.

Banshee Reeks is not a park, but a nature preserve; thus making the primary focus preservation of our native species. Purchased by Loudoun County in 1997, a former corn and cattle farm, it has become 700 acres of wildlife habitat. And what a varied habitat it is! Wetlands and ponds with beaver and otters, hardwood forest where even black bear have been seen, and successful fields that have been "going wild" for 20 years. A riparian area along two miles of Goose Creek combines with these fields and wetlands into a collage of interacting habitats.



An enormous variety of birds are finding a home here, a virtual birding hot spot, where bird watching has become a major activity. You may join a group from the Friends of Banshee Reek and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for free when they go out the second Saturday of each month at 8:00 AM. On my last visit a puffy patch of feathers along a woodland trail told the story of a screech owl that had been killed by either a hawk or another larger owl, or perhaps by a ground predator who caught it off guard while eating its own prey. Barn owls reside in the vacated silo that once held silage for the cattle. Great horned owls have also been seen here. Now those cattle fields hold a multitude of wild creatures from the diminutive field mouse to the abundant whitetail deer.

There are plans for doing scientific research on native grasses. Some of the more recently cultivated fields will soon be planted in quadrants of native warm season grasses. Growth rates, forage rates, types of birds and wildlife which they



Continued on page 4

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 members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Phil Daley.

You can also visit us at:

www.loudounwildlife.org

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A Word from the President:

by Phil Daley

What a crazy Spring! But then again, this is Northern Virginia, which does not have the definitive seasonal changes I grew up experiencing. Seems we already had a few days of summer, and the rains of March and April really didn't arrive until May. Many of our spring plants seemed to bloom all at the same time rather than in their normal sequences.

Our chipmunks never did hibernate and seem to be thriving in spite of the influx of black rat snakes that keep appearing in and around our house. Old stone foundations make great homes for them. Even with the snakes, including the baby one we found under the heating register, the mice and chipmunks all seem to be multiplying very well.

Spring and summer are always a busy time for outdoor enthusiasts. LWC's water monitoring began a new year with increased emphasis on habitat assessments, increased macro-invertebrate collections, and improved correlation with both EPA and state DEQ standards. Our bird-watching enthusiasts enjoyed very nice weather for our migratory bird count. For this year's count, LWC members were joined by some really great birders from the surrounding area. Even those of us with some experience were awed at the expertise of many who came to assist, and they in turn marveled at the beauty and diversity of Loudoun's habitat.

Since its inception, LWC has been actively communicating with county leaders in matters concerning wildlife habitat. This past year we worked diligently towards a countywide effort to identify the status and quality of Loudoun's numerous watersheds. Recently, we were asked to be active participants in the focus groups helping to finalize guidelines to implement the County's Revised Comprehensive Plan. It is reassuring to know that a 'grassroots organization,' started only six years ago by three

Continued on page 3

A Word...continued from page 2

individuals, has expanded so fast, yet has kept its focus on the issues for which it was founded. We are definitely a busy, well thought of organization.

When I attended my first LWC meeting in the basement of Loudoun Valley Community Center several years ago, I was wary of where this organization was headed. I am a hunter and fisherman, as well as a naturalist and conservationist. I wanted to assure myself that LWC wasn't just another 'radical -animal rights/stop-all-population-growth group' before I joined. Since then I have discovered an impressive and healthy diversity among our membership, making LWC an effective organization when it comes to issues regarding the protection of habitat. We have an extensive range of interests, knowledge and talent that sets us apart from some groups that may be too narrowly focused to be widely effective.

As my tenure as president comes to a close, I can honestly say that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a

very successful organization, made up of fine and talented people. I especially am proud of, and thank, the members of the outgoing board — Bruce McG., Bruce H., Denise, Joe, Gem, Fred, Leslie, Otto, Sharon and Nana — for their leadership, devotion and guidance to this organization. I have enjoyed their camaraderie and will continue to cherish their friendship. The individuals who have stepped forward to lead field trips, birding expeditions/counts, stream quality testing and training, and the many other endeavors undertaken by LWC also deserve special thanks. For the coming year, we are fortunate to have several new faces stepping forward to take leadership positions, and, together with some who will remain active on the new board, I know that their enthusiasm and leadership will enhance the organization even further. I am confident of LWC's continued success.

Now, all I have to do is learn how to live with the snakes and make sure they leave the chipmunks and bluebirds alone. I am looking for suggestions — short of moving out of the house!

Have You Heard Barred Owls Recently?

by Bill Seebeck



Help us find the remaining Barred Owl locations in Loudoun County. Classified as a "species of special concern," Barred Owls can now be surveyed successfully during the non-breeding season. We are looking for new Barred Owls territories to continue research based on the prize-winning Science Fair Project, "The Relationship Between Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) Calls and Responses During the Non-Breeding Season" by Alex Seebeck. If you have recently heard Barred Owls, please contact the Seebecks at (540) 338-0977 or by email at wseebeck@mindspring.com.

Thank you for supporting this important research.

Barred Owl Basics:

Length: 20"

Wingspan: 44"

Call: "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?"

Territory: Throughout the eastern half of the U.S. and into some portions of Canada.

Breeding: February and March in the Mid-Atlantic states.

Nesting: Beginning in March.

Habitat: Strictly nocturnal, prefer deep-woods.

Lets Go Wild ...continued from page 1

attract, will all be studied, and once the desired grasses are found, many of the remaining fields will be so planted for optimum feed and cover. It is hoped that a resident covey of quail will be reestablished. A truly southern species harmed by extensive agricultural practices may once again return when we "go wild."

Another special focus of the project management is the education of local landowners in like practices. This spring, in mid-May, a Forestry and Wildlife Management Workshop will be held for small landowners (<50 acres). The goal is to provide a rationale and guidelines for keeping our rural areas wild enough for wildlife preservation. As wild populations are pressed into smaller and smaller areas every little bit of overgrown corridor, fence rows, and especially riparian buffers along streams become the key to their survival.

Future plans for Banshee Reeks are nature trails with posted informational signs along the varied trails, informing the casual hiker of interesting facts about the flora and fauna through which they are passing. Observation blinds are being constructed so wildlife can be observed without serious intrusion. Presently there is a 45-minute, self-guided trail around a spring and pond located near the present preserve headquarters. Currently about 6 miles of trails exist throughout the preserve. A handicap trail is being created near another wetland area. Many of the trails lead to Goose Creek, which is a designated Wild and Scenic River and one of the focal points of the preserve.

Other plans include taking a circa 1947 barn and refurbishing it into a visitors center. Near this barn is a very small, old (circa 1840) log home, which was damaged by fire a few years ago. It had been lived in

continuously for well over 150 years. It will not be restored to its original condition, but rather repaired and displayed by unveiling its progressive history as it grew from a two-room cabin and modernized in successive decades if not centuries. This modernization of old log homes is worthy of preservation effort in and



of itself as it speaks of the struggle of our forefathers to survive on this land.

Since preservation and conservation are the key practices at Banshee Reeks, it is of note that one modern addition is being made. The VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries has decided to put a full-time staff person on the grounds. Many of the VDGIF education programs will be conducted on site and will be offered to both adults and youth groups. This will only serve to make this resource more valuable as it becomes a classroom as well as a nature preserve.

Why do we need a nature preserve? Well, simply put, the web of life needs continuity. We need to see that these creatures have somewhere to "be wild." Many birds and animals are quite reclusive, and their very existence depends on finding a truly wild place to live and breed and raise their young. Banshee Reeks will hopefully be that place in Loudoun County where we are able to preserve that continuity.

However, all the above mentioned positives about this marvelous and significant piece of Loudoun County are in real jeopardy. They are about to get some neighbors. As proposed, a 270 family "village" is scheduled to go into the large wooded section along the most remote boundary of Banshee Reeks. This "village" lies along Woods Road, a small one-lane rural road. This small, unpaved road will certainly become a major road if it is to serve an additional 1000+ auto trips per day.

Courtland Farm has been sold to developers, and the plans needed to develop these 200 acres were approved in 1996 under the old, county long-range plan and a Board of Supervisors no longer in control. This huge development will lie between the Dulles Wetlands Area and the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. This is one of the largest and most pristine wooded areas in Loudoun County. A sewage treatment facility will lie in the flood plain of Goose Creek, and the affluent will be piped under the Goose Creek for spray dispersal on an adjacent hillside, thus endangering the entire watershed in that area.

What can we do? You know the drill. "We are masters of our own destiny." There is a small group called Friends of Banshee Reeks. Join up. Get involved. Only great community pressure will change the outcome.

For information on the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, call 703-669-0316, or for the Friends of Banshee Reeks, call 540-554-2542 or visit their web site at www.bansheereeks.org.

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 food, shelter, and travel corridors for animals and many of the migratory bird species that make their seasonal journeys across our landscape.

Stream Monitoring classes are taught by Dave Harrelson of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Cliff Fairweather of Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). As our volunteer base grows, the LWC, in partnership with ANS, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and the North Fork Goose Creek and Catoctin 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.

Classes are held at the **Rust Sanctuary** in Leesburg, VA — *Sign up is required.*

To register for any of the classes, contact Cliff Fairweather at (703) 803-8400 or cliff@audubonnaturalist.org.

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION I: ORDER LEVEL

Thursday, August 1 (7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.) — classroom

Sunday, August 11 (1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.) — field

Sunday, October 13 (1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.) — classroom

Saturday, October 26 (10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) — field

Tuesday, November 19 (7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.) — classroom

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).

STREAM MONITORING PROTOCOL PRACTICUM WITH HABITAT ASSESSMENT

Saturday, August 24 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

Saturday, November 23 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

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 Habitat Assessment portion of this class will focus on measuring physical data and evaluating key habitat features that help identify healthy stream habitat and warning signs of declining stream quality and will be useful for completing the stream evaluation forms used throughout our monitoring season. *We will carpool to a nearby stream. Please bring boots or sneakers for wading.*

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
FAX: (703) 443-0187

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

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

If neither of those streams is available, are you willing to help monitor a site designated by the Project?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you interested in being one of our Team Leaders?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you be interested in helping us with some of our administrative functions (typing, maintaining our database, or record -keeping)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

For more information on any of the programs please contact:

Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District (703) 777-2075

Audubon Naturalist Society — Cliff Fairweather (703) 803-8400

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Space is limited for many of these programs.

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

BBANSHEE REEKS ROCKS Saturday, June 29, 9:00 a.m. to noon. A \$2.00 fee and sign-up is required - call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316 to sign up or to get more information. Join geologists from the U.S. Geological Survey on a guided tour of the rocks of Banshee Reeks. Learn about this unique geological area, how and when it was formed, why it looks like it does today, and how it affects Banshee's different habitats. Sign-up early; class size is limited.

SOUNDS OF THE NIGHT Wednesday, July 10 and July 24, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. A \$2.00 fee and sign-up is required - call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316 to sign up. Bring the family out to Banshee Reeks for an unusual experience. Join the Banshee Reeks staff and volunteers as we sit on a hillside and listen to the amazing night sounds "on the Reeks". The first session will be during the NEW MOON and the second session will be during the FULL MOON. Sign up for both and find out if you can "hear" the differences. Bring a flashlight. Children MUST be accompanied by an adult.

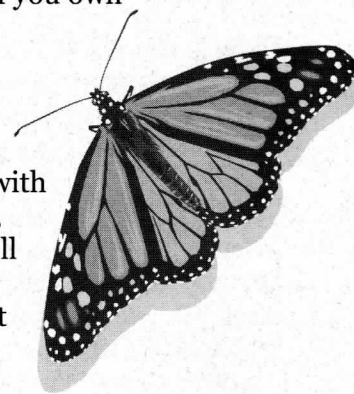
BIRDING BANSHEE Saturday, July 13, 8:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve for the regular monthly bird walk. Because of its rich and varied habitat, this part of the County is a birding hot spot. Please bring binoculars. Questions - Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com.

BUTTERFLIES AT BANSHEE Saturday, July 20, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join the Friends of Banshee Reeks and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a Butterfly Walk. We will investigate some of Banshee's many diverse natural areas and identify all of the butterflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Questions - Contact Banshee Reeks at 703-669-0316.

BUTTERFLIES 2002:

Saturday, July 20	Coursework
Sunday, July 21	Airlie Census
Saturday, August 3	Waterford Census

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will be assisting Environmental Studies at Airlie with a butterfly workshop. The workshop will be for anyone interested in the insect world, particularly butterflies. Hands-on learning in the field is emphasized. Participants will gain an understanding and appreciation of butterfly biology and identification, and contribute to the annual nationwide Butterfly Census. For more information, contact Environmental Studies at 540-341-3239 or es@iapm.org. Teachers - inquire about continuing education credits.



SOUNDS OF THE NIGHT Wednesday, July 24, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. See the July 10 listing for details.

SUMMER WILDFLOWER WALK and PICNIC Saturday, July 27, 5:00 p.m. near Waterford. Join the MacDowells on a walk through their streamside meadow to view the many wildflowers that thrive there in the summer, including some unusual wild orchids, the only specimens of this species known to bloom in Loudoun County. Since the walk will be followed by a picnic for anyone who wishes to stay, please bring a picnic dinner and folding chairs or a blanket to sit on. If you have any questions or need directions, call the MacDowells at 540-882-9000.

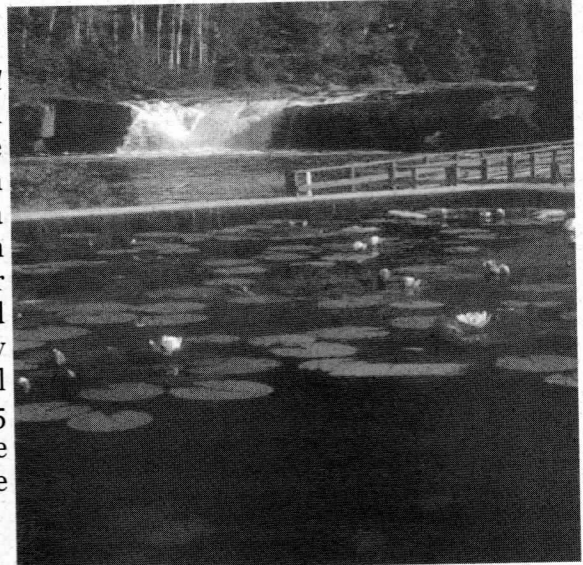
ANNUAL LOUDOUN COUNTY BUTTERFLY COUNT Saturday, August 3, 9:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on its fifth annual Butterfly Count, centered in the Waterford area. No experience is necessary; novices will be teamed with experienced leaders in each segment of the count. Come out and have fun while contributing to butterfly conservation. The Conservancy is also interested in visiting butterfly gardens within the area which stretches from White's Ferry in the east to the Appalachian

Continued on page 8

Calendar...continued from page 7

Trail in the west, and from Point of Rocks south to Lincoln. This annual mid-summer count, modeled after Christmas Bird Counts, is sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. For more information or to register and receive directions, contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com.

WATERSHED ECOLOGY: WATER QUALITY ON A LOCAL POND AND STREAM (Ages 18 and up) **Thursday, August 8, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Saturday, August 10, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and Thursday August 15, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Registration required for this fee-based course, \$45 for the course.** Co-sponsored by the Friends of Banshee Reeks, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Audubon Naturalist Society, and Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services. Join a team of naturalist instructors in studying water quality in Goose Creek and local ponds. This mini-course will cover topics on watersheds for ponds, streams, riparian areas and wetlands; water chemistry, bacteriology and water quality standards; and stream habitats and aquatic insects. There will be both classroom and field sessions. Class size is limited to 15 participants. Pre-registration is required. Make checks payable to: "Friends of Banshee Reeks". For more information, please call 703-669-0316.

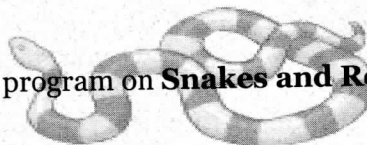


BIRDING BANSHEE Saturday, August 10, 8:00 a.m. See the June 8 listing for details.

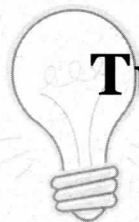
INSECTS: NATURAL HISTORY AND IDENTIFICATION (Ages 18 and up): Tuesday, August 13, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Saturday, August 17, 8:00 a.m. to Noon, Tuesday, August 20, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Friday, August 23, 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Registration required for this fee-based course, \$50 for the course. Co-sponsored by the Friends of Banshee Reeks, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Audubon Naturalist Society, and Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services. Join professional naturalist Cliff Fairweather in studying the natural history and identification of insects. The mini-course will include two evening sessions, a half-day field trip and an evening field trip. Participants will learn the ecological role and value of insects, the distinguishing characteristics of insects, their life cycles, habitats, feeding, behavior and social characteristics. Classroom and instructional material will be provided for teachers. Class is limited to 15 participants. Pre-registration is required. Make checks payable to: Friends of Banshee Reeks. For more information call 703-669-0316.

BUTTERFLIES AT BANSHEE Saturday, August 17, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. See the July 20 listing for details.

Look for a special program on **Snakes and Reptiles** in September.



Keep your eyes open for announcements on our many activities, or even better, join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy so you can be the first to hear about all our great programs and field trips! Check out our web site at **www.loudounwildlife.org**. Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com with any questions you might have about the above programs.



Turning Lights Off Saves Bird Lives

This article was retrieved from the Environmental News Service internet listservice — <http://ens-news.com/ens>.

CHICAGO, Illinois, May 9, 2002 (ENS) - Turning off building lights in a major city could save thousands of migratory birds a day, say researchers from The Field Museum in Chicago.

"For the first time, we now have numbers to back up scientists' claims that turning off building lights during migration season is an effective way to reduce the number of birds who kill themselves by flying into buildings," said Doug Stotz, PhD, a conservation ecologist at The Field Museum.

During 2000 and 2001, Stotz and his colleagues counted dead birds around McCormick Place every day during the migration seasons, from late March to the end of May and from mid-August to Thanksgiving. Half of the vertical surface of the huge, lakefront building is glass, and lights in the building seem to disorient migrating birds.

Turning lights off at McCormick Place reduced the number of dead birds by up to 88 percent, depending on lighting conditions and window location. For all the days counted, 1,297 birds died from hitting lit windows while just 192 birds died from hitting dark windows.

After adjusting for the variance in lit versus dark windows, the overall reduction due to turning the lights out was 83 percent.

"That's an incredible savings from just one building," Stotz said. "Imagine what we could accomplish if the drive to turn off lights during

migration season spread to include most downtown buildings."

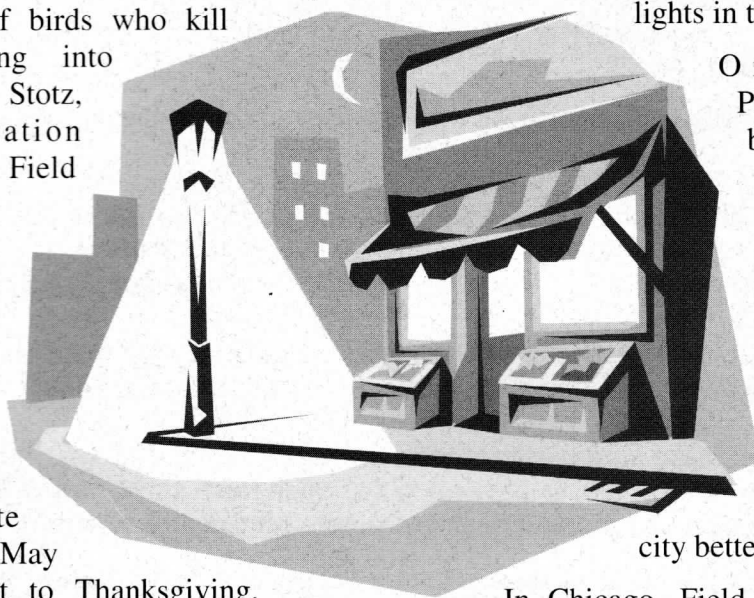
The city of Chicago is working toward that goal. In 2000, Chicago and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds. Ever since, the city has been asking downtown buildings to dim or shut off their lights in the spring and fall.

On Wednesday, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania became the third city, after Chicago and New Orleans, Louisiana, to sign an Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds. The USFWS will give the city \$75,000 to support projects and educational initiatives to make the city better bird habitat.

In Chicago, Field Museum scientists have been checking for dead birds at the base of McCormick Place since 1978. Over the years, they have collected 29,842 birds of 140 species. The most common window casualty was the song sparrow.

The Chicago Ornithological Society estimates that 100 million to one billion birds die each year after colliding with buildings in the U.S. alone.

Canada is ahead of the U.S. in studying and preventing bird building collisions. Michael Mesure, executive director of the Fatal Light Awareness Program in Toronto, spoke at The Field Museum on the causes and solutions to the problem on May 20.



Improper Trash Disposal Endangers Wildlife

This article was retrieved from the Environmental News Service internet listservice — <http://ens-news.com/ens>.

WASHINGTON, DC, May 13, 2002 (ENS) - Taking care to secure and properly dispose of trash and recyclables can help keep wildlife safe, says the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Raccoons, skunks, squirrels, birds and other wildlife are attracted to items thrown away in residential and commercial trash. Containers and plastic wrap with food residues in the trash are tempting treats for hungry wildlife, but they also pose a potential danger.

"Wide mouth containers can become death traps when animals get their heads stuck inside and suffocate," said Susan Hagood, wildlife issues specialist at HSUS. "Plastic containers, like some yogurt containers, that are narrower at the top than the bottom are especially hazardous to skunks."

"Plastic wrap mistakenly eaten by hungry animals, possibly even your own pet, can cause an internal blockage - a potentially fatal situation," Hagood added. "And birds and other animals can become entangled in plastic beverage rings."

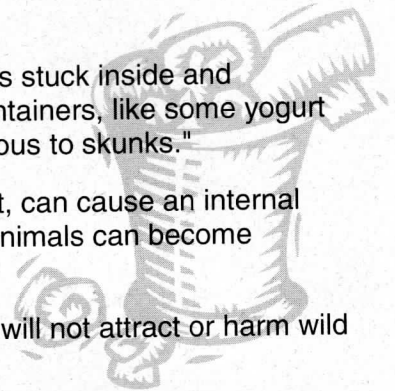
The HSUS provides the following tips to ensure that garbage and recyclables will not attract or harm wild animals:

***Rinse and Recycle:** Rinse all recyclable glass and plastic containers to remove food remnants and odors. Animals like skunks, whose front legs are too short to push containers off their heads, are vulnerable to harm from this type of packaging.

***Cut or Crush:** Cut up or crush plastic containers before putting them in the garbage or recycling bin. Cut apart each ring in plastic six pack carriers and other similar packaging.

***Close and Cover:** Make sure plastic food wrap is rinsed and contained inside a closed garbage bag. Never throw plastic packaging into open trash cans. Always put garbage out for collection in plastic or metal trash containers with secure covers.

"Remember to properly dispose of containers and plastic wrap when you're hiking, camping, or picnicking, too," Hagood concluded. "It only takes an extra second or two, but it can save an animal's life."



RABBIT HABITAT

by Barbara Holland

West Main Street in Purcellville is a pretty strip of gentle, porchy

houses with big trees and tidy lawns. Once such lawn last winter sprouted a brush pile, in plain sight of the street. It was a

big, untidy stack of loose sticks that seemed, for months, to be waiting to be burned or collected and carried away. Perfectly acceptable behind a barn on a farm, on manicured Main Street it looked peculiar.

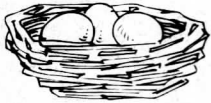
No doubt the neighbors complained. Late in May a large, neatly lettered sign was propped up against its side: RABBIT HABITAT. As of this writing, brush pile and sign are still there.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy applauds the courage and determination of these good people and extends a hope that many small creatures will find a welcome on Main Street.

Brush piles make good homes, and are particularly favored by the quail that have made themselves so scarce lately.

Neatness may count, but it isn't everything.





Bird Nests Are Protected by Law

This article was retrieved from the Environmental News Service internet listserve — <http://ens-news.com/ens>.

WASHINGTON, DC, April 22, 2002 (ENS) - Even when nesting birds make a mess around houses and buildings, it is illegal to harm them, warns the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Hundreds of species of neo-tropical migratory birds - those that spend the winter in Central or South America or Mexico - return to the United States each spring. Most birds raise several broods of young in spring and summer. When natural habitat has been altered or destroyed birds will sometimes build nests on houses, buildings or bridges. For example, barn swallows often build nests made of mud pellets under porch eaves or on sides of houses, and chickadees will build nests almost anywhere they can find a safe cavity. Most birds take about a month to raise a brood, including laying eggs, incubating them and raising chicks until they are strong enough to leave the nest.

Native birds such as warblers, swallows and hummingbirds are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Even birds that do not always migrate, such as robins and wrens and woodpeckers, are protected under the Act. The Act prohibits destruction of nests with eggs or young, or possession of migratory bird parts. Violations can carry maximum penalties of \$15,000 and/or six months in jail. It is not a violation, however, to prevent the birds from constructing their nests, and non-native birds such as starlings and house sparrows are not protected under the Act.

"A bird must be just beginning to build it's nest - just a few sticks or pieces of mud," said Anne Badgley, director of the USFWS Pacific Region. "However, sometimes people wash down a nest and don't pay attention to the site for a week or so, only to find the nest has been reconstructed and has eggs in it. Once the nest has eggs, it is protected and its destruction or removal is illegal." An active nest - one with eggs or young - may be removed only under a special permit issued by the USFWS. These permits are issued only if the USFWS determines that a nest poses a hazard to human health or safety.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was created in 1918 to address the mass killing of birds for their feathers, which were used in the hat business and other decorative clothing. Today, many native bird populations are declining because of habitat loss, toxins, domestic cat predation and other hazards.

More information about migratory birds is available at: <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/homepg.html>.

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LWC 2002 Annual Meeting

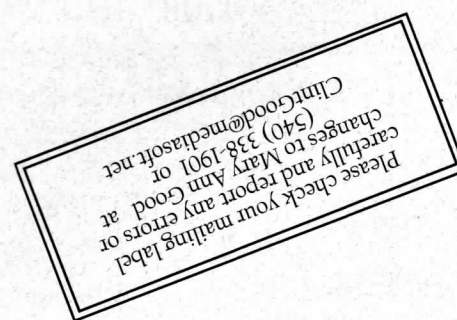
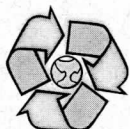
The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy held its annual membership meeting on May 21 at the Rust Wildlife Sanctuary in Leesburg. In addition to a general business meeting, new officers were elected for 2002 – 2004: Bruce McGranahan, president; Tom Bjorkman, vice president; Sharon Kearns, treasurer; and Mary Ann Good, secretary. Outgoing president Phil Daley thanked the past officers and board members for their hard work and support which ensured LWC's continued success.

A highlight at this year's annual meeting was the presentation of three conservation awards to students from the 21st annual Loudoun County Science and Engineering Fair. The fair was held at Loudoun Valley High School on March 21. The three student projects which were selected by LWC for recognition dealt with stream quality and wildlife habitat. First-place winner Alex Seebeck, who won for his "Relationship Between Barred Owl Calls and Responses During the Non-Breeding Season," related how much he enjoyed researching his subject. He was most excited about his discovery of a little known aspect of barred owls of which a life-time researcher was unaware! The

runners-up for the conservation awards included Jared Fausnaught for "Determining the Effects of Degradation in Streamside and In-Stream Habitat Relative to Stream Health" and Gavin Ruedisueli for "Effects of Stream Features on Water Quality." LWC presented a check for \$250 to the first-place winner and a check for \$125 to each of the runners-up. All three awardees also received a special plaque.

The evening also brought special recognition for Leslie McCasker who was presented with a 2001 Volunteer of the Year award. As a long-time active member of LWC, Leslie edits and publishes the organization's quarterly newsletter, "The Habitat Herald," produces the annual Christmas flyer, and in her spare time is a wildlife rehabilitator. Phil Daley reflected on Leslie's unfailing willingness to take on whatever was needed, which always resulted in a great product.

Although the annual membership meeting occurs only once a year, the LWC board meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month, 7:30 p.m., at the Rust Wildlife Sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to attend.



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