
Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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www.loudounwildlife.org

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BEAVERS: Wetland Specialists

by Joe Coleman

Few animals rearrange their landscapes as much as man; a major exception is the beaver (*Castor canadensis*). Their homes are constructed so strongly that not even brown bears can break into them. Beavers cut down trees not just for food, but also to build dams, canals and spill ways. They are remarkably adapted to their aquatic lifestyle, having valves in both their ears and nose which automatically close when they are underwater. Their webbed hind feet allow them to swim rapidly, and their broad, paddle-shaped flat tail serves as a rudder while swimming and to make warning signals to their family. The beavers' large incisors and powerful jaw muscles are used to build their structures. Beavers also have acute hearing and a keen sense of smell, which in combination with the ability to sense vibrations in the earth through their webbed rear feet, allow them to escape from their predators. Their fur coats are highly effective in shedding moisture and keeping them warm under the coldest and wettest conditions. Each hind foot includes a split toe which they use as a comb to groom their fur. They produce a special oil — castor (hence their Latin name) — that they comb through their fur for waterproofing. The castor oil is also deposited in strategically placed “mudpies” so they can mark their territory.

Their front feet have five, relatively long toes, which they use in combination with their front incisors to build their lodges and dams. When beavers chew underwater their lips close behind their incisors, sealing off the rest of the mouth and preventing water from going down their throat. While most people

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The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) group of volunteers who share a common goal of protecting and perpetuating natural habitats for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

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

You can also visit us at:

www.loudounwildlife.org

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A Word from the President

by Tom Bjorkman

Members and friends of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy must be driven by the goal of expanding our impact and, thereby, our ability to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat. This is not a time for business as usual. The pressures on wildlife habitat are enormous, and they show no sign of abating.

All of us need to be involved in the effort to expand our impact. However, it is up to the Conservancy's leaders to do what those entrusted with leadership positions are supposed to do – to help keep us all moving forward in the same direction.

Last fall, your leadership committed itself to a short list of initiatives for the coming year that we believe will help us realize the goal of expanding our impact. I urge all of you to familiarize yourselves with these goals and to consider how you can help to achieve them. I hope you will be just as excited as I am about the commitment to our organization's growth that is apparent in these initiatives:

1. *Partnering with local Loudoun communities and Homeowner Associations to develop wildlife and habitat restoration programs tailored to fit the goals of both LWC and our local communities.* One secret to expanding our membership is to share the enthusiasm and expertise of our membership with local communities who need our help.
2. *Energizing our Stream Monitoring Program.* LWC was a leader in getting the county's stream monitoring program off the ground, and we need to show leadership once again. Shortly, we will be naming a new Coordinator for Stream Monitoring and stepping up our efforts to get more members and friends involved, both in the east and in the west.

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A Word...*continued from page 2*

3. *Creating a more powerful web site that will offer more information and attract more visits from members of Loudoun's large and growing conservation community looking for ways to make a difference.*

4. *Developing a Marketing Information Packet.* We need to make it easier for people to find out more about us. The goal of this packet is to draw people into the Conservancy by giving them the basic information they need about the who, what, and why of LWC, including programs offered and volunteer opportunities.

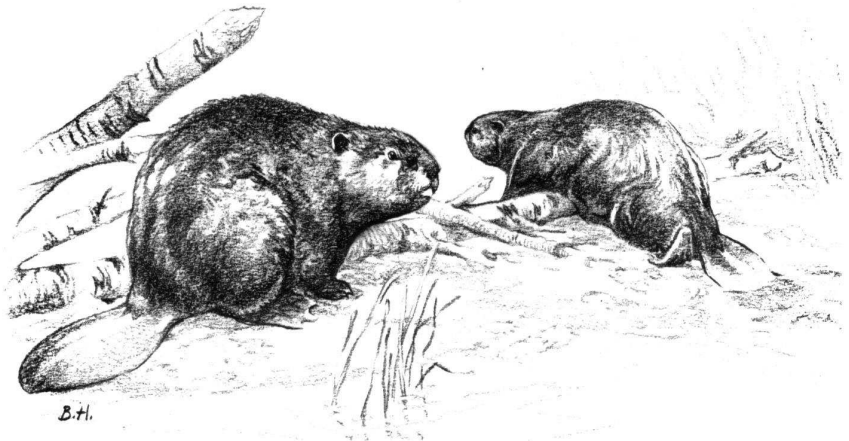
5. *Developing a logo and tagline or catch phrase.* Some people may say that the key to our success is great programs, not good PR. But the experiences of our counterpart organizations in the conservation community makes clear that, in a world full of busy people, making our organization instantly identifiable is one way to make a difference.

Moving forward with all these initiatives simultaneously will be a challenge for our organization – a challenge that is entirely appropriate to an environment in which we cannot afford to carry on business as usual. We will need your help to make them happen. I am extremely encouraged by the initial results of the annual fundraising appeal and the membership survey that we sent out at the end of last year. The response tells me that we have members and friends who recognize the challenge and are ready to rise to it.

Beavers...*continued from page 1*

associate beavers with lodges and dams, beavers that live in rivers and large streams, such as Bull Run or Goose Creek, live in burrows with an underwater entrance. As a result, these beavers do not need to build either dams or lodges. The entrance to these burrows can be found, especially in the fall and winter, by locating twigs and small branches anchored nearby in the mud underwater. These twigs and branches serve as their winter stores. Beaver lodges have one or more underwater entrances with their living quarters located in a hollow near the top of the lodge. Not only will the lodge include a vent to allow air circulation, but the beavers will also spread wood chips on the bottom of the floor to absorb excess moisture. When they build dams, the structures are usually bowed to lessen the water pressure on them. Additionally, beavers will build spillways around the dams to let excess water out, and in areas where there is insufficient water flow, they will build canals to channel extra water into their ponds.

Research indicates that beavers pair for life, mating in January or February, depending on how far north they live. The young are born about four months later, and while they are able to swim fairly quickly, the young beavers are relatively helpless through their first winter. They stay with their parents for about two years, until the next young are born, and help with chores around their home until that time. It is when they leave home that we often find beavers in unusual places, even on roads, where they are susceptible to being killed by cars due to their slow gait and poor vision.



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When beavers first move into an area, they remove the trees and shrubs around their new home. The resulting pond serves as a home for a number of different animals, from birds to amphibians and fish. The resulting openings in the forest let in more light, and plant growth actually increases. After the beavers exhaust their immediate food supply, they move on to a new area. Before long their dam on the abandoned pond begins to leak because of the lack of maintenance; then it begins to drain.

Because the soil has been enriched by the presence of the beavers, grassland and shrubby vegetation quickly appears. Before long, trees are growing in the clearing, and the forest, through succession, reappears. After enough time the beavers may even return to the area and re-colonize it. It is possible to find everything from active beaver colonies to abandoned beaver ponds in varying stages of succession during a visit to many stream valleys, such as those that make up the Prince William Forest National Park. Each stage seems to welcome different types of wildlife. Earl Hilfiker writes in his book Beavers: Water Wildlife and History:

"A beaver pond goes through a series of stages, each reflecting the changes brought about by the beaver's manipulation of his environment. These stages may be likened to those of life, for indeed, the beaver pond can be viewed as a living, changing, and growing thing. It progresses from birth through infancy, adolescence, maturity, old age and eventually death, or abandonment."

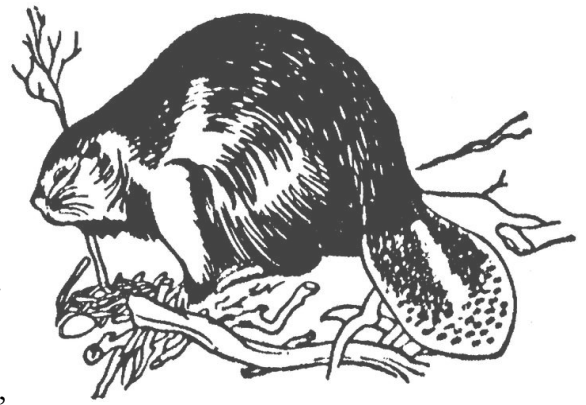
Beavers create one of our most productive and lush habitats — wet and moist meadows, mostly on floodplains and on their edges. Beavers were, and still are in areas where they are allowed to thrive, critical to creating habitats that several threatened and endangered species utilize. There is extensive research showing that natural areas can support and benefit from larger beaver populations.

While many people first react to beavers moving onto their property with pleasure, often this quickly turns to dismay as the beavers begin cutting down prize ornamental trees and shrubs and flooding areas which were once dry. The first problem is relatively easy to solve as specific trees can be protected by wrapping wire mesh around them from ground level to about three feet high. In areas which get a lot of snow, it is necessary to wrap the wire higher. Although it is more difficult to deal with the problem of flooding, it can be solved by building a beaver baffle. Beaver baffles stop beavers from completely blocking the water flow and prevent a pond from getting too large. Information on building beaver baffles can be found on the websites of either the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy (www.loudounwildlife.org) or the Humane Society of the United States (www.hsus.org)

Beaver ponds create wonderful wildlife habitat, which is not only highly productive during the time beavers are active but also for years afterwards. In addition, beaver ponds do an excellent job of mitigating storm water and reducing soil erosion. And, last but not least, these ponds are fascinating places for visiting and watching wildlife and the cycle of life.

References:

- Askins, Robert A. *Restoring North America's Birds*. Yale University Press, 2000.
- Hilfiker, Earl L. *Beavers: Water, Wildlife and History*. Windswept Press, 1990.
- Murie, Olaus J. *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks*. 2nd ed. Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
- Whitaker, John O. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.



AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY WATER QUALITY 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 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

Saturday, February 14 (10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) - classroom

Saturday, March 6 (10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) - field

Tuesday, March 16 (7:00 - 9:30 p.m.) - classroom

Saturday, April 3 (2:00 - 4:00 p.m.) - field

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).

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION II: FAMILY LEVEL

Caddisflies Sunday, February 15 (1:00 - 3:30 p.m.)

True Flies & Beetles Sunday, February 29 (1:00 - 3:30 p.m.)

Identification to the family level gives our monitoring data much more power to assess stream health. These classes are recommended for monitors with at least one year of monitoring experience and a good grasp of order-level identification.

PROTOCOL PRACTICUM

Sunday, April 4 (2:00 - 4:00 p.m.) — Note: *This class is for Loudoun Stream Monitoring participants only.*

Others should attend a Clifton/Manassas area session.

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. This section will include additional habitat assessment instruction and will be held in both the classroom and the field. *Please bring boots or sneakers for wading.*

MACRO-INVERTEBRATE IDENTIFICATION REVIEW AND QUIZ

Thursday, April 1 (7:00 - 9:30 p.m.)

Friday, April 2 (9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.) - open, walk-in quiz (no ID review)

Saturday, April 10 (10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)

All stream monitors are encouraged to take this short review and quiz to test your recognition of aquatic macro-invertebrates. Team leaders must pass the quiz for recertification for the 2004 monitoring season.

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 Audubon Naturalist Society
ATTN: Cliff Fairweather
Rust Sanctuary
802 Children's Center Rd, SW
Leesburg, VA 20176

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:

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

LWC PROGRAM CALENDAR

Space is limited for many of these programs.

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

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIRDS OF PREY – Thursday, February 26, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Saturday, February 28, 10:30 a.m. to dusk. Leader: Liam McGranaghan, assisted by Joe Coleman. This two-day class is sponsored by the Audubon Naturalist Society and the Loudoun Wildlife



Conservancy. Slides will be used at Thursday night's class at the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary (Leesburg) to describe the many types of birds of prey that winter over in our area. Saturday will begin with a visit to the Smithsonian Naturalist Center in Leesburg to study the skins of different raptors. The field session in the afternoon will carpool to different locations in western Loudoun where the birds will be studied in the field. Not only is it possible most winters to find many birds of prey in our area, but the variety of species increases also. **Fee: Members: \$33; Nonmembers: \$46.**

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, February 28, 8:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for the monthly bird walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES). This 900-acre preserve is located on Harpers Ferry Road (Rt. 671) in northwestern Loudoun County. Only a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, this property includes meadows in the valley and heavily forested slopes on the Blue Ridge. We will meet at the Neersville Volunteer Fire Station on Rt. 671 at 8:00 a.m. *Questions - contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com.*

THE BIRDS OF BANSHEE REEKS – Saturday, March 6, 10:00 a.m., Ashburn Library (703-737-8100), 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn. The mosaic of different habitats at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve makes it a birder's paradise. John Drummond of the Friends of Banshee Reeks will show slides of the many birds that can be found at the preserve. In addition, he will describe the many different habitats that exist at Banshee Reeks and explain how they combine to attract so many different birds — both migrants and nesters.

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, March 13, 8:00 a.m. Join the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve for the 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.*

LIVING WITH OUR WILD NEIGHBORS – Tuesday, March 16, 7:30 p.m. Ashburn Library (703-737-8100), 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn. Many of the people who move into Loudoun County enjoy the wildlife that surrounds us. Unfortunately, the proximity of our wild neighbors sometimes leads to conflict. John Hadidian, Director of Urban Wildlife Programs for the Humane Society of the United State (HSUS), will explain how you can avoid the more common problems that occur when we displace our wild neighbors. He will also describe humane solutions to managing wildlife, using approaches and technology that only recently have become available. Join us at this free program sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and learn how we can continue to live next to and appreciate the animals who share our neighborhoods.




BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, March 27, 8:00 a.m. See the February 28th listing for details.

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BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, April 10, 8:00 a.m. See the March 13th listing for details.

THE DASHING WORLD OF THE HUMMINGBIRD  – **Tuesday, April 20, 7:30 p.m., Purcellville Library.** This program will peek into the fast-paced life of the tiny hummingbird. You will see how they manage their amazing flying feats and feed, migrate, and raise their young. A sampling of hummingbird species that range from Alaska to the tip of South America will be covered, with special insight into the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and hints on how to attract it to your yard. The program will be presented by Peggy Spiegel, previous owner of For the Birds, a nature/birding store that had locations in Blacksburg and Roanoke. Now retired, Peggy volunteers her time working on the Important Bird Areas Technical Committee, serving as Field Trip Chairman for the New River Valley Bird Club, serving as a Board Member for VSO, and traveling around the state giving programs on her favorite topic – birds.

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, April 24, 8:00 a.m. See the February 28th listing for details.

CELEBRATING ARBOR DAY AT THE BANSHEE REEKS NATURE PRESERVE – Saturday, April 24, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Participate with the Virginia Department of Forestry and the Loudoun County Soil & Water Conservation District in celebrating Arbor Day at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.



CELEBRATING SPECIAL PLACES: BIRDING LOUDOUN COUNTY – Saturday, May 8. During spring, thousands of migratory birds move through North America to their nesting territories. Some will stay and nest in our area, while others will spend only a few days here replenishing their energy before continuing a journey that may be thousands of miles long. In celebration of International Migratory Bird Day and in recognition of the importance of healthy wildlife habitat, the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is sponsoring several bird walks and a bird survey throughout Loudoun County. Some of the sites the different groups will visit are Horsepen Preserve in eastern Loudoun, Morven Park and the ANS Rust Wildlife Sanctuary in Leesburg, Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in central Loudoun, and the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in northwestern Loudoun County. Please bring binoculars. *Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com before May 5 to participate in one of the walks or the survey and to choose a site.*

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, A NATIONAL NATURAL TREASURE – Tuesday, May 18, 7:00 p.m., Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary, 802 Children's Center Road, SW, Leesburg. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been a leader in restoring and protecting the Bay for over 30 years. When they began their work, the Bay's health had deteriorated to the point that its unique riches were disappearing before our very eyes. While the Bay's downward trend has been halted, its healing is now at a standstill, largely because of the failure of local, state, and federal leaders to aggressively address the problems plaguing the Bay, among them nutrient pollution and massive development which is occurring within its watershed. Joe Lerch of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation will talk about the Bay's wonders and discuss what the residents of Loudoun County can do to help return the Bay to its glory days.

Since a small part of the evening will be devoted to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Annual Meeting, refreshments will be served beginning at 7:00 p.m. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. with LWC's recognition of this year's outstanding Loudoun high school science-fair projects in the field of environmental sciences.

BIRDING THE BLUE RIDGE CENTER – Saturday, May 22, 8:00 a.m. See the February 28th listing for details.

BIRDING BANSHEE – Saturday, June 12, 8:00 a.m. See the March 13th listing for details.

Questions about the above programs –
 contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jandkcoleman@erols.com.
 For up-to-date information on our programs check our web site at www.loudounwildlife.org.

Living with Backyard Wildlife

by Leslie McCasker

This article is meant to help deal with situations where people and wildlife interact on a more personal level – around our homes. The rewards of enjoying wildlife in our own backyards, and of knowing how to conduct ourselves in theirs, can be rewarding. Unfortunately, there is not enough time or space for me to go into a great deal of detail or specifics. So, I will try to highlight some of the points that may make your wildlife encounters more acceptable, if not enjoyable.

Our attitudes and assumptions guide the way we react to wildlife encounters. Many people use words like *nuisance* or *damage* when relating stories of their interactions with wildlife. Most people tolerate wildlife if it does not interfere with their livelihood, property, pets or recreation. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who see wildlife as a kind of pet, requiring their attention, care and feeding. This perspective fails to recognize the independent and nonhuman attributes of wildlife and often causes more harm than good.

We should strive instead for a balanced view of wildlife — recognizing our responsibility to safeguard wild habitat and to act humanely toward these wild animals, while understanding the animals' basic right to exist free of human depredation and interference.

Inviting wildlife to your backyard requires you to take into account all of the possible problems that may come with the invitation. There is always that chance that the wildlife visitors may outstay their welcome or wander into areas you never intended them to visit. With a little bit of forethought you can prevent or troubleshoot most wildlife problems without doing anything drastic.

Some homeowners take it personally when wildlife becomes problematic. They think the animal is acting maliciously. We put up fences to make “good neighbors” and lock our doors and windows to keep uninvited people out. Yet, we expect wildlife to *know* that they are not welcome, even if we don't take similar measures to prevent or restrict their access to our property.

The animals are not being malicious. They have simply found an element they need for survival (food, water, shelter, etc.). In many cases, by the time a homeowner discovers that they have a wildlife problem and seeks a solution, the offending wildlife has already become conditioned that their actions can be safely repeated. The longer wildlife is allowed to continue their actions, the longer it will take to recondition them. Unfortunately, the homeowner who allowed the squirrels to nest in their attic for the last two years is usually not willing to wait for the next two weeks or even two days to correct the problem. But they are also not usually enamored with the idea of paying a pest control operator \$100-\$200 to fix the problem that they could do for free (and much more humanely/effectively most of the time).



Most homeowners choose to have an animal immediately “removed and relocated,” which they feel is a quick solution for them and a humane alternative for the animal. There are three major elements to consider before deciding to trap and relocate an animal:

- Most relocated wildlife does not survive. In an unfamiliar environment, they do not have an established shelter site, food and water source, or territory. By dumping it into another animal's territory, it has to fight and compete with the resident animal for a limited food supply and nesting area. In almost all cases, it is the newcomer that loses – many dying from infection from bite wounds, and others being killed by cars in an attempt to return to their original territory.

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Living with Backyard Wildlife.....continued from page 9

- Most jurisdictions prohibit the relocation of wildlife and require that pest control operators destroy trapped wildlife. This is usually accomplished by shooting, drowning, suffocation or injection with commercial solvents such as acetone. This is anything but humane!
- Unless the situation that originally attracted the animal is corrected, the problem will only be repeated by the next animal drawn to the property. Essentially, an “open house/vacancy” sign has been posted. The new animal, many times, is more of a *nuisance* than the previous one.

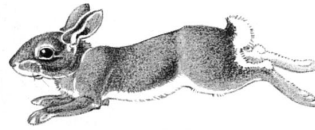
Wildlife will continue to repeat a behavior such as living in an attic or raiding trash cans only when it is relatively easy to do so, and they feel it is safe. Attics are ideal shelters, especially when problems of deteriorating fascias or soffets make it easy to get in. Attics are warm, quiet, dark and protected from the elements. However, animals will no longer feel safe or hidden in an attic when a radio blares for several days, or lights are left on continuously. They will begin to look for more suitable quarters within a matter of days. Reconditioning offending wildlife is much more effective than removing it from the property, and much more humane than destroying it. But in order for this to be effective, reconditioning must be followed by correcting the situation that initially attracted the animal. By teaching the one squirrel to stay out of your attic, he will also continue to defend his territory (your yard) from invasion by other squirrels.

Tips for Preventing Conflicts with Wildlife:

- Do not provide food for mammals that visit your backyard. These animals, unlike birds, can begin to behave in unnatural ways when they are fed by humans. They may become overly brave with you and other humans which can lead to danger for both the humans and animals alike. The animals will still bite, even though they seem *tame*. They may also become destructive if their behaviors involve your home and belongings. Putting out food for wild animals creates dependency, as the animals learn where the food sources are. Those animals that have become dependent on your food can be severely deprived and even die when you go on vacation or move away (and the next resident human may not be so welcoming).
- Do not leave dog or cat food out for your pets. This acts as the same attractant as deliberate feedings.
- Seal all cracks and crevices that might be used by birds and animals to enter your home. Any size opening can be used by wildlife to enter. If a crack is too small for a mouse or squirrel, it can often be made wider by those little rodent teeth. *Be sure the animals have left before you seal their exits.*
- Cap your chimney and screen all outside vents in your home. Use ¼ inch hardware cloth, not window screening.
- Stack firewood away from your home. Stacked firewood is a favorite hiding place for mice and snakes.
- Try to avoid cedar-sided homes in forested areas. Woodpeckers and wood-boring insects are fond of cedar siding and can become very attracted to one house, putting many holes in the siding and pulling out insulation. Woodpeckers are protected by federal law and may not be harassed, trapped or killed.



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Living with Backyard Wildlife...continued from page 10

- Fence off small vegetable gardens with hardware cloth buried about five inches below ground and extending about two feet above ground. This will help prevent invasion by rabbits and groundhogs. To limit access by deer, a fence must be tall, with a top section protruding outward to prevent jumping.
- Secure all garbage cans. Do not simply leave the lid on. Devise a latch or buy cans with latches – the more difficult to open, the better. Secure your garbage cans to a railing so they are difficult to tip over. This can help prevent invasion of your garbage by dogs, cats, raccoons, opossums, and crows.
- Screen all basement window wells, so that small animals are not trapped inside them. Also, screen the small spaces that sometimes exist between first floor porches and the ground. Skunks, snakes, groundhogs, and other animals find these spaces attractive homes.
- Keep bird feeders and feeding areas clean. If you ever see rats eating left over seeds, immediately stop putting out bird feed. The birds will adjust; for your sake and for the sake of your neighbors, you must discourage the rats.

Tips for Resolving Conflicts with Wildlife:

Don't panic! Most wildlife conflicts are easy to solve with a little forethought and common sense.

- If a bird or small animal enters your home, seal the room from the rest of the house. Open all doors and windows from the room to the outside, so that the animal can escape. If it is a bat at night, shut off all the lights after opening the doors and windows to the outside.
- If woodpeckers are currently working on your house siding, you will need to cover their favorite areas with netting or burlap. Seal all siding connections and current holes made by the woodpeckers.
- If birds (particularly cardinals) are beating themselves against one of your windows or a car mirror, you will need to cover it so that the bird can no longer see its own reflection. This should discourage the offender.
- If an unwanted snake is found, don't kill it! Simply pick it up with a shovel or broom, or sweep it into a garbage can or box and move it to a suitable outside location.



Don't let potential wildlife conflicts discourage you from enjoying wildlife in your backyard. Most wildlife/human conflicts are not dangerous to either party and only require a cool head and some basic information to solve. If you do find yourself in need of assistance, contact a wildlife specialist.

To learn more about living with your backyard wildlife, attend our upcoming program:

Living with Our Wild Neighbors, presented by John Hadidian, Ph.D. of the Humane Society of the United States, on Tuesday, March 16th at 7:30 p.m. at the Ashburn Library (see page 7 for details).

The best resource for at-home, do-it-yourself wildlife information and tools and tactics for wildlife conflict resolution is the book, *Wild Neighbors, The Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife*, published by the Humane Society of the United States.



Floodplains Better Left Natural

by Cliff Fairweather, Naturalist
Audubon Naturalist Society

The following letter to the editor appeared in more than one local paper in late October 2003. It is reprinted here due to its timely nature. The new Board of Supervisors has signaled its intention to change the recently revised Zoning Ordinance to allow active and passive recreation in floodplains by Special Exception.

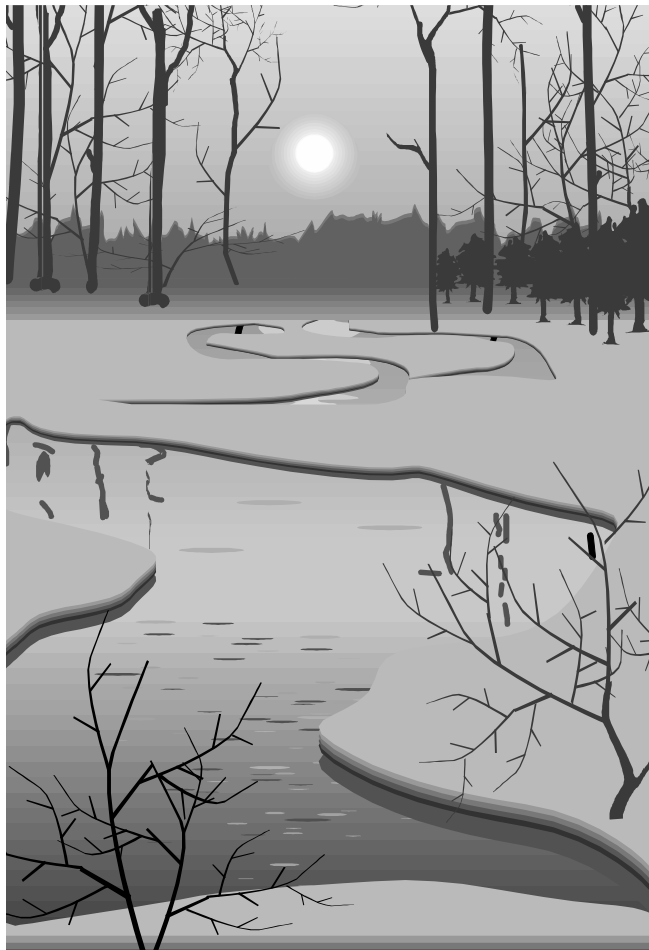
Floodplain protection is a critical element of any comprehensive effort to protect the health of Loudoun County streams. Protection for floodplains has recently been strengthened under the county's new zoning ordinance.

Unfortunately, proposals now being floated would remove this well-crafted and carefully negotiated countywide protection in order to address a problem affecting some schools. These proposals are of great concern to the Audubon Naturalist Society and others working to protect the health of our streams.

Prior to the new ordinance, land was designated for ball fields in floodplains adjacent to some county schools. Under the new rules this land can no longer be used for that purpose. We believe that there are ways to resolve this problem without eliminating the protection afforded streams under the new ordinance.

Part of the solution should include moving forward with community sketch plans to identify locations for future ball fields that do not intrude into floodplains. As for ball fields planned for floodplains prior to the new zoning ordinance, solutions need to be found on a case basis rather than overturning the ordinance.

Moreover schools and other institutions need to stop viewing floodplains as land available for ball fields. Recent research has shown that compacted soils in floodplains, such as occurs under ball fields, are not nearly as effective in absorbing rainfall as undisturbed land. Ball fields also reduce critical vegetative buffers from along streams.



We can learn lessons from neighboring Fairfax and even eastern Loudoun. The most obvious of these is that streams without floodplain protection and vegetative buffers are in much worse shape than those with a protected floodplain.

Where floodplain protection is absent, more storm water runs off the land and into streams. This increased runoff causes stream bank erosion, greater downstream flooding, damage to roads, bridges, and private property, and

degrades stream ecosystems. Our past failure to protect streams has created a costly legacy of restoration for which we now must pay.

The good news is that much of Loudoun still has healthy streams that can be protected. Protecting healthy streams is always less expensive and more

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ANS Environmental Education Programs

*The following classes are given by the Audubon Naturalist Society at the Rust Sanctuary in Leesburg, VA.
Please contact Tammy Schwab at tschwab@audubonnaturalist.org or (703) 669-0000
for more information or to register.*

Free Programs for All Ages

Beginner Bird Walks

February 14th, 28th, March 13th, 27th (8:00 a.m.)

These one hour walks are for bird watching beginners and are lead by an experienced birder. Learn about what to look and listen for and tips on identification. Bring your binoculars and field guide if you've got them if not we've got some to loan.

Family Nature Walk and Discovery Center Open House

Saturday, April 3rd (10:00 - 11:00 a.m.)

Kids bring your parents for a morning of nature fun. We will hike the nature trail at Rust and talk about all the wonderful things we see along the way. Spend some time with nature and share it with your family. Afterwards, we will have a naturalist in the discovery center to answer questions and help you explore nature together further. Feel free to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy after!

Family Programs (For beginners of all ages)

Fee \$5.00 for ANS members and \$8.00 for non-members (adults free with child)

Creature Feature: Reptiles and Amphibians

**Saturday, February 14th
(10:00 - 11:00 a.m.)**

Here is your chance to learn about reptiles and amphibians that live in this region and how they are affected by the seasons. We will make a craft and visit with the turtle and toad that make their home in our discovery center.



Be a Wildlife Detective

Saturday, February 28th (10:00 - 11:00 a.m.)

We will learn about animal tracks take a hike around Rust's many habitats and look for the tracks and traces of our familiar and unfamiliar wild neighbors.

Salamander Spring

Saturday, March 20th (10:00 - 11:00 a.m.)

Come out and explore the wild and unusual habitat of the cold weather amphibian. We will visit the protected upland wetland owned by ANS and explore the life that teams inside. Please wear boots for this hands on wetland exploration.



Continued on page 14

ANS Programs...*continued from page 13*

Who's Minding the Nest

Saturday, April 10th (10:00 - 11:00 a.m.)



Lots of different kinds of animals make nests not just birds. Spring is the time when lots of baby animals are born. Learn all about nests; who builds them, what they are made of, and who's minding the babies.

Animal Homes and Habitats

Saturday, April 10th (12:00 - 1:00 p.m.)

We will explore Rust's many habitats while we learn about the things animals need to survive. We will visit the beaver pond and fox meadow and look for animals in their wild homes.

Amateur Naturalist Series

(For adults and interested teens)

Fee \$10.00 for ANS members and \$14.00 for non-members

These programs are geared for teens and adults who have a serious interest in nature. These classes will not only include instruction from the naturalist but, extensive resources for continuing self guided study, and lots of question and answer opportunities.

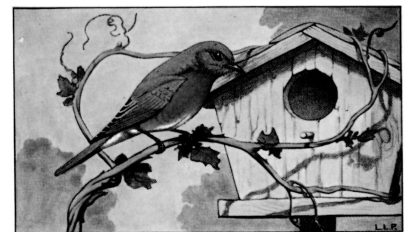
Nature Interpretation 101

Saturday, February 21st (9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

Interested in volunteering as a nature program leader? Teachers and scout leaders, want to incorporate environmental education into your programs but aren't sure where to start. Join us for a chance to develop your skills of interpretation. Learn how to observe nature, use field guides and keys, and how to develop and lead meaningful, educational nature programs for audiences of all ages. Participants will receive a comprehensive resource packet. Class size is limited to 16 people so please register early.

An Introduction to Blue Bird Nest Box Monitoring **Saturday, March 20th (12:00 - 2:00 p.m.)**

Blue birds are a citizen involvement success story. People can make a difference in the survival of a species. This program will introduce you to the principals and practice of blue bird box monitoring. We will learn about the habitat and habitats of this bird species as well as how we can best help them. We will walk an actual blue bird trail and work with some active boxes.



Amphibians 101

Saturday, March 27th (10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

Come out to learn some basic amphibian facts. Meet some live specimens and learn about life cycles, habits, and habitats of our local amphibians. In keeping with our Amateur Naturalist series format, we will also discuss and practice techniques of how to find and study them.

Floodplains...continued from page 12

effective than efforts to restore degraded ones. Local stream protection also helps safeguard water quality in the Potomac and the Chesapeake. Children need both ball fields and healthy streams. The ball field issue provides an important opportunity for adults to teach by example, showing young people how environmental protection can be balanced with the needs of sports.

If you are concerned about the proposed revisions to existing floodplain protection, please take a moment to write to the Board of Supervisors at loudounbos@aol.com and let them know your thoughts. To be even more effective, watch for the public hearing notice so that you can attend and speak in favor of the existing regulations. Contact Gem Bingol, LWC Stream Team Chair for more information at gem.bingol@verizon.net.

Trading Floodplains for Athletic Fields – Not a Wise Decision

The following article was submitted by a concerned LWC member.

At least one of our newly-elected members of the Board Supervisors has publicly stated that floodplains should be used for active recreation and ball-field construction. Also, it has been publicly said that the best way to remove the threat of West Nile Virus is to stop protecting wetlands, stop creating more of them, and to "clean-up" floodplains and other wet areas. This sort of talk should be alarming to those of us that value and understand the role of riparian corridors and wetlands. It also demonstrates an ignorance of the issue and perpetuates certain incorrect myths about floodplains and wetlands.

- Fact:** Floodplains serve many important functions, including mitigating downstream flooding, protecting surface water quality, and providing critical wildlife habitat. The cumulative effect of filling floodplains for construction reduces flood-storage volume that is necessary to moderate peak flood flows. Reduced overbank storage dramatically increases the volume and velocity of flood flows – increasing flood damage to unsuspecting downstream property owners. Streams will run higher and faster and will erode quicker if we continue to reduce our floodplains.
- Fact:** Floodplains serve as critical, natural filters. Flood waters in the shallow floodplain deposit silt, sediment, and debris safely outside of the stream. Floodplain areas also buffer the stream from nutrients and pollutant-laden runoff which frequently leave adjacent developed areas.
- Fact:** Opening floodplains to development is not the solution to the County's shortage of athletic fields. Relaxing protections will benefit only developers and a few landowners – not Loudoun's citizens. Floodplains are a poor choice for athletic fields. Poorly drained soils, high water table, chronically wet conditions, and periodic damage from flooding increase the costs of construction and maintenance for playing fields in floodplains. The typically wet conditions also limit the use during much of the year and make establishment and maintenance of turf more difficult and costly. These fields are a poor investment, and their wet, slippery conditions are unsafe for our county's youth. They deserve athletic fields constructed on well-drained, upland land in suitable locations. The shortage of athletic fields is NOT a result of the county's General Plan policies or floodplain regulations.

Continued on page 16

Trading Floodplains...continued from page 15

Fact: Wetlands are critical nutrient and pollutant "sinks" that help purify our surface and groundwater supplies. Wetlands also provide a water-dominated habitat critical to the survival of many plant and animal species.

Fact: Draining all of the wetlands will not eliminate mosquito breeding areas. Wetlands sustain a healthy population of predators (e.g. fish, dragonflies) that consume mosquito larvae and adults. The main sources of mosquitoes are small puddles, ditches, and backyard depressions where predation does not occur. The Director of the Loudoun County Health Department stated that ditches and depressions created by construction is a major contributor to mosquito populations.

I hope you will join me in trying to educate our County's citizens and elected officials. The Board of Supervisors has called for a review of the General Plan policies and River and Stream Corridor Overlay District regulations. It appears the intent is to remove protections on floodplains and allow uses such as golf courses and ball fields in stream corridors. Clearly, you and I will not benefit by overturning the basic environmental protections wisely instituted by the previous Board.

Floodplains Help Get Fecal Pollution Out of County Waters

by Darrell Schwalm

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) are currently conducting water pollution studies and developing implementation plans to restore water quality in the Goose Creek, Catoctin, Piney Run, and Limestone Branch watersheds. Portions of these streams are impaired (unfit) for recreational use because of high levels of fecal pollution and poor aquatic life. It is ironic that at the same time the state is working with local communities to improve stream buffers and protect floodplains in these watersheds, Loudoun County officials are discussing slacking current levels of protection to allow tree cutting and filling in floodplains.

DEQ and DCR are pushing for improved controls because stream riparian buffers and floodplains are critical to good water quality and stream health. The benefits that the public will receive by protecting and restoring streams are (1) cleaner waters, (2) improved public health, (3) conservation of natural resources (e.g., soil and soil nutrients), (4) improved aquatic life, (5) improved riparian habitat, (6) reductions in the amount of flood damage, (7) improved recreational opportunities, and (8) greater economic opportunities (e.g., improved agricultural production, outdoor recreation, tourism, etc.). DEQ and DCR

also report that an ancillary benefit is enhanced real estate values for farms, homes, and businesses located near water bodies with good water quality. This information is available at www.deq.state.va.us under TMDL Implementation Plan Guidelines.

It is a shame that in our politically polarized county that concerns about water quality, public health, and outdoor recreation seem to be connected to a partisan political agenda. This is wrong. Clean water and a healthy environment benefit people of all political persuasions. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will continue to work with DEQ and DCR to restore water quality in Loudoun County by protecting stream buffers and floodplains because this will benefit our communities.

If you would like to contribute an article, photograph or graphic for publication in the Habitat Herald, please send to:

Leslie McCasker
c/o Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
PO Box 2088
Purcellville, VA 20134-2088

Appropriate credit will be given for all work published.

The 2003 Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

For the seventh year, local birders spread out over 177 square miles of central Loudoun County as part of the 104th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Our count, which took place on December 28, was part of a larger effort as thousands of birders (almost 56,000 last year) all over North America — from Prudhoe Bay to Key West and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean — participated in close to 2,000 different counts.



During the Central Loudoun CBC, 91 people found 91 different bird species and 26,486 individual birds, including some unusual ones. Yellow-breasted Chats are common nesters in Loudoun County in the summer; however, the one found by Greg Justice near Camp Highroad on Lime Kiln Road was our best find of the day, as Chats are extraordinarily rare in the winter. The Common Yellowthroat, found by Andy Rabin and his team, was another rare winter find. Neither of these birds had been found previously on any of the Central Loudoun CBC's. A Chipping Sparrow found near Balls Bluff was another example of a bird frequently seen here in the summer but rarely in the winter.

As a result of several different teams "owling" early in the morning, this was a great year for finding owls. Near the community of Oatlands Mill, Todd Day found a Northern Saw-whet Owl, our first in years. Besides the Saw-whet, 22 Barred Owls, 12 Great Horned Owls, eight Eastern Screech Owls, and a Barn Owl were seen by various groups. Over the past few years, we have found increasingly higher numbers of hawks, and this year was no

exception. Red-tailed Hawks totaled 135, a new high for the count. The ten Bald Eagles seen were a new high also, especially when one considers how few eagles we counted our first four years. The American Kestrel is the only bird of prey whose numbers have diminished on our counts.

All seven species of woodpeckers were well-represented in this year's CBC. New high counts were tallied for Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers and Pileated Woodpeckers.

However, not all of the news was good. As many people had noticed recently, several of our more common species were found in much lower numbers than usual, perhaps because of this past year's cooler and wetter spring and summer. Numbers for Bluebirds, Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens and Tufted Titmice were all down considerably, especially when compared to the number of groups who participated in this year's count. For example, last year we tallied 2.55 Bluebirds per group-hour; this year the tally was only 1.26 per hour. Hopefully, these declines will be for one or two years only and are not harbingers of a lasting trend.



Continued on page 18

Christmas Bird Count...*continued from page 17*

While it is exciting to find unusual birds during a count, the most important aspect of the Christmas Bird Count is that it is the largest and longest example of citizen science in the country. As a result of the counts, numerous long-term trends have been recorded. This has been possible only through the dedication of thousands of volunteers who take time from their busy holiday schedules to count and record every wild bird they see on selected dates.

In addition to the 91 people listed below, I would like to thank the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Bird Feeder for their monetary support of the Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count and Tally Rally. Also, thanks go to Nana and Kevin Chroninger for coordinating, hosting, and making the Tally Rally at the Rust Nature Sanctuary a fun and perfect ending to a very successful day.

CBC Participants:

Joe Coleman, <i>Compiler</i>	David Gersten	Kevin McKee
Bob Abrams	Frank Good	Larry Meade
Angela Acevedo	Mary Ann Good	Alex Merritt
Barb Adatte	Jean Gooding	Phil Merritt
Ana Arguelles	Jenny Gooding	Carole Miller
Dale Ball	Alyssa Hansen	Paul Miller
Elizabeth Ball	Corey Hansen	Linda Millington
Barbara Berge	Dirck Harris	Peter Munroe
Tom Bjorkman	Debbie Harrison	Alex Newton
Joan Boudreau	Sue Heath	Sylvia Orli
Linda Carruthers	Bruce Hill	Jeff Pfoutz
Thomas Chornock	Kathleen Hugus	Andy Rabin
Roger Clapp	Aliya Jamil	Jean Sagan
Joseph Coleman	Jan Jamil	Marc Sagan
Karen Coleman	Iftikhar Jamil	Jerry Schaefer
Germaine Connolly	Elizabeth Johnson	Cheri Schneck
Ellie Daley	Lesley Julian	Tammy Schwab
Phil Daley	Greg Justice	Darrell Schwalm
Todd Day	Eunice Kawamoto	Stanwyn Shetler
John Drummond	Sharon Kearns	Michael Sisson
Kate Eldridge	Phil Kenny	Lee Stang
Rob Estelow	Mary Alice Koeneke	Ron Staley
Elizabeth Evans	Glenn Koppel	Anne Strahan
Cliff Fairweather	Bev Leeuwenburg	Yurim Suh
Karen Fairweather	Spring Ligi	Joanna Taylor
Susan Freis	Robert Lyon	Jackie Thurman
Michael Friedman	Karin MacDowell	Jim Van Ness
David Fuller	Robert MacDowell	Warren Wagner
Gwen Gantt	Scott MacDonald	Jeff Wneck
Joseph Gantt	Tamara MacDonald	
Kurt Gaskill	Andy Martin	
	Liam McGranaghan	

Continued on page 19

Christmas Bird Count...continued from page 18**CBC Birds Seen:****91 Species****26,486 Individual Birds**

6	Pied-bill Grebe		22	Barred Owl	HC	283	Rock Pigeon	HC
20	Great Blue Heron		1	No. Saw-whet Owl	UNS	513	Mourning Dove	
125	Black Vulture		24	Belted Kingfisher		1	Barn Owl	
416	Turkey Vulture		10	Red-head Woodpecker		8	Eastern Screech Owl	
2	Snow Goose	UNS	317	Red-bellied Woodpecker	HC	12	Great Horned Owl	
6945	Canada Goose		83	Yellow-bellied Woodpecker	HC	133	Cedar Waxwing	
1	Mute Swan	UNS	168	Downy Woodpecker		191	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
40	Gadwall		27	Hairy Woodpecker		1	Common Yellowthroat	UNS
22	American Wigeon		221	Northern Flicker	HC	1	Yellow-breasted Chat	UNS
45	American Black Duck		72	Pileated Woodpecker	HC	32	Eastern Towhee	
434	Mallard		1	Eastern Phoebe		39	American Tree Sparrow	
6	Northern Pintail		712	Blue Jay	HC	1	Chipping Sparrow	UNS
16	Green-winged Teal		443	American Crow		152	Field Sparrow	
55	Ring-necked Duck		72	Fish Crow		4	Savannah Sparrow	
3	Bufflehead		127	Crow species		5	Fox Sparrow	
28	Hooded Merganser		2	Common Raven		497	Song Sparrow	HC
63	Common Merganser	HC	300	Carolina Chickadee		36	Swamp Sparrow	
1	Ruddy Duck		146	Tufted Titmouse		1449	White-throated Sparrow	HC
5	Bald Eagle adult	HC	162	White-breasted Nuthatch		183	White-crowned Sparrow	
5	Bald Eagle immature		39	Brown Creeper		1332	Dark-eyed Junco	HC
12	Northern Harrier		143	Carolina Wren		693	Northern Cardinal	HC
14	Sharp-shinned Hawk		12	Winter Wren		170	Red-winged Blackbird	
10	Cooper's Hawk		53	Golden-crowned Kinglet		17	Eastern Meadowlark	
54	Red-shouldered Hawk		29	Ruby-crowned Kinglet		2	Rusty Blackbird	
135	Red-tailed Hawk	HC	230	Eastern Bluebird		14	Common Grackle	
15	American Kestrel		9	Hermit Thrush		1	Brown-headed Cowbird	
cw	Wild Turkey		684	American Robin		101	Black-bird species	
15	Northern Bobwhite	HC	213	Northern Mockingbird		5	Purple Finch	
5	Killdeer		1	Brown Thrasher		115	House Finch	
19	Wilson's Snipe	HC	6704	European Starling		231	American Goldfinch	
507	Ring-billed Gull		1	American Pipit		199	House Sparrow	
12	Herring Gull		1	Owl species				

HC High Count
 UNS Unusual Species
 cw Count Week Species

A Toolkit for Conservation: The Endangered Species Act

by Rich Landers

I'm handy around the house. I can use my fingernail to drive a screw and the sole of my boot to hammer a nail. My wife, however, thinks I'm several tools short in my toolkit. As stewards of the environment, we frequently conjure up creative ways to ensure that our natural resources receive protection, but there is no substitute for an effective toolkit. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides many such tools for conservation of which everybody should be aware.

The ESA recently turned 30. It was passed in 1973 by an overwhelming majority, both republicans and democrats, affirming a national sentiment committed to saving endangered wildlife. Although the American public strongly agrees that species and ecosystems must be protected, there is a sharp disagreement about how far we should go. These differences were accentuated in 1978 when the ESA was rightfully put into action to protect the Tellico River Snail Darter, and again in 1990 when the ESA was invoked as a stop-gap measure to save the Northern Spotted Owl. Opposition to the ESA in both of these instances created a painful gap between environmentally conscious people and well-funded political entities. Ever since, the ESA has been under attack. Everyone on both sides must understand that saving endangered wildlife ultimately comes at a price. Unfortunately, debates about the cost of species conservation typically center around short-term benchmarks such as jobs lost and construction projects delayed. Consequently, the long-term goal of maintaining a natural resources base that can sustain future generations both economically and aesthetically is lost in the brawl.

The ESA is administered by two government agencies: the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), a branch of the Department of the Interior, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), a sub-agency of the Department of Commerce, under NOAA. In general, the NMFS manages endangered species issues involving creatures inhabiting coastal waters, while the FWS handles the rest. The ESA's goal is to protect endangered wildlife and plants and the ecosystems on which they depend. Without protected habitat, species protection cannot succeed.

The ESA is broken down into 18 sections, each covering a specific area. The sections that lay out the governing principles of the ESA are Sections 4, 7, and 9. Section 4 provides guidelines for listing species: a process that can take several years of scientific evaluation to complete; or, in emergency situations, the Secretary of the Interior can speed up the process to as little as a few weeks. Section 4 also provides the mechanism for establishing critical habitat and implementing recovery plans. However, since designating critical habitat is a politically sensitive area, only 20% of listed species have it. A large percentage of tax dollars allocated for endangered species is spent on court costs involving critical habitat disputes.

Section 7 governs how the ESA is coordinated and enforced within federal agencies. Since the federal government controls over 650 million acres of U.S. land, Section 7 is potentially one of the most effective tools for species conservation. Even so, it's not used to its fullest extent. There is little motivation for federal agencies to comply with the ESA and not enough resources within the FWS to enforce it. Ultimately, politics plays a primary role in how rigorously Section 7 guidelines are adhered to, and in recent years Section 7 has not been given the opportunity to live up to its potential.

While Section 7 provides species protection on federal lands, Section 9 is geared toward protecting individual species on privately owned land. Section 7 regulates only federal agencies, but Section 9 forbids *anyone* from harming an endangered species. Since almost 80% of all listed species have some or all of their habitat on private land, Section 9 protections are an indispensable tool in our wildlife conservation toolkit. These protections have teeth, too. They specifically state that a person cannot kill,

(Continued on page 21)

Toolkit for Conservation.....continued from page 20

harm or harass an endangered animal (note: plants do not receive Section 9 protection), and that includes modifying the habitat on which the species depend for food, shelter, and reproduction.

Other tools that the FWS provides to landowners include Habitat Conservation Plans and Safe Harbor Agreements. These programs allow private landowners to coordinate with the FWS any activities landowners do on endangered-species habitat. If a species is accidentally taken during the course of approved activities, no consequences will ensue. Programs such as these are designed to allow landowners to maintain the value of their property and conservationists to protect endangered species residing on non-federal property.

Property rights advocates have been among the most vocal opponents of the ESA. One misconception that private landowners frequently have about the ESA is that when an endangered species is found to exist on their land, their property is transformed into public domain, and subsequently their property values will drop. However, having a tract of private property designated as critical habitat only means that Section 9 prohibitions against harming and harassing the species will apply. Property owners are still permitted to do whatever they want with their property, so long as it doesn't interfere with the survival of the species. Furthermore, property owners may apply for Incidental Take Permits (ITP) that will relieve them of any liability in the event a species is accidentally killed.

There are many opinions regarding the "problems" of the ESA. Many people cite lack of FWS funding to administer the ESA. Some say that it is incomprehensible to everyone but biologists; it is inflexible; it chooses animals over people; and procedures for designating critical habitat are flawed. Whether or not you subscribe to any of these opinions, if you believe in the precepts of sustainable ecology, you probably believe in the ESA — most people do. No matter what you believe, there are problems with the ESA, and there will be changes to it. The opportunity to make the ESA stronger or weaker or to repeal it altogether is now looming on the horizon. Politics at this level is not a stroll through the park; it can be confusing, frustrating, boring, and even corrupt. However, the ESA is one of the major frontlines in the conflict over our natural resources, and everyone should be involved.

As a flexible document of American democracy, the ESA is constantly undergoing revision. Many politicians today would have us revert to screwing with our fingernails and hammering with our boots, but a look around Loudoun County today should convince anyone that we need stronger and better tools in our conservation toolkit. For further information on the ESA go to <http://endangered.fws.gov>, and beware of those who say that your toolkit can be improved by taking your tools away.

Endangered vs. Threatened

A species designated as Endangered automatically receives all protections provided by the law from "take" which includes killing, harassment, collection, and major habitat modification.

A species designated as Threatened does not automatically receive these protections. By regulation, the Interior Secretary (or Commerce, if it is a marine species) extends prohibitions on take to threatened species but also retains the authority to issue a "special 4(d)" rule for threatened species, allowing some take to be allowed, including killing.

Resource: *Wildlife Tracks*, The Humane Society of the United States

Habitat destruction is the primary cause of imperilment for 85% of endangered species in the U.S., yet only one out of three listed species have critical habitat designations.

On-line toolkits for taking action are available at www.stopextinction.org.

Natural History Day Camps at Banshee Reeks

PEC and PRCS will once again sponsor Day Camps at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. The purpose of these camps is to give children the opportunity to explore and enjoy nature. Camp includes hiking, observing natural habitat, invasive plants, observing a variety of creatures and exploring the woods, fields, and pond and stream environments.

Camps for students entering grades 2 through 5, are June 28 to July 2 and July 12 to 16. The cost is \$110.00 per student.

Senior Camp for students entering grades 6 through 8, will be July 19 to 23 and includes one overnight. The cost is \$130.00 per student.

For more information, contact Helen deGroot at 540-338-4955 or Phil Daley at 540-338-6528.

Ode to Growth

*It's goodbye to the elms,
So long to the oaks,
We're tired of the maples
And lookin' for folks.*

*It's farewell to the cedars,
Those sycamores, too
The fruit trees and pines
You can now bid adieu.*

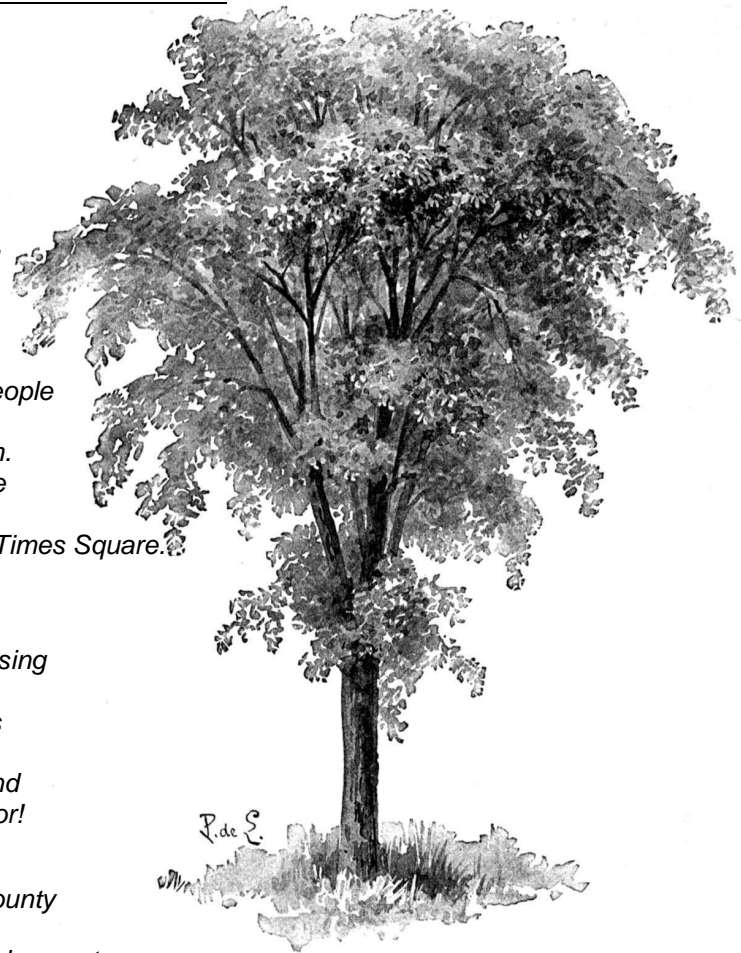
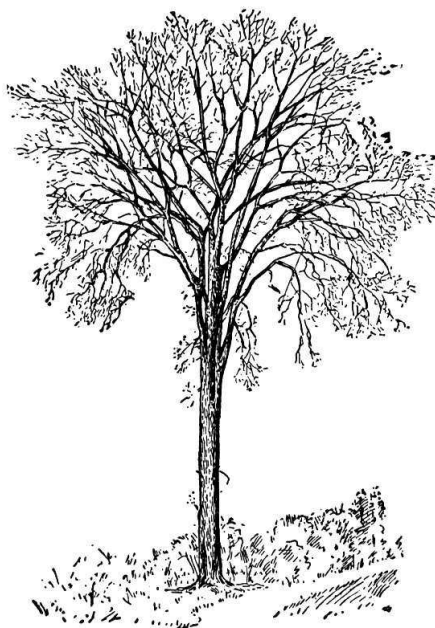
*What we need is more people
To side and abide with
To hide and be snide with.
Cramped spaces to share
We'll new be happy
Til Middleburg looks like Times Square.*

*So bring on the sewers
And tanks full of septic
The dumpsters, tract housing
And lawyers dyspeptic
Let's marshal the graders
The asphalt and more
We'll march 'cross the land
Through the West Corridor!*

*Adios to the farms
Their charms and their bounty
With luck in a decade,
We'll have paved the whole county.*

—Tam Stewart
Middleburg

The poem above was originally published in the January 22nd edition of the Washington Post as a letter to the editor and is reprinted with permission of the author.



LWC Needs YOU!

Members of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy can be proud of all we have accomplished since the organization was founded in 1995. With this solid foundation, the LWC Board is committed to increasing our membership and our impact on preserving and expanding wildlife habitat in the county. Rapidly growing development pressures demand nothing less.

To this end, the Board is seeking volunteers to help us in two critical areas:

1. We are blessed with a membership that is highly talented and committed. We need volunteers who will help us design and implement initiatives to better identify our members' talents and put them to good use in all of our activities. If you would like to discuss this opportunity, please contact LWC President Tom Bjorkman at (540) 882-3960 or TNBj@megapipe.net.
2. Our Stream Monitoring Program has been one of our most rewarding and successful activities. We are looking for volunteers to help re-energize and expand this program. If you would like to discuss this opportunity, please contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or phidaley@aol.com.

The following Board/Committee Chair positions remain unfilled:

Children's Programs
Membership

Programs (Assistant / Co-chair)
Stream Monitoring (Assistant/Co-chair)

YES, I want to become an LWC Member!

Membership Benefits Include:

- * Subscription to *Habitat Herald*
- * Volunteer Opportunities
- * Classes and Workshops
- * Regular Membership Meetings and Programs

Mail this form along with your payment to:

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
PO Box 2088
Purcellville, VA 20134-2088

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ E-mail _____

Please indicate your membership level:

(*membership runs from January 1- December 31)

☐ \$10 Student*

☐ \$30 Family*

☐ \$200 Individual Lifetime

☐ \$20 Individual*

☐ \$75 Corporate*

☐ \$300 Family Lifetime

☐ Additional Donation \$ _____

☐ Renewing Member

☐ New Member

Programs at a Glance

(see pages 5-8 and 13-14 for complete descriptions)

February

- 16 Winter Wonders (L)
- 17 Bluebirds (L)
- 21 Nature Interpretation (A)
- 26 Intro to Birds of Prey (L)
- 28 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)
- 28 Be a Wildlife Detective (A)
- 28 Beginner Bird Walk (A)
- 29 Macro-Invertebrate ID II (W)

March

- 6 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)
- 6 The Birds of Banshee Reeks (L)
- 13 Birding Banshee (L)
- 13 Beginner Bird Walk (A)
- 16 Living with Our Wild Neighbors (L)
- 16 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)
- 20 Salamander Spring (A)
- 20 Intro to Bluebird Nest Monitoring (A)
- 27 Beginner Bird Walk (A)
- 27 Amphibians (A)
- 27 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)

April

- 1 Macro-Invertebrate ID Review & Quiz (W)
- 2 Macro-Invertebrate ID Quiz (W)
- 3 Family Nature Walk (A)
- 3 Macro-Invertebrate ID I (W)
- 4 Protocol Practicum (W)
- 10 Who's Minding the Nest (A)
- 10 Animal Homes & Habitat (A)
- 10 Birding Banshee (L)
- 10 Macro-Invertebrate ID Review & Quiz (W)
- 20 Dashing World of the Hummingbird (L)
- 24 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)
- 24 Arbor Day at Banshee Reeks (L)

May

- 8 Celebrating Special Places: Birding (L)
- 18 The Chesapeake Bay (L)
- 22 Birding the Blue Ridge Center (L)

June

- 12 Birding Banshee (L)

A = ANS L = LWC W = Water Quality

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

P.O. Box 2088

Purcellville, VA 20134-2088

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