

Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Executive Director's Message *by Nicole Sudduth*



Nicole Sudduth

The Fate of Loudoun's Green Infrastructure

"Green infrastructure is nice, except when it interferes with development." How does that statement make you feel? It was said by one of the members of the Envision Loudoun Stakeholders Committee – people appointed by our Board of Supervisors to represent the interests of our community and help envision the future of Loudoun County. I applied to be on the Stakeholders Committee seeing that the environmental voice was not represented, but was denied a seat. At this point, it looks as though representation may not have mattered because the membership is so heavily weighted towards developers and developer interests. Yet, Green Infrastructure is a key asset that that makes Loudoun unique. It is our forests, floodplains, meadows and fields, views to the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains, streams and valleys that tie us to the Potomac and beyond. Green Infrastructure makes up the features that bring diverse wildlife species to our neighborhoods and give us places to walk, relax, explore and teach our children and grandchildren.

I don't know about you, but hearing these words "Green infrastructure is nice, except when it interferes with development," makes me angry. They represent a short-sighted perspective with an air of arrogance, or worse. Hearing these words makes me stand up and speak out. Loudoun Wildlife has prepared a draft Green Infrastructure Policy chapter for inclusion in the next county comprehensive plan. We built upon the previous Green Infrastructure Chapter and strengthened it. The County Planning Commission and Envision Loudoun team with backing from the Stakeholders Committee plans to strip all Green Infrastructure policies from the comprehensive plan and move them to the zoning ordinance. This is bad for us for a few reasons: First, it means that we will be left with just broad happy statements in the comprehensive plan that are open to wide interpretation by developers. We will not have any hooks to clearly define what should be saved in our Green Infrastructure or what is important to us as a community. Second, the zoning ordinance is easily and quietly changed by the group known as the Zoning Ordinance Action Group or ZOAG. This group is made up of developers, and based on the quote that led off this message, we know where Green Infrastructure lies in the list of developer priorities.

2018 is a watershed moment for Loudoun County. The comprehensive plan will decide which aspects of our Green Infrastructure are retained and which are destroyed in the name of development. I hope you will stand up and speak out, be visible, talk to your Supervisor, and mobilize your friends and neighbors to do the same. We need to be the voice for wildlife and the future of this county.

cover photos by Katherine Daniels (with one noted exception)

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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 monthly. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Nicole Sudduth.

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Conservation Advocacy Update *by Cheri Conca*

Loudoun County's New Comprehensive Plan: We Need Your Help!

If you ever wanted to participate in environmental advocacy but weren't sure where to begin, you have an opportunity to voice your opinions by attending the third and final round of Envision Loudoun public input workshops to be held in early 2018. Stay tuned for more information from Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy regarding dates, times, locations and talking points, and be sure to follow us on Facebook.

In conjunction with the Envision Loudoun process, Loudoun Wildlife and other members of the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition are exploring green infrastructure policies to recommend for inclusion in the county's new comprehensive plan, which will steer land use, growth and conservation decisions for decades to come. Our green infrastructure — or the interconnected network of forests, streams, meadows and wetlands that benefits both people and wildlife — protects our air and water quality and preserves our ecosystems. It is crucial that we conserve these natural assets.

Loudoun Wildlife participated in an Election Day initiative along with other groups and concerned citizens to raise awareness for the environmental and growth issues we face. Pollgoers who signed up will be informed about our concerns for the future of the county, and how they can help preserve our wildlife, wild places and open spaces by attending Envision Loudoun workshops.

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors to Vote on Rezoning for a Data Center on Goose Creek

A proposed data center along Sycolin Road in the County's Transition Policy Area would require rezoning in order to be built on a heavily forested land containing wood turtle habitat and a globally rare ecological community of mafic barrens, upstream from Loudoun's drinking water intake on Goose Creek.

Loudoun Wildlife opposes the rezoning because it is:

- 1) The wrong place for a data center: runoff from the data center's substantial quantity of impervious surface will negatively affect Goose Creek. Acres of pristine forest habitat will be destroyed, and wetlands impacted.
- 2) The wrong time: a decision of this magnitude should not be made before our new comprehensive plan is in place. If approved, the rezoning sets a precedent for ignoring our current comprehensive plan, which does not allow data centers in this location. Approval will pave the way for other data centers or light industrial enterprises to locate in the watershed. The cumulative impact of additional impervious surfaces and habitat loss is incalculable.

The Board of Supervisors will vote on whether to approve or deny rezoning for the data center at its January 18, 2018, business meeting at 1 Harrison St., SE in Leesburg. This is another great opportunity for our members to make an impact. Sign up to speak during the public input portion of the meeting, help us fill the audience to show support for denial of the application, or email your supervisor to voice your concerns.



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit

by Marion Constance

Some of us root for Peter Rabbit on his tales of adventure while many others side with Mr. McGregor, as he tirelessly tries to protect his garden from Peter and his family. Regardless of which side you are on, cottontail rabbits are abundant in our literature and our lands. Bugs Bunny, story book bunnies, rabbit holes and magic rabbits paint a picture of clever creatures with determination and proliferation in their bag of tricks.

The Eastern Cottontail Rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), which is native to and found abundantly around the eastern United States, has a reddish-brown to grey coat, and the small fluffy white tail that gives them their name. Not a very large species of rabbit, the Eastern Cottontail averages around 3 pounds, and can grow to 15-18 inches long. As herbivores, their natural diet consists of clovers, grasses, and broad-leaf weeds in the summer, and buds, twigs, and bark in the winter.

As for their habitat, Eastern Cottontails generally inhabit open spaces, meadows, and fields near wooded areas. Visible throughout the year, including the winter months as they don't hibernate, Cottontails are a diurnal species and are active during the day. However, if you want to spot one, its best to look during the twilight hours of dusk and at dawn when they tend to be the most active. This is also the time when mothers will feed their young.

Cottontails have many different indigenous predators, including foxes, coyotes, bobcats, hawks, and owls. Even domesticated dogs and cats will hunt rabbits. Being numerous, they are an ample and year-round food source. However, they have their own tricks to avoid being eaten. To survive to adulthood and reproduce, these rabbits use their coats as camouflage. When they stay still and low, their coats blend into the vegetation. If that is not good enough, a rabbit can bolt with speeds up to 18 miles per hour and run in a zig-zag pattern with its fluffy tail raised high to confuse the predator.

Eastern Cottontails mature rapidly and can live up to three years in the wild. They usually reproduce three to four times per year, with litters of three to eight. Without predators to control the population, they can become a nuisance.

When preparing for offspring, a mother rabbit first builds a nest. This is solely the female's task, as males are not involved with the nest or caring for the young. She digs out a shallow, narrow depression in grasses or under bushes where she feels safe. Sometimes nests can be found in the open and in yards. The nest is then lined with grasses and fur to keep the babies warm and protected. For added protection, the mother leaves the nest during the day to help keep predators away from her offspring. The mother Cottontail returns back twice a day, in the morning and evening, to feed her offspring. She continues to feed them until they are independent, about four to five weeks.

Some may look at the Eastern Cottontail as a nuisance and garden invader. However, these creatures can be beneficial to the ecosystem and helpful to our local habitat. From a personal viewpoint, I welcome Cottontails into my yard, as they enjoy eating dandelion weeds. Instead of using chemical weed killers, rabbits will do the work for me, while getting their nutrition and providing a food source for predators. If a balanced ecosystem exists and there are enough predators to keep the rabbit population in check, they are less of a nuisance.



Cottontail Rabbit
© Thienne Johnson



Cottontail Rabbit
© Olga Mendenhall



The Eastern Cottontail's diet of weedy greens helps ensure healthy meadows and open spaces, but unprotected gardens can be an inviting buffet. While sometimes a nuisance for gardeners, the rabbits can be prevented from eating vegetables and flowers by employing a few simple tricks. The best way to keep rabbits out of gardens is by using chicken wire. Placing the wire in a shallow ditch about 6 inches deep and high enough to protect plants will do the trick. I have also found it effective to use wire to plug holes in existing fencing to discourage rabbits. This also helps to deter other burrowing animals like groundhogs.

As a very common animal here in Loudoun County, the Eastern Cottontail Rabbit is a species that is important to the balance of our ecosystem, benefiting myriad other animals, including humans. Fortunately, our county still has some natural predators, which are vital for keeping rabbit populations in check and maintaining a balanced ecosystem, where rabbit populations stay at safe and stable levels. If we manage our habitats wisely, then gardens and garden creatures can co-exist and we can enjoy all that Cottontail Rabbits bring to our lives.

Resources

<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/rabbit/eastern-cottontail/>
<http://www.psu.edu/dept/nkbiology/naturetrail/speciespages/cottontail.htm>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/e/eastern-cottontail-rabbit/>
<https://www.welcomewildlife.com/all-about-the-eastern-cottontail-rabbit/>



Cottontail Rabbit
© Michael Mill

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."

Robert Swan

"Find your place on the planet. Dig in and take responsibility from there."

Gary Snyder



Layers for Wildlife

by Anne Owen, Audubon at Home Ambassador

High-rise condo with a view, cozy townhouse or single-family home — there are many different places that people choose to make a home, and the same is true for the wildlife in our backyards. By taking that into account as we add native plants, we can greatly enrich the variety of habitat available. Not everyone has room for tall trees, but taking a classic approach to layering plants such as using taller shrubs and perennials at the back of beds, with lower ones in the middle and low-growing ground cover at the front, will increase visual interest as well as provide a variety of niches for critters that need food, shelter and nesting sites to succeed.

Upper Story: Trees

We all know that many birds nest in trees, but the magnificent deciduous forest natives like oak, hickory and sycamore also provide home, food and larval host services to countless species of butterflies, moths and other insects that enable those birds to feed their chicks and raise their broods. In the canopy you will also find tree frogs, snakes, squirrels and so many more wildlife species that are essential to a balanced ecosystem. Trees may also support beneficial vines like Virginia Creeper, which add nesting places and food while providing us with wonderful fall color. Dead trees and snags are of great value to woodpeckers for food, and to Mason Bees for nest sites.

Mid Story: Small Trees, Tall Shrubs

Early flowering beauties like cherry and dogwood trees support the emerging early pollinator insects, and later provide berries for birds. But along with later-flowering shrubs like viburnums, they also provide essential cover for birds like chickadees, jays, wrens and kinglets to move about between food sources while avoiding predators such as hawks. Near feeders, it is very common to see a nuthatch or a titmouse dart in to pick up a seed, then retreat to the safety of a nearby branch to crack it open and consume the kernel. Bluebirds and flycatchers, like the Eastern Phoebe, like to make use of mid-level branches as perches from which to catch insects on the wing. The Redbud is also a preferred source of leaf matter for nesting Leaf Cutter bees.

Understory: Low Shrubs and Perennials

These may be the tallest plants that will fit into a small yard, but there is plenty of opportunity to layer low-growing shrubs like Virginia Sweetspire or Fragrant Sumac with pollinator favorites like bee balms, asters, goldenrods and coneflowers. St John's Wort is another favorite of Leaf-Cutter Bees for nesting. Native grasses, like Purple Love Grass, larval host to the Zabulon Skipper, can be a good addition in hot, dry areas, while ferns like the Cinnamon Fern can add an accent in moist areas, and birds love to use the fuzz covering the young fiddleheads as nesting material.

Ground Cover: Grasses, Sedges and more

Ground covers do more than just eliminate the need for unsightly mulch! Many birds forage on the ground, and a varied planting of low-growing plants can provide an excellent hunting ground, especially if you let leaf litter lay through the winter. Robins, sparrows and juncos will all appreciate the food and shelter from predators provided by plantings of clumping grasses like Purple Love Grass, or sedges like Pennsylvania Sedge. Broad-leaved Sedge hosts over 35 species of caterpillars, while the handsome Golden Ragwort attracts butterflies and bees, then provides seeds much loved by goldfinches.

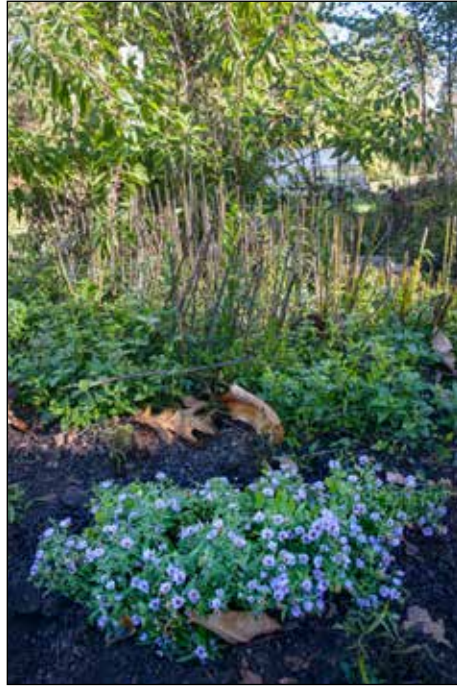
Bare Ground

Yes, even bare earth is a valuable habitat! 70% of bees in our area nest underground. Look for a small patch of compacted earth that catches the early-morning sun and is unlikely to be flooded, then just leave it bare — and you might well provide a home for a hard-working pollinator.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can provide habitat for wildlife on your own property and the Audubon at Home Program, please contact Ann Garvey, at agarvey@loudounwildlife.org for more information.



From the bottom, the layers are:
Perennial - *Yucca filamentosa*, Common Yucca
Grass - *Schizachyrium scoparium*, Little Bluestem
Shrub - *Callicarpa americana*, Beautyberry
Tree - *Betula nigra*, River Birch



From the bottom, the layers are:
Perennial - *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*,
Aromatic Aster, "October Skies"
Perennial - *Monarda didyma*, Bee Balm
Shrub - *Callicarpa americana*, Beautyberry



From the bottom, the layers are:
Perennial - *Symphyotrichum ericoides*, White Heath Aster
Grass - *Tridens flavus*, Purpletop
Tree - *Cornus florida*, Flowering Dogwood

*"What good is the warmth of summer,
without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."
John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America**

Short-Eared Owl Rescue Success

by Sharon Plummer



Short-eared Owl
photo by David Boltz

On October 19, 2017, Loudoun Animal Services got a call that an injured Short-eared Owl had been found in the parking lot of One Loudoun Mall in Ashburn, Va. The owl was carefully rescued by Officer Kelli Kleptach and Billy Rios, a raptor rescue expert. Rios then transported the feathered patient to Wild Vet Care for evaluation and treatment.

The owl had head trauma and a detached retina that had likely been caused by collision with a vehicle. Dr. Belinda Burwell of Wildlife Vet Care treated the owl's wounds and said the owl responded well and gained back vision in his injured left eye. They monitored his progress until it was determined that he had healed sufficiently to be released back into the wild. After the raptor passed a series of tests to prove he could make it on his own, his release was scheduled on December 2.

Several people from the community came to the "Release Party" at Blandy Experimental Farm to witness this little guy's return to the wild. That spot was picked both because it met the criteria for Short-eared Owl habitat and the species had been seen there before.

Dr. Burwell skillfully removed the owl from its crate and allowed the attendees to take a rare close look at this beautiful wild raptor before he was released. She carefully positioned the owl for takeoff and tossed him into the air, where he flew off with no hesitation.

Because this owl arrived ahead of schedule for the typical Short-eared Owl migration, it is suspected that he is from this year's hatch. Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) typically arrive in Virginia in early November. They migrate down from the Arctic tundra to spend the winter here, preying on mice and voles. These owls are frequently seen in the daytime and early evening, hunting in open pastures.



Short-eared Owl
photo by David Boltz

Their summer nesting grounds are in the far northern plains and tundra, where the female builds a nest by creating a shallow depression on the ground and lining it with feathers and grass. The male will bring food to her on the nest while she tends to the owlets.

Not all injured wildlife stories have a happy ending like this one, but thanks to the generous teamwork of the community, we have one more free wild neighbor to fulfill his niche in our intertwined environment.

Resources

<http://www.wildlifevetcare.com/>

<http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/short-eared-owl>

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Short-eared_Owl/lifehistory



Veterinarian Belinda Burwell has been rescuing and caring for wildlife for 30 years. She founded the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center hotline in 2000 to answer questions and offer help with wildlife emergencies, and then in 2004 opened the BRWC wildlife rescue center. In 2015, she opened Wildlife Veterinary Care to fill the need for wildlife rescue and stewardship in Northern Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland.

Dr. Burwell is a graduate of Duke University with a B.S. in Zoology, and received her Veterinary Medical Degree from Tufts University. The majority of her study at these institutions was Zoo and Wildlife medicine. She has been rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife since 1987 and is a Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator through the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. She also serves on the Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator Examination Board and on the Advisory Board of the Animal Rescue Fund. In addition, she is a Virginia Master Naturalist and Instructor.

WVC is a 501(c)3 organization — donations are 100% tax deductible. Please help us fulfill our mission to provide free veterinary care for injured and sick wildlife.

<http://www.wildlifevetcare.com>

*Rescued owl preparing for release
photo by David Boltz*



*Released Short-eared Owl
flying free again
photos by Tracey Robertson*



**Check out our new office location
within Morven Park**

The Gatehouse



Stand With Us: Your Membership Matters

In 2018, a significant focus of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will be on the county's efforts to create a New Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as the government's guiding document for land use and development for the foreseeable future. As we stand before our Board of Supervisors and other key decision-makers to advocate for the conservation of Loudoun's green infrastructure and vital habitats, we need to be able to say that we represent a significant number of people across Loudoun County. Your membership for 2018 is how we count you as someone who stands with us as the voice for wildlife. However, your membership counts in more ways than just one. Below are just a few of the ways we made an impact in 2017 with your support:

We gathered data, developed recommendations, and worked with partners to ensure our voice was heard at Envision Loudoun sessions and in meetings with county staff. Our main message: Loudoun's natural habitats are assets to be protected.

We assisted Lovettsville and Purcellville in taking the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, which resulted in these locales adopting Monarch Butterfly-friendly practices and committing to community outreach and habitat restoration.

We hosted dozens of free nature walks and programs that engaged youth and adults in learning about and valuing the great wild species and habitats across our area.

We trained people to be good stewards of our landscapes through the Audubon at Home program.

We returned to the Phillips Farm in Waterford to fortify a stream buffer with native plantings.

We worked with Loudoun County Public Schools to further integrate Monarchs into the curriculum and build Loudoun towards becoming the first school system in the country with a Monarch Waystation at every school.

Since our founding in 1995, your support has had a direct — and meaningful — impact on the work we do. Please continue to stand with us. Your membership matters.

Visit our website today to join, renew, or establish a gift membership for a family member or friend: <https://loudounwildlife.org/donate>. Contributions are tax-deductible, as allowed by law.



BRAVO

Congratulations to our President, Joe Coleman, for receiving the "Friend of the Mountain" Award from the Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains organization. Joe's tireless efforts to educate people about wildlife, lobby for habitat preservation and inspire action for the environment have made a truly significant difference to the landscape of our county.

Thanks, Joe!



SAVE THE DATE

APRIL 27, 2018

Join Loudoun Wildlife on a bus trip to
Mt. Cuba Center, Hockessin, Delaware

The mission of Mt. Cuba is to inspire an appreciation for the beauty and value of native plants and a commitment to support the habitats that sustain them. The gardens feature plants that are native in the Piedmont.

Details to follow - contact Ann Garvey ahgarvey@aol.com.



Nooks and Crannies — A Place for Families

Written by and for youth and families, this feature shines a light on the exciting perspective of our young nature stewards with an eye for things unseen, residing in the Nooks and Crannies of our environment.

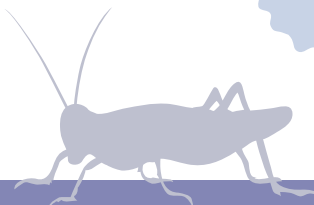


photos by Sarah Steadman

In 2017, Loudoun Wildlife touched thousands of local youth members in our work in the schools and through our programs such as:



Butterfly Count
The Magic of Moths
Jump in a Creek
Christmas Bird Count
Full Moon Nature Walk
Insect Safari



Teaching a child to

Discover Learn **Feel** Touch
Nature

is one of the most important things a citizen of this planet can do to assure our legacy continues.

Happy New Year to all of our young members.

WE'LL SEE YOU OUTSIDE IN 2018!



Programs and Field Trips

Space is limited for many of these programs and field trips. For up-to-date information on our programs and to sign up, visit our website at www.loudounwildlife.org. Unless otherwise specified, contact info@loudounwildlife.org with questions.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board Meeting — The board typically meets the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. All Loudoun Wildlife members are welcome. Contact Nicole Sudduth at nsudduth@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.

Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls — Saturday, January 13, 6 p.m., Ida Lee Park. Book signing, refreshments, and viewing of live owls followed by program at 7 p.m. To kick off 2018, join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a celebration of owls! As the main feature of this celebration, award-winning photographer Paul Bannick will present his new program featuring video, sound, and stories from the field while he teaches us about all 19 species of North American owls and the habitats they need to thrive. Paul uses intimate yet dramatic images to follow owls through the course of a year and in their distinct habitats. Audiences will witness the four seasons, as each stage in an owl's life is chronicled through rare images: courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of young in summer; dispersal and gaining independence in fall; and finally, winter's migration and the competition for food. His program shows how owls use the unique resources available to them in each habitat to face those challenges. Paul's book, *Owl*, is a stunning follow-up to his bestselling title *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, giving bird and nature lovers alike a gorgeous photographic tribute, engaging natural history, and a compelling call to preserve the habitats that sustain these most iconic of birds. Watch our website and email announcements for more details on this celebration! Registration required: Sign Up Online.

Searching for Birds of Prey — Sunday, January 28, 1:30 p.m. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a winter raptor search. We will drive the back roads of Loudoun County, with frequent stops to find and identify the many hawks, and an owl or two, who winter here. Space is limited, so please register early. Registration required: Sign Up Online.

Exploring Nature in Winter — Sunday, February 11, 1 – 4 p.m., Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy naturalists Phil Daley and Paul Miller on this family-friendly walk to discover and discuss how animals and plants survive the coldest months of the year. This will be a relatively easy walk, during which we will examine the trees, plants, animal signs, and insects we find along the trails, and hopefully discover some skunk cabbage poking its flower heads up through the mud and snow (a sure sign that spring is on its way). Enjoy a beautiful time to be out of doors in this magnificent setting! Directions can be found at www.brces.org. Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pedaley@verizon.net.

My Inordinate Fondness for Beetles — Saturday, February 24, 2 p.m., Stone Barn at Morven Park. Entomologist Arthur V. Evans is an author, educator, lecturer, photographer, and radio broadcaster who has had a long fascination with beetles. My Inordinate Fondness for Beetles is a colorful and engaging overview of Art's early entomological influences, his long-standing fascination with beetles, and the making of his book *Beetles of Eastern North America*. The program will also offer a sneak peek at Art's next two books, *Beetles of Western North America* and *Arizona Beetles*, accompanied by a colorful potpourri of his recent photographs of insects and other arthropods. This is a family-friendly event sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, and children over the age of 5 are encouraged to attend. Registration required: Sign Up Online.

Audubon at Home Orientation — Saturday, March 3, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., Watermark Woods Nursery, 16764 Hamilton Station Rd., Hamilton. The Audubon at Home program supports people who want to create and sustain native wildlife habitat in their own backyards, neighborhoods, schools, and other outdoor spaces. Audubon at Home Ambassadors make site visits and provide practical suggestions on three essential requirements for healthy habitat — shelter, water, and food — most of which may be provided by suitable native planting. You can become a trained Audubon at Home Ambassador by starting with this Orientation session, then accompanying experienced Ambassadors on site visits. Contact Anne Owen at aowen@loudounwildlife.org for more information and to sign up.

Woodcock Outing at the Institute Farm — March Date and Time TBD. Witness the incredible courtship display of the American Woodcock, one of our most fascinating avian residents. On this



Birding the Blue Ridge Center

Join us on the monthly bird walk at the **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES)**, a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. The property includes diverse wildlife habitats, including meadows, streams, and heavily forested slopes. Meet at the Education Center; bring binoculars if you have them. BRCES is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671); detailed directions at www.brces.org. Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Fourth Saturdays: January 27, February 24, March 24 at 8:00 a.m.



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy outing, we will watch and listen for the woodcock's "peent" at the Institute Farm near Aldie. *Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact Emily Southgate at ewbsouthgate@gmail.com.*

Vanishing Vernal Pools and the Amphibians That Use Them:

Indoor Class — Friday, March 16, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Location TBD. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Mike Hayslett of Virginia Vernal Pools for this popular program on vernal pools and other seasonal wetlands and their inhabitants. Through this classroom session, participants will learn where to find vernal pools in different settings, how other wetland habitats can function as vernal pools, the life cycles of local amphibians such as Spotted Salamanders, Jefferson Salamanders, and Wood Frogs, and insights into very special crustaceans called Fairy Shrimp. This class provides a great foundation for those going out into the field with us. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

Explore the Wonders of Vernal Pools! — Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy out in the field during a day or night hike as we celebrate and discover the different animals that use vernal pools and their surrounding forest habitats. Over the course of this special week, Mike Hayslett, Director of Virginia Vernal Pools, will lead us into these habitats, which truly come to life as spring takes off. We will look for Wood Frogs, salamanders, toads, Spring Peepers, Fairy Shrimp and more as Mike shares his knowledge of these important habitats, which vanish by summer. Meeting locations and other details will be provided to participants. Space is limited for each of these field trips. Fee per event is \$10 per person. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

Vernal Pools of the Blue Ridge Center, Our New State Park — Saturday, March 17, 10 a.m. – noon.

Amphibian Action Night: A Family Adventure at Morven Park — Saturday, March 17, 6 – 8:30 p.m., Morven Park.

Exploring a Globally Rare Wetland: Gum Farm — Sunday, March 18, 10 a.m. – noon.

Night Walk Exploring Vernal Pool Habitats at Horsepen Preserve — Sunday, March 18, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Private Vernal Pool Consultation with Mike Hayslett — Mike Hayslett has offered to give private vernal pool consultations to individual home owners, groups, and HOAs seeking to learn about the vernal pools in their community or how to construct a vernal pool in their yard. If you would like to engage Mike in this activity, please contact him to schedule and make arrangements. There may be a small fee for this consult. Each consultation will be approximately two hours. *Contact Mike at vavernalpools@gmail.com.*

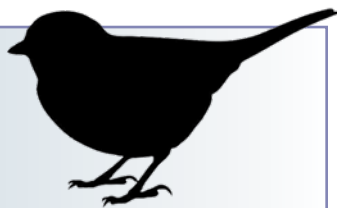
Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring Kickoff — Sunday, March 18, 2 p.m., Stone Barn at Morven Park. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy supports the Virginia Bluebird Society in setting up and monitoring nestbox trails across the county. By collecting information on native cavity nesters, we track population trends and learn about their lives firsthand. Karla Etten, Loudoun Wildlife's bluebird program coordinator, will offer an introduction to nestbox monitoring and the protocol used in Loudoun for collecting and reporting data. She'll also discuss bluebird nesting behavior, preferred foods, and habitat needs during her slideshow presentation. Individuals interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2018 season, or setting up a nestbox at home, are encouraged to participate in the kickoff. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

The Strange World of Fungi — Saturday, March 24, 2 p.m., Stone Barn at Morven Park. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Teta Kain for a program on the strange world of fungi. Did you know that the southeastern United States has the greatest variety of poisonous mushrooms of any place in the world? Virginia is home to a bewildering variety of mushrooms, bracket fungus, slimes, jellies, cups — the list goes on and on. Teta gets up close and personal with them, often lying flat on the ground to get a different perspective of these strange growths that spring up overnight in field, forest, lawn, garden, and just about any other place you can think of. She has amassed many stories about how people relate to fungi, how they get their strange names, whether they are edible, and what other uses they might have. She tells us that she is not an expert, but loves to photograph and study fungi — and she warns: "Don't eat my identifications!" *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

Attract Birds to Your Yard with Native Plants — Sunday, March 25, 2 p.m., Rust Library. Native plants bring birds — and beauty — to a landscape. Join local naturalists Sheila Ferguson and Gerco Hoogeweg for a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy presentation on how to use native plants to attract birds (and pollinators!) to your yard. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

Spring Native Plant Sale — Saturday, April 7, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., main parking lot at Morven Park. Native plants add beauty and interest to your garden year-round and provide important habitat for wildlife. Flowers, shrubs, trees, vines, and ferns will be available for purchase from a trio of Virginia-based vendors: Watermark Woods Nursery in Hamilton; Hill House Farm and Nursery in Castleton; and Nature by Design in Alexandria. The sale, sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, will be staffed by volunteers knowledgeable about native plants. Other community groups also participate, sharing information on how to support local wildlife. *Questions: Contact Danielle Dillion at ddillion@loudounwildlife.org.*

Birding Banshee



Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks for the monthly bird walk at the **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve** south of Leesburg. Because of its rich and varied habitat, it is a birding hot spot. Bring binoculars if you have them. *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

Second Saturdays: January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14 at 8:00 a.m.



Spring Wildflowers — Saturday, April 14, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Balls Bluff. Join John DeMary, well-known local naturalist and retired teacher, on a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy field trip to explore this beautiful wooded riverside park for the early spring wildflowers that enrich the Potomac River Valley. We will also watch for early migrating birds. If you own binoculars, please bring them. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*

Round Hill Tree and Pollinator Garden Plantings — Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is working with the Town of Round Hill to put in native plants and a pollinator garden and enhance the already existing natural habitats at their future Sleeter Lake Park beginning in April. Keep your eye on our calendar for the dates, and contact jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org if you want to assist with the planning of this project.

Mt. Cuba Center Bus Trip — April 27. Plan now to join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a bus trip to the Mt. Cuba Center, Hockessin, Delaware. Mt. Cuba's mission is to inspire appreciation for the beauty and value of native plants and a commitment to support the habitats that sustain them. The gardens feature plants that are native to the Piedmont. *Details to follow; contact Ann Garvey at ahgarvey@aol.com with questions.*

Contributions in Memory of Rockie Fera

Joe Coleman
Daniel and Judy Compton
Phil and Ellie Daley
Mark Davis
Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Gates
Ruann and Jack George
Gail Groy
EJ Herczyk
Bruce and Genie Hopkins
Tom and Trisha Horne
Dervila Jonas
Catherine Jozwik
Herbert Laine
Barbara Marshall
Ellen and Greg Murphy
Liz Parker
Barbara Benson
Carol Robinson
Stephen and Juli Seaman
Shenandoah Regional AACA
Janice Steele
Thomas and Claudia Sullivan
Anne Tiffany
John and Carolyn Unger
Alan and Sandra Winter

LONG-TIME MEMBERS WHO RECENTLY PASSED

Rockie Fera - September 2017

<http://www.loudounfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Francis-Fera/#!/Obituary>

Rockie was a renowned and highly respected educator, a tireless community volunteer, and an energetic advocate for the Thomas Balch Library and The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

During his 38-year tenure in education, he was awarded the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award (1989), opened several new middle schools in Loudoun County during critical years of growth, and had the Auditorium at Farmwell Station Middle School named after him.

He volunteered many hours of his time with Loudoun Wildlife to educate youth about our natural treasures in this area.

Marc Sagan - June 2017

<http://loudounnow.com/2017/06/14/marc-sagan/>

Marc was instrumental in helping the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Banshee Reeks in their early years. His invaluable advice and his knowledge of the natural world benefited everyone. Marc also volunteered many hours for both organizations and especially enjoyed giving classes on identifying and photographing dragonflies and damselflies.

Marc was the father of Loudoun Wildlife Board member Hatsy Cutshall.

Dirck Harris - August 2017

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?pid=186674276>

Dirck was a naturalist, hiker, cyclist, photographer and gardener who was an active member of our community. As a member of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, he built a Certified Monarch Waystation, Certified Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary, helped with bird counts, butterfly counts and was an expert on dragonflies.

Stanwyn G. Shetler by Joe Coleman

It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Dr. Stanwyn G. Shetler from his son, who wrote: "he was a man of many accomplishments who achieved a goal so few are able to claim; he left the world better than he found it." Stan was a very special person who had a tremendous impact on a lot of people (more than I think any of us realize).

His interest in natural history began with bird-watching in the sixth grade; ornithology was a lifelong avocation. Stan earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Cornell University. He went to work at the Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution, in 1962 directly from graduate studies at the University of Michigan, where he subsequently earned a PhD degree in systematic botany. He spent his whole professional career at the Smithsonian before retiring at the end of 1995. Beginning as an Assistant Curator, he rose to serve as Associate Director and then Deputy Director of the National Museum of Natural History. His publications number well over 100 scientific, technical, and popular titles, including three books and the Annotated Checklist of the Vascular Plants of the Washington-Baltimore Area. His books include the popular *Portraits of Nature: Paintings by Robert Bateman* (1986), which accompanied a Smithsonian exhibition by the same title organized by him in 1987.

Dr. Shetler was program director of the international Flora North America Program. The data produced from this project was among the first in the world to document the climatic phenomenon now known as global warming. He served on the board of the Piedmont Environmental Council and the board of directors of the Audubon Naturalist Society, including several years as president. He was a charter member of the Virginia Native Plant Society, and served on the state board of directors as Botany Chair for many years. He taught plant identification courses for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School off and

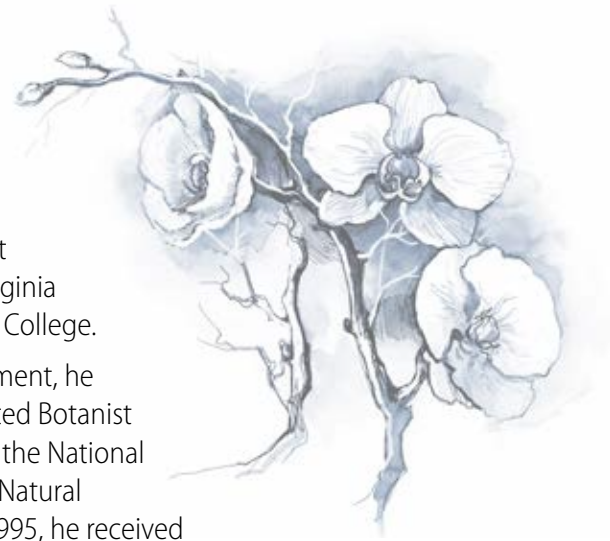
on since 1963, and in the 1980s and 1990s at Northern Virginia Community College.

Upon retirement, he was appointed Botanist Emeritus by the National Museum of Natural History. In 1995, he received the Paul Bartsch Medal, which is the Audubon Naturalist Society's top award for contributions to natural history and conservation. In 1988, at the invitation of the Chautauqua Institution, he presented the featured lecture at the celebration of the late Roger Tory Peterson's 80th birthday. He received the Piedmont Environmental Council's Individual Award for Contributions to Environmental Improvement in 1981 for his role in drafting a Vegetation Preservation Policy for Loudoun County.

And while doing all that, Stan contributed extensively to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. He gave many programs (I'll never forget his wonderful and incredibly accurate imitations of warbler songs) and led numerous field trips for us. Those of us who attended these field trips and programs not only learned a lot about the natural world, but were able to share his love of its wonder and diversity.

The boards I was on with him always valued his advice, and when he wasn't there I frequently quoted him. His gentle, unassuming manner and his vast knowledge of the natural world, people, and nonprofits was invaluable to many of us. He will be sorely missed.

Joe Coleman



Legacy

We are eternally grateful for these leaders, who left their mark on our lands.

They cared, they shared and they took action.

*Our lands and county residents, whether human, feathered or furred
have benefited from these diligent citizens.*



*People and Wildlife
Living in Harmony*

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
P.O. Box 1892
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*Willowsford Farm Tree Walk
photo by Jim McWalters*

Volunteer with us!

Put down your phone for a while and get out and play.

Join in our fun, rewarding adventures.

We need someone to:

- 🍃 lead activities for Habitat Restoration
- 🍃 help plan events
- 🍃 write grants.

Join us in making a real difference in our community.

Contact Kelly Senser at

ksenser@loudounwildlife.org for more info.