

Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Winter 2019



JK's Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary

by Sharon Plummer

Our dream of preserving a precious piece of habitat is becoming a reality.

JK's Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, formerly referred to as Stumptown Woods, is one of our key projects for 2019.

Our organizational vision statement for the property: "Forever preserve and enhance the globally rare wetlands at JK's Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary as a wildlife sanctuary by protecting the sensitive vernal pools, unique geological setting, and the rich amphibian and wildlife populations. Additionally, to serve as a model and catalyst to conserve adjacent lands and to create an ecologically significant sanctuary for the conservation and study of native wildlife."

We visualize an outdoor classroom, possibly with a network of trails and raised boardwalks over the rare wetlands and through the eastern forest of Black Oak, White Oak, Black Walnut, Chestnut Oak, Red Hickory, Scarlet Oak, Black Gum, Black Cherry, and Red Maple. This rich forest houses an extensive network of wildlife, including salamanders, frogs, turtles, raptors, songbirds and too many others to list.

Our project still needs support from the community, so that together we can preserve this living treasure for perpetuity. To support the acquisition and future maintenance of the sanctuary, please make a donation at any time on our website or mail a check to the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Please note in the memo or message line that the donation is to support JK's Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.

If you wish to make a larger donation or want more information, please contact our executive director, Michael Myers.

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Photo by Sierra Plummer



Executive Director's Message

Last year included a lot of firsts for Loudoun Wildlife, and this year promises even more firsts for our organization. The last few months have flown by as I've been learning about our organization, meeting new faces and learning new places. My enthusiasm and excitement for leading Loudoun Wildlife continues to grow, and I'm very excited for 2019.

There are a few announcements I would like to highlight. Starting with this issue, we will have a new publication schedule for the *Habitat Herald*. It will still be published quarterly, only the dates have changed. The new publication dates will be February for Winter, May for Spring, August for Summer and November for Fall.

We have been working with Chuck Kuhn of JK Moving to purchase an 87-acre parcel of land outside of Lucketts that has been previously referred to as Stumptown or Stumptown Woods. In combination with input from Chuck and members of the community, we have officially named the property JK's Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. This name draws upon the historical context of the property and nearby area, and we feel it aptly represents the property and our plans for it.

We will be hosting our Wine for Wildlife fundraiser at the Sycamore House in Willowsford on Friday, March 22. We hope to see you there!

We have been busy behind the scenes working to grow our organization — our outreach, our programs, our impact and our membership. So we look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events or activities!

Happy Trails,
Michael

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The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a nonprofit 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 Joe Coleman.

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Envision Loudoun Update *by Cheri Conca*

Early in 2019, Loudoun County's Planning Commission will make its final tweaks to the draft 2040 comprehensive plan before submitting it to the Board of Supervisors for approval. The comprehensive plan presents Loudoun's vision for its future and will guide land use, transportation and housing for years to come. Citizens and local groups, including the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC), which represents over 40 nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations, and the Coalition of Loudoun Towns (COLT), comprised of the county's seven rural mayors, have expressed concerns over the new plan. LCPCC held two community meetings with panel discussions regarding the draft plan, with more discussions planned for early 2019.

The draft plan sounds good on the surface, but compared to the county's current plan, it strips and weakens protection for the environment while facilitating development. The current Revised General Plan establishes green infrastructure as the framework for all land use decisions, green infrastructure being the connected network of streams, trees, wetlands, slopes, meadows and limestone that work together as a system to provide valuable functions such as stormwater management, air filtration, and biodiversity. Unfortunately, the inclusion of green infrastructure as a planning tool is on the chopping block in the draft plan.

Using green infrastructure as the framework for land use means the county should first identify what is important to conserve and enhance, and then plan homes, businesses and roads around those irreplaceable natural features. The draft plan not only removes the concept of green infrastructure as the framework for land use, but it also proposes an additional 22,000 homes on top of the 48,000 that are already planned. Much of that housing would be built in a narrow strip of the county known as the Transition Policy Area (TPA), which separates the suburban eastern part of the county from the rural west. The TPA is home to three drinking water reservoirs, and an abundant variety of resident and migrant birds and other wildlife.

The good news is that some sustainability policies have been added to the draft plan. As the final draft is crafted, it is important for planners to recognize that environmental and economic sustainability go hand in

hand. Without conservation of our wild places, it will be harder to attract businesses and tourists. Degradation of natural assets leads to higher "gray infrastructure" costs, including the construction and maintenance of stormwater systems. Loss of forested areas, wetlands and meadows that soak up floodwaters and retain water during droughts reduces resilience to costly weather-related damages. Insufficient natural open space affects residents' health and well-being. As the push to maximize opportunities for commercial and residential development increases, so should the demand for conservation of irreplaceable natural assets. In other words, the plan needs balance in order to be sustainable.

The Board of Supervisors recently approved funding for a pilot conservation easement program and will explore a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to preserve land. While the county's current Revised General Plan includes these conservation tools, planners should consider adding policies to the draft plan that would allow for additional tools, such as bond referendums and stormwater utility fees to fund purchases of environmentally valuable land.

Acknowledging that land use, conservation, sustainability, economic growth and public health are interconnected, Loudoun Wildlife advocates for a plan that integrates green infrastructure planning throughout, a plan that includes:

- Reinstatement of green infrastructure as the framework for all land use decisions.
- Actions to identify and map stream corridor lands and key parcels for conservation.
- Native plant policies for roadsides, county facilities, development and redevelopment, and riparian buffers.
- Increased stream buffer protections.

Franklin D. Roosevelt exemplified the interconnectedness of land use and quality of life when he wrote that "Forests are the 'lungs' of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people."

SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 3 p.m.

LOUDOUN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY ANNUAL MEETING



Every year our Annual Meeting gives both members and anyone who is curious an opportunity to find out what the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has accomplished during the past year and what is planned for the upcoming year. This year's speaker is our area's local naturalist, environmental educator, highly entertaining storyteller and Capital Naturalist, Alonso Abugattas. In addition to Alonso's presentation, there will be a short business meeting, some awards, and refreshments.

Book Review: *The Feather Thief* by Kirk Wallace Johnson

Review by Steve Allen

In the second half of the 19th century feathered hats were all the rage. This passion for plumage resulted in the slaughter of millions of birds for use in the millinery trade. Beginning in the 1890s, groups of women banded together and formed Audubon Societies to protest the senseless killing of egrets and other birds. Their protests were highly successful and feathers quickly went out of style. Many of the organizations they created continue to protect birds today.

At the same time that women were enjoying their feathered hats, men had found another use for exotic feathers: creating salmon flies. Unlike trout, which will only hit artificial flies that resemble the insects they are eating at the time, salmon are not eating at all when they come upriver to spawn, and instead will attack any lure that appears to be a threat to their eggs. In Victorian England it became fashionable for men to use all sorts of exotic brightly-colored tropical bird feathers to tie beautiful salmon flies.

The federal government eventually became concerned about the killing of birds for their feathers, and largely put an end to the feather trade in America. The Lacey Act was passed in 1900, making wildlife smuggling a crime; the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 protected all of the native birds of North America; and the U.S. later joined the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), which expanded the protection of threatened international species.

Unfortunately, some men did not get the message. *The Feather Thief* by Kirk Wallace Johnson is an engrossing true-crime exploration of the culture of enthusiasts trying to maintain the salmon fly-tying tradition, and one man who took this obsession too far.

The Natural History Museum in Tring, England, an annex to the British Museum, contains one of the great collections of world birds, including more than 750,000 bird skins. These specimens

include Charles Darwin's Galapagos finches and the tropical birds collected by Darwin's contemporary Alfred Russell Wallace in several trips to the Malay Peninsula.

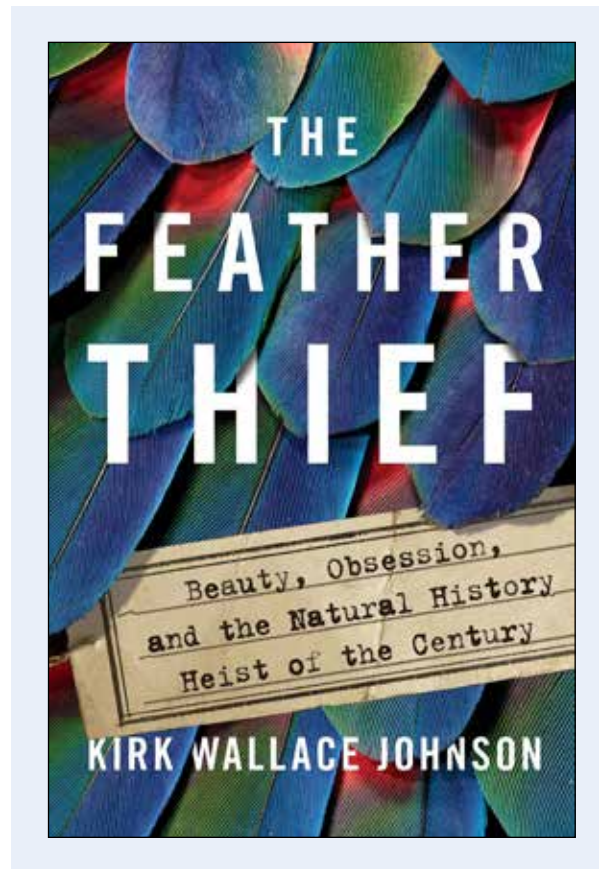
This collection was too tempting for Edwin Rist, an up-and-coming classical flutist and world-class salmon fly-tier from upstate New York. In England studying the flute in 2009, Rist plans and executes the feather-heist of the century, breaking

into the Tring and stealing 299 exotic bird skins, many collected by Wallace, then selling individual feathers, pieces of carcasses and some whole birds. Despite his efforts to conceal that he was the source of all these feathers coming on to the market, Rist is identified, charged and convicted of the theft. Without revealing too much, his sentencing is a travesty owing to some clever lawyering and the failure of the English judicial system to take seriously the theft of 100-year-old bird carcasses.

The Feather Thief is equally a story of Kirk Wallace Johnson's obsession. Recovering from injuries incurred during a stint as a civilian worker in Afghanistan, he learns of the theft while salmon fishing in New Mexico, and soon decides to infiltrate the world of salmon fly-tying and solve some of the lingering mysteries. He interviews fly-tying hobbyists, museum and law enforcement

officials, possible co-conspirators, and finally Rist himself. The greatest mystery is that even after Rist's conviction, only a small fraction of the stolen birds have been sold or recovered. Armed with a list of the stolen specimens, Johnson sets out to recover the large trove of missing feathers.

The Feather Thief is several books at once: a history of the search for evidence of evolution by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace, the story of the Tring Museum, an account of the hobby of salmon fly-tying, a tale of obsession, and a true-crime page-turner. Always captivating, sometimes infuriating, *The Feather Thief* is great fun and a great read.



Birding in the Wet: The 22nd Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

by Joe Coleman

Wet is the best way to describe this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC), as were most of the CBCs in our area. A few days before the Central Loudoun count 120 people were signed up to participate, but with constant rain in the forecast that dropped to 92. The day of the count began with rain but let up about 9 a.m. for a few hours. During that short time and in spite of many trails being closed because they were impassable, the birds came out, and when the day was over we had tallied 92 species and 28,870 individuals, about average for both.

The day's sightings included two species never before observed on this count: seven Trumpeter Swans seen and photographed on a pond in Aldie, and a Cape May Warbler seen and photographed a little north of Leesburg. Other rare species that have only been seen once before on this count were a Cackling Goose and a juvenile Iceland Gull. The latter was seen at the consistently productive county landfill, along with two Great Black-backed Gulls and three Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Because it wasn't observed on the day of the count, the Baltimore Oriole visiting a feeder in Lincoln isn't part of the 92, but since it was seen the days immediately before and after the count it is considered a Count Week bird.

The 37 Bald Eagles observed on this count has only been topped once before, and the 17 American Kestrels seen was the highest in the past five years. Two teams, fewer than usual, found all seven of the woodpecker species that overwinter here. Other highlights were the 500 Common Mergansers seen on the Beaverdam Reservoir, as well as two Common Goldeneyes found elsewhere.



Cape May Warbler
Photo by Russ Taylor



Trumpeter Swans
Photo by Linda Millington



Photo by Kristen Rhodes

Always interesting are the major decreases for some species in the count. For the second year in a row none of the teams found an Eastern Meadowlark, and very disturbing was the small number of Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice. Last year's 321 Carolina Chickadees was the smallest number in 10 years but considerably larger than this year's 126. And this year's 57 Tufted Titmice was the first time this species has been found in only double digits. Hopefully both are aberrations and their numbers will increase in the near future.

The 30 people who turned up for the Tally Rally shared stories about what we'd found and missed and enjoyed a great and filling meal catered by Mama Lucci's. Everyone was excited as Spring Ligi described and showed some sample pages of the upcoming *Birds of Loudoun County: A Guide Based on the 2009-2014 Bird Atlas*, which should be printed and available for purchase in the next couple of months. The number of copies we decide to print will determine its price, but it will probably be between \$30 and \$40. We are looking for sponsors to offset the printing costs, and anyone who donates \$75 or more will receive a copy.

To see our totals and how they compare to previous years check out <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/bird-counts/christmas-bird-count/>.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy thanks the many participants as well as the numerous landowners who gave us permission to visit their properties. Without both, this count would not be possible and we wouldn't have this snapshot of what is happening with birds in Loudoun in early winter.

Hope to see you next year — it's not too early to pencil December 28, 2019, in your calendar!

THANK YOU!

Supporting Biodiversity in the Soil Food Web

by Nan McCarry, Audubon at Home Ambassador

We often read in these pages about planting for wildlife habitat. But we might not often think about supporting the living “soil food web” that exists in the top few inches of soil. This biodiverse food web is the key to healthy soil that, in turn, provides many ecosystem services to humans — and to the rest of the ecosystem.

The soil food web is driven by the primary producers, plants, which capture the sun’s energy and convert it to carbohydrates through photosynthesis. When leaves fall or plants die, they are decomposed by the primary consumers, fungi and bacteria. Nutrients and carbohydrates remain in the soil or in the microbes’ cells and are available in forms that plant roots can absorb. Certain soil bacteria perform the important job of converting atmospheric nitrogen into forms that plants (and the animals that eat them) can use. Another kind of bacteria, the Actinomycetes, have long filaments called hyphae and look more like fungi. They also help decompose organic matter and they give off that wonderful “earthy” smell of turned soil.

Secondary consumers, such as protozoa, nematodes and arthropods, eat the fungi and bacteria. These secondary consumers in turn are eaten by many other organisms. At each level, nutrients and energy sources are released into the soil through excrement or the death of the organism. The end product of decomposition, called humus, is

a complex, negatively charged substance that holds onto positively charged nutrients that plants need, such as calcium, magnesium and potassium.

And then there is the symbiotic relationship between fungi and roots known as the *mycorrhiza* (from the Latin *myco* for fungi and the Greek *rhiza* for root). Both partners benefit from this relationship. The fungal partner gives the roots access to water and nutrients, especially phosphorus, that they could not reach otherwise. The root partner gives the fungi carbohydrates. There is a huge mycorrhizal network under a forest, and scientists have discovered that trees send chemical signals to each other and even share nutrients through these networks. Some of these mycorrhizal relationships are as old as when plants first colonized land more than 400 million years ago. This is something to think about every time we remove vegetation or soil. It takes a long time to build the complex symbiotic relationships that drive ecosystems, and such a short time to sweep them away.

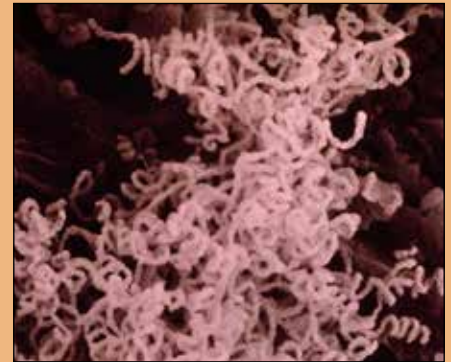
The soil food network provides what we call “ecosystem services.” Some of these have already been mentioned: converting nitrogen from the atmosphere, decomposing dead plant matter and recycling nutrients that are also needed by the above-ground food webs. Soil organisms also build good soil structure by binding particles together into cookie-



Earthworm contributing to her part of the soil ecosystem
Photo by Nan McCarry



Supporting the soil food web with leaves and other organic matter
Photo by Nan McCarry



Actinomycetes
Photo by Nan McCarry



Mushrooms thrive in rich, moist soil
Photo by Nan McCarry



What we see above-ground is evidence for the complex web of networks functioning below-ground
Photo by Kirsten Rhodes



Decomposers are an important element to rich, living soil
Photo by Nan McCarry

crumb-sized aggregates. Perhaps the most important ecosystem service that healthy soil performs is to capture and clean water. The movement of organisms like earthworms and ants through the soil creates pore spaces for air and water. Healthy soil should have 25% water and 25% air along with 45% mineral particles and 5% organic matter. We want our soil to be like a sponge, able to absorb rainwater and let it infiltrate into the soil rather than running over the surface and carrying silt and pollutants into waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. When water infiltrates slowly, soil bacteria can actually break down pollutants such as pesticides and sequester the molecules from them.

How can we support the amazing soil food web that performs these ecosystem services? The most important thing we can do is to feed the microbes by adding organic matter to the soil. Organic matter refers to anything that is or was alive. In nature, organic matter comes from falling leaves and dying plants. In our human-impacted landscapes, we need to add mulch or compost and leave our grass clippings and leaves in order to feed the soil food web. (If you add organic matter and it seems to disappear, that's probably because earthworms are pulling pieces of it down into deeper levels of the soil. You can see an example of this at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3wsUYg3XV0>). Another reason to add organic matter is that it protects soil from being eroded away.

Another important thing we can do is to avoid compaction. The result of forces bearing down on the soil, compaction pushes soil particles together so that there are fewer pore spaces for air and water. Avoiding

compaction is one of the most important things we can do in our yards. Many things cause compaction, such as driving on the soil, especially when it is wet, and removing organic matter, which allows heavy rain and other impact forces to cause greater compaction. We should also avoid tilling. Plowing and rototilling break up the soil food web and destroy soil structure. Whenever gardeners need to kill existing vegetation, the recommended method is to cover it with mulch or cardboard instead of tilling. Finally, even letting grass in the lawn grow longer between mowings can be good for the soil food web. When we cut the grass short, the roots also stay very short. Plant roots create pore spaces for water to infiltrate more deeply, and whenever they die they too are decomposed by the microbes.

It can take 500 years for nature to produce an inch of topsoil. Soil is crucial for wildlife and for human civilization. All of us need to do everything we can to protect and support the soil food web in our yards and gardens.

If you would like to find out more about the Audubon at Home program and providing habitat for wildlife on your own property, please contact Anne Owen at aowen@loudounwildlife.org.

Resources:

Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis, *Teaming with Microbes: The Organic Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web* (Timber Press, 2010).

James B. Nardi, *Life in the Soil: A Guide for Naturalists and Gardeners* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007).

<https://landscapeforlife.org/soil/support-the-soil-food-web/>
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/soils/health/biology/?cid=nrcs142p2_053868

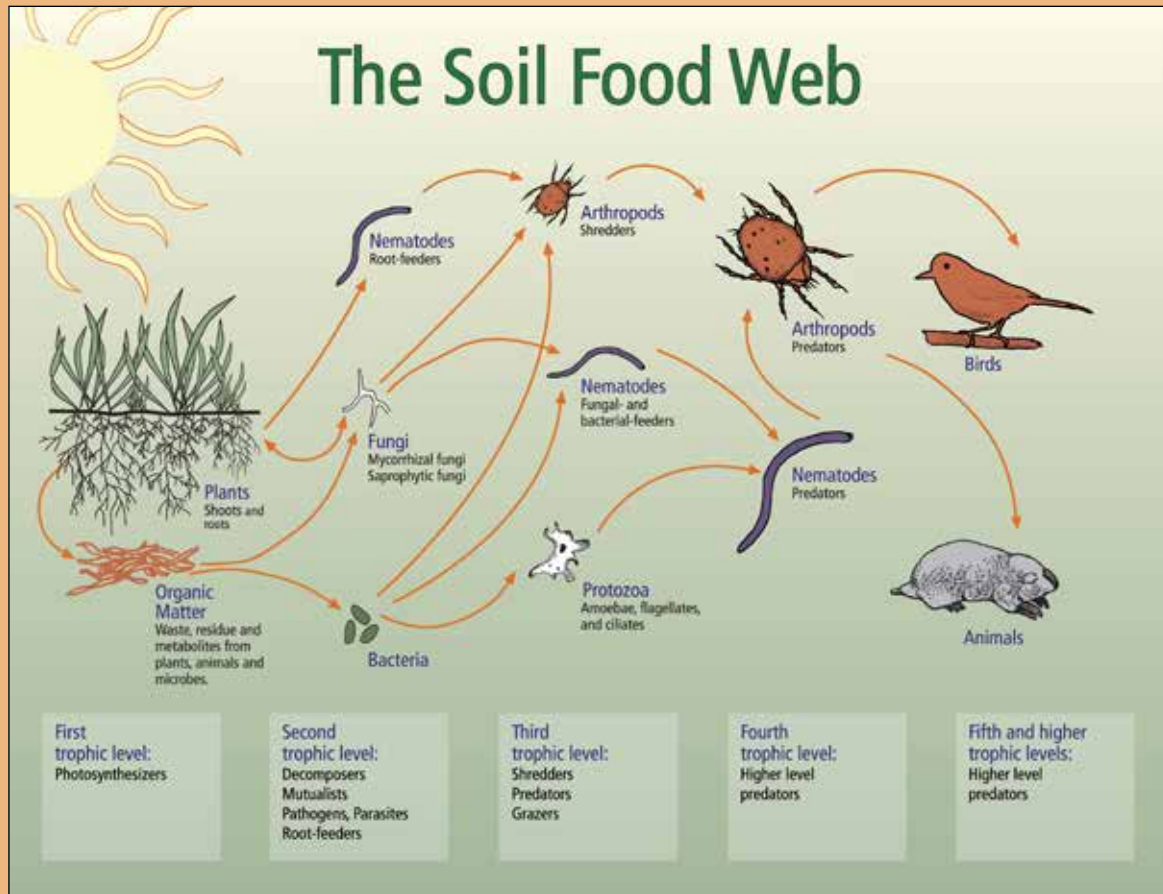


Chart by National Resources Conservation Service USDA

Bird Lovers: The Wait is Almost Over!



Photo by Liam McGranaghan

A Birds of Loudoun book showcasing the results of the 2009-2014 Loudoun County Bird Atlas will be available for purchase at a celebration event in early spring. The book includes 261 species accounts with stunning photographs and distribution maps, along with great places to bird throughout the county and information on which birds are thriving and which need our help the most. Visit <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/bird-counts/bird-atlas> for more details and a link to become a sponsor, helping to offset publication costs. All sponsors donating \$75 or more will receive a copy of the book. Any questions can be directed to Spring Ligi at sligi@loudounwildlife.org.

VDOT Median Mowing

On December 4, 2018, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a measure for the county to investigate how much it would cost to supplement VDOT mowing responsibilities along medians and roadsides. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has some concerns about this undertaking.

Nicole Sudduth, the previous executive director, along with other local leaders, had worked diligently with local and state VDOT officials since 2015 to create more wildlife-friendly mowing practices in medians throughout the Commonwealth. An agreement was reached with VDOT to restrict mowing to the edges of medians throughout the summer, waiting to mow until November — after most pollinators have completed their life-cycles for the year. Not only does not mowing provide benefits to pollinators, it promotes motorist safety, reduces maintenance costs and improves roadside aesthetics. VDOT officials recognized that there were not any downsides to mowing reduction. Since this practice has been implemented, the results have been positive.

The benefits to reduced mowing practices are plentiful. Unmown medians might not look “well kempt” to the untrained eye, but they are important habitat for pollinators throughout the summer and into the fall. Allowing native grasses and wildflowers to grow provides food and homes for bees, butterflies and other insects that are necessary for the sustainability of plants, including nearby agricultural crops. Roadsides and medians also provide linear connections of habitat that appeal to wildlife. Pollinators are an essential component to the global food web, and the health and success of pollinators is crucial to human health.

These medians also include vital milkweed habitat for Monarch butterflies, which originate and migrate through Loudoun County in the fall every year on their way to Mexico. Native plants growing in medians reduce invasive weeds, which lowers the need for herbicide or pesticide spraying. Native plants also provide better weed and soil erosion control than non-native grasses.

Economically, not mowing the medians benefits the agricultural economy by providing habitat for species that pollinate crops, and it puts less stress on state budgets. Increased mowing would only waste taxpayer dollars. Instead we could focus on educating our residents about the importance of pollinators, and how these medians are increasing the quality of life for both humans and wildlife.

We know our 1,000+ members appreciate seeing wildflowers blooming throughout the spring, summer and fall in our medians and along our roadsides. The benefits have been scientifically studied, and they are numerous, while the negatives are mostly uninformed opinions of natural landscapes looking “messy.”

The Xerces Society offers a wealth of knowledge on the benefits of managing roadsides for pollinators that can be found here: <https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-roadsides/>.



One factor in the success of the Bee Pollinator Habitat Project in Ohio was the level of public support it engendered. A highly visible location was chosen, with signs informing drivers of what was happening. (Photograph courtesy Ohio DOT.)



Winter Hiking

by Emily Cook

When the temperatures begin to drop and the summer clothes get packed away, most people tuck outdoor activities right into that storage box with them. Thinking it's too cold, too windy, or that winter hiking may not be as rewarding as a hike through the fall color or spring greenery, many people snuggle up, hunker down and put their hiking plans on hiatus. What they don't know is that with the right planning and preparation, winter hiking can be quite beautiful and even somewhat addictive.



Photos by Jennifer Cardwell

People typically assume that winter hiking requires much more preparation than it does in warmer weather. This is actually not the case. When you consider that a summer hike requires sun protection, hydration, proper nutrition on longer hikes, and protection against insects and overheating, preparation for a chilly or snowy hike can actually be a bit simpler.

While you still have to take similar precautions to ensure you are adequately protected from the elements and have the necessary supplies for an enjoyable hike, there are a few things that are often not considered. For example, one of the best things about winter hiking is that your excursion will be insect free. Nothing can make a hike more frustrating than being the first on a trail on a warm spring morning and having to clear the spider webs from your face as you go. The summer foliage has also died back, which means no wading through waist-high grasses where you can pick up hitchhikers like ticks, a very real concern here in Virginia. And I don't think I even need to mention those bothersome mosquitos, who swarm onto your exposed skin the moment you stop to take a sip of water. Also, your chance of contacting poison ivy, oak or sumac is substantially reduced, since the bright, shiny greenery dies back during colder months and there are no leaves fluttering along the trail's edge or brushing against your clothing.

Outerwear for a winter hike should incorporate dressing in layers, preferably wearing a wicking under-dressing so that you do not become damp from sweat and can strip down when you begin to warm up. You still need to ensure that you have adequate hydration and sun protection just as you would during the summer. Despite the cooler temperatures, you can become overheated, dehydrated or sunburned, as the sun can be quite strong on a clear winter day.

A winter hike can be a calming, serene experience. With the trees bare, the views become unobstructed. Suddenly the mountain peaks in the distance are visible and the fields appear more expansive and open. It is easier to spot wildlife, and during a snow there is a crispness in the air and a crunch underfoot that is cathartic and rejuvenating.

So now that you're convinced a winter hike is for you, how do you prepare?

- Make sure to bring plenty of water.
- Wear layers so that you can strip down as you go when the temperature warms up.
- Wear appropriate footwear, including warm, comfortable socks.
- Go early! Remember that daylight is limited in winter months, so it's best to get an early morning start.
- Bring along nutritious snacks.
- Wear sunscreen! Yes, you can get sunburned during the winter, too.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from that intense winter sun.
- Bring a map of your trail. It's easy to get lost when you're unfamiliar with the landscape — and sometimes even when you are!
- Pack a flashlight, extra batteries, a whistle and a signal mirror, as well as a small first aid kit in case of emergency.
- Bring a walking stick or hiking poles.

Where should you go? The following website lists a number of top winter hikes throughout Virginia: <https://blog.virginia.org/2017/01/15-winter-hikes-virginia/>. The hikes profiled on the site range in distance and fitness level. You can also just hike right along your neighborhood trails, up Sugarloaf or Old Rag Mountain, or along the C&O Canal, which is lovely any time of year.

Hiking is a wonderful way to enjoy the beauty of our natural world, and it doesn't need to be limited to a certain time of year. So bundle up and explore. You might see things from a whole new perspective.

Resources:

<https://www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/your-national-park-guide-hiking-winter>

<https://www.shape.com/fitness/tips/benefits-hiking-in-winter-enjoy-trails>

<https://blog.virginia.org/2017/01/15-winter-hikes-virginia/>

<https://matadornetwork.com/notebook/10-tips-for-safe-and-comfortable-winter-hiking/>



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 Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.

Exploring Nature in Winter — Saturday, February 9, 1 – 4 p.m., Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Join naturalists Phil Daley and Paul Miller on this 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). We will enjoy a beautiful time to be out of doors in this magnificent setting. Find directions at www.brces.org. *Registration required. Questions: Contact phildaley40@gmail.com or 540-338-6528.*

A Seasonal Garden & Meadow Tour in 2019. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has partnered with Susan Abraham of Conservation Landscapes for a series of garden and meadow tours in Waterford. Join us as we walk through each site discussing the seasonal aspects of these gardens and meadows, designed and planted with native species and conservation principles in mind. These tours will allow you to watch the sites unfold over time, revealing the true nature of each. Light refreshments will be served. Join Ann Garvey and Susan Abraham in their meadows on:
Saturday, February 16, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, May 11, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, August 10, 9 a.m. to noon
Saturday, October 12, 9 a.m. to noon
Fees: Series \$75 members, \$100 non-members. Individual sessions \$20 members, \$30 non-members. Limit: 15 for the series, 5 for each individual session. *Registration required. Questions: Contact Ann Garvey at agarvey@loudounwildlife.org.*

Waterfowl of Loudoun County: Class and Field Trip — Thursday, February 28, 7 – 9 p.m., and Sunday, March 3, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Winter brings a good variety of attractive waterfowl to Loudoun County, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is offering a class and field trip by Bill Brown so you can get to know these beautiful creatures. The class will be an indoor presentation covering the basics of waterfowl biology, identification, molt, migration and breeding (location TBA). The field trip will visit several local hotspots where we should find many of the species that regularly visit the county. We will have spotting scopes so that everyone can get close-up looks at these beautiful winter visitors. Limit 15. Fee: \$15 members and \$25 non-members. *Registration required.*



Birding the Blue Ridge Center

The Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES) is a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. With its diverse wildlife habitats, including meadows, streams and heavily forested slopes, BRCES draws a wide variety of birds and other creatures. Come and see what's there! 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: February 23, March 23, April 27 and May 25 at 8 a.m.

Birding Banshee



Whether you're a beginning birder or an expert, you'll be dazzled by the many bird species you'll find at the **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve** south of Leesburg. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Friends of Banshee Reeks for the monthly bird walk at this birding hot spot. Bring binoculars if you have them. *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

Second Saturdays: February 9, March 9, April 13 and May 11 at 8 a.m.

Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring Program Kickoff — Saturday, March 2, 2 p.m., Brambleton Library. Karla Etten, coordinator of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's bluebird monitoring program, will provide an orientation on nest box monitoring and the protocol used in Loudoun for collecting and reporting data. She will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails being monitored around Loudoun, and take us through a slide show about bluebirds, their nesting habits, habitat needs and preferred foods. The discussion will include tips about gardening for bluebirds as well as using natural cavities and nest boxes. A typical nest box system with predator guards will be set up for demonstration. Participants interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2019 season can sign up during the meeting. Those interested in monitoring a home nest box or trail and providing data to Loudoun Wildlife can register their trails/boxes during the meeting as well. *Registration required.*



Helping Your Stream Through Citizen Science — Sunday, March 10, 2 p.m., Chapman DeMary Trail, Purcellville. Healthy streams and waterways support a wide range of native flora and fauna. The stream running through your neighborhood is vitally important to ensuring that our larger tributaries such as the Potomac River and Goose Creek remain healthy to sustain a diverse wildlife habitat. Local streams can, however, become impaired by urban runoff and development. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a stream-side demonstration and discussion examining how citizen science surveys can help assess local stream quality. You will see how to conduct biomonitoring surveys. You will have a chance to look at data and at aquatic creatures. We will discuss how the data is analyzed and how it can be used to improve our streams. At the end, you may sign up for a spring survey, led by one of Loudoun Wildlife's citizen science stream monitoring teams. Limit 20. *Registration required.*

Woodcock Outing at the Institute Farm — Tuesday, March 12, 7 – 8:30 p.m. Witness the incredible courtship displays of the woodcock, one of our most fascinating avian residents. On this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy outing, we will watch and listen for the woodcock's "peent" at the Institute Farm near Aldie. Date is subject to change depending on presence of woodcocks in the area. Limit 15. *Registration required. Questions: Contact Emily Southgate at ewbsouthgate@gmail.com.*

Writing in Nature — Saturday, March 16, The Gatehouse at Morven Park, 2 p.m. We are drawn to nature to discover parts of ourselves lost in the busy-ness of life. In this workshop, we will take a walk through Morven Park to find out what interests, intrigues and attracts us. Through writing we will begin a conversation about a few of our favorite things encountered on the walk. Ann Garvey will lead the walk; Nancy Morgan will guide our writing efforts with prompts and much encouragement. We'll hear the poems of Wendell Berry and Mary Oliver. This session promises to illustrate the health benefits of nature and writing. Writing journals provided. Dress for outdoor weather. Limit 12. Fee: \$20 members and \$30 non-members. *Registration required.*

Wine for Wildlife — Friday, March 22, 6:30 – 10 p.m., Sycamore House, Willowsford, Ashburn. Join us for an evening of fun and a chance to mingle with wildlife guests in support of wildlife and wildlife habitat in Loudoun County. This fundraising event for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will be hosted by Loudoun Wildlife and Willowsford Conservancy. For the price of

admission, enjoy two complimentary beverages, appetizers, exceptional local entertainment and wildlife ambassadors in beautiful Sycamore House at Willowsford. Wines from several local vineyards and wineries will be available for purchase. You will also be able to participate in a silent auction that has something for everyone! *Purchase tickets online.*

Spring Native Plant Sale — Saturday, April 6, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., Morven Park right BEFORE the main parking lot (17263 Southern Planter Lane, Leesburg). A landscape alive with birds, butterflies, bees and other animals is the sign of a healthy environment. Piedmont native plants thrive in Loudoun and offer the added benefits of their beauty and value to the ecosystem. Enhance the biodiversity and success of your landscape with native plants available at the sale. Flowers, shrubs, trees, vines and ferns will be available from Watermark Woods Nursery, Hill House Farm and Nursery, and Nature by Design. *Questions: Contact Ann Garvey at agarvey@loudounwildlife.org.*

Spring Wildflowers — Saturday, April 13, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Balls Bluff. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a 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. Limit 15. *Registration required.*

Celebrate Birds, Go Birding! Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to celebrate bird migration, one of our planet's greatest wonders! From late April through early June, millions of birds journey north from their wintering grounds. Some of these birds will stay and nest in our area, but many will only stay long enough to feed and replenish their strength before heading further north. As a result, it is possible to observe over 100 species of birds in a single day. To celebrate this phenomenon, Loudoun Wildlife invites you to join one of our bird walks at hotspots throughout the county. We also invite you to either sponsor one of our teams or participate in our Birdathon sometime between April 27 and May 12 — the peak of migration in our area. How many species will our intrepid birders find? Would you like to join them? Support your favorite birding team or start your own. Registration required for all walks. To sign up for a walk, visit our calendar at loudounwildlife.org/events. *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

For up-to-date information on our programs and to sign up, visit our website at www.loudounwildlife.org.

Photo by David Boltz



**"The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem it will avail us little to solve others."
Theodore Roosevelt**



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
P.O. Box 1892
Leesburg, VA 20177

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Wine for Wildlife



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**Friday
March 22,
2019**

**6:30-9:30pm
Sycamore House at
Willowsford
23595 Founders Drive
Ashburn, VA 20148**

**Wine
Auctions
Raffles
and more**



For sponsorships contact jborneman@LoudounWildlife.org