

Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XXV, Issue 1

Winter 2020



Nature Play:

Conserving the Wild Life of Our Children



by Meghan Goldman, Youth and Family Program Coordinator

Until recently, outdoor play was a central part of almost everyone's childhood. Whether it was playing games in the street, playing pretend in overgrown bushes, or playing explorer in the woods, this unstructured and make-it-up-as-you-go play was a staple of our childhood.

Today, with widespread concerns about safety and the ever-increasing number of "enrichment" activities for children, outdoor free play is quickly vanishing from the lives of most U.S. children. This dramatic shift is having a significant impact on children, but it's also a slow-moving crisis for the conservation movement.

Charlie Tierney, Abby Mae Edwards, Kate Weller, Belle Ours, and Max Ours cross a stream at the Chapman DeMary Trail during a Dec. 29 playdate led by Loudoun Wildlife's Play Rangers with Purcellville Parks and Recreation. Photo by Amie Ware/Purcellville Parks and Recreation

When it comes to the effect that nature play has on child development, the evidence is astounding. Research shows that the diverse and dynamic environment of outdoor natural spaces is one of the best for healthy child development, offering children stimulation in all their developmental domains. This stimulation lays the foundation for acquiring new skills and abilities, and is critical to healthy development. Think of the sensory experiences of feeling the wind blow, walking on uneven surfaces, and collecting rocks from a stream. Without experiences like these, children are no longer able to develop their cognitive, physical, or creative abilities as quickly or as easily as they once did.

In addition to the effect on individual child development, the loss of nature play is also a threat to the future of the conservation movement. Research from around the globe shows that nature play

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Executive Director's Message

This is a big year for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we celebrate our 25th anniversary. In addition to our annual Wine for Wildlife gathering on Friday, March 27, we are planning a variety of events to celebrate our 25 years. Throughout the year, we are planning get-togethers at local breweries, wineries, and other locations to celebrate our successes and look forward to the future. These fundraisers are an opportunity for us to connect with members and to introduce new people to Loudoun Wildlife. We are planning a more formal 25th Anniversary Gala (details to come) in the fall. We look forward to seeing you at these gatherings.

We're also looking forward to taking ownership of JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. This effort has been years in the making, and we are excited for what the future holds. We are working on setting up a trail system that will enable us to take groups out onto the property, including volunteers who will study and collect data on amphibians, birds, flora, and other fauna.

Spring is right around the corner, bringing an extra dose of bird programs to Celebrate Birds! Migration gives us a glimpse of many species that pass through Loudoun County, and our programs help give you a closer look at them. Along with our birding field trips, we host our annual Birdathon in May. It brings together teams of birders for a friendly competition to see who can identify the most species in a 24-hour period and who can raise the most money for Loudoun Wildlife. Donate to one of our existing teams or start your very own Birdathon team. It's easy to get started with your family, friends, scouts, and many other groups. You can help us Celebrate Birds!

It's also going to be a big year for our advocacy team. There are new members to the Loudoun Board of Supervisors and many new appointments to commissions, committees, boards, and advisory boards. It is important to educate these groups on the importance of the wonderful natural assets we have here in Loudoun County. And we are continuing our vital work with the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition to advocate for more effective ordinances during the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite process. As always, we're looking for volunteers to get into the weeds with us to help strengthen protections for the environment.

As Loudoun County grows, we're looking to engage and inspire more people to get actively involved in protecting, preserving, and restoring wildlife habitat here. Together, we can have a positive impact on Loudoun's future!

Happy trails,
Michael

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Design: Katie Shupe, Chroma Imaging, Herndon, VA

Printer: Mr. Print, Purcellville, VA

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Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a nonprofit 501c3 organization that inspires, motivates, and engages people to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat in Loudoun County. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board meets bi-monthly. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Julie Borneman.

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Volunteers Plant More Natives for Wildlife at JK Black Oak

by Michael Myers, Executive Director

While we haven't yet taken ownership of the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary in Lucketts, we have already begun stewardship projects on it. Our largest, to date, was on November 2, when 92 Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteers planted 260 native trees and shrubs there. The purpose of this project was to enhance the ecological value and habitat for amphibians and other wildlife by linking a vernal pool in an open field to the mature forest on the property.

It was a beautiful, cool, sunny morning that was perfect for planting trees and shrubs. It's always great to see so many members and volunteers come together to actively participate in the conservation of healthy wildlife habitats.

The project was sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, with assistance from Loudoun County, the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Lucketts Ruritan Club, and was made possible by the help of volunteers from CarMax Cares, Leesburg Daybreak Rotary Club, Lucketts Elementary School Rudy Youth Service Club, Lucketts Ruritan Club, Northwest Federal Credit Union, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, and the general public. It was the first of many stewardship projects that we will manage within the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.

We are currently in the process of purchasing JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary from Chuck Kuhn of JK Moving Services. Last year, Chuck placed the property under a conservation easement that will be held by the Land Trust of Virginia, ensuring that the globally rare wetlands will be protected from development in

perpetuity. Chuck is selling the property to us at a conserved value, making it possible for us to be stewards of this property.

Our vision is to preserve and enhance JK Black Oak Wildlife

Sanctuary by protecting the property's sensitive vernal pools, its unique geological setting, and the rich amphibian and wildlife populations. Additionally, the sanctuary will 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 look forward to completing more stewardship projects like this volunteer tree planting to enhance the natural features of the property while engaging the public in habitat restoration efforts.

We also plan to work with local students and adults to conduct citizen science projects studying amphibians, birds, butterflies, and other species on the property — as we do elsewhere throughout the county. We are very excited at the prospect of completing the plethora of programs we have planned for the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.

Funding for this property acquisition has been made possible by a grant agreement with The Nature Conservancy and generous individual donors. However, we still need assistance to ensure we

have the necessary funding to complete future stewardship projects on the property. Please help us steward this beautiful and valuable property by making donations at <https://loudounwildlife.org/black-oak/>.



The 92 volunteers planted 260 native trees and shrubs at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg



The November plantings will help protect a vernal pool that is currently surrounded by an open field at JK Black Oak. Photo by Jackson Borneman



The team of volunteers planted 260 trees and shrubs, including this Sassafras sapling. Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg



Highlights of this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) included a Peregrine Falcon, similar to this one photographed last year.

Photo by Liam McGranaghan

December 28: A Great Day for Counting Birds

by Joe Coleman, Birding Coordinator

A Peregrine Falcon, a Merlin, lots of Ravens and Bald Eagles, record numbers of woodpeckers, and Rusty Blackbirds within a large flock of other blackbirds were the highlights of December 28, the day of the 23rd Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count.

The 124 participants, the second highest number of people participating in this count, had a beautiful day for bird spotting. While the day began at a nippy 31 degrees, it was sunny with calm winds all day, with the temperature hitting a balmy 63 degrees. While the 88 species seen were a little below our average of 92, the number of individuals observed, 42,239, was among our highest.

The Peregrine Falcon seen at the landfill was only the third we've had on the count. While the Bald Eagles at the landfill made the many gulls nervous, the falcon not only caused all the gulls to flush, they remained unsettled until it left.

The 39 Bald Eagles and 49 Common Ravens were also highlights, especially when you consider that we didn't find a single Bald Eagle three out of the first four years of the count and usually only a Raven or two. And while we didn't set any records with owl numbers, we did find a good number, especially in the area immediately north of Leesburg.

We had record numbers for five of the seven woodpecker species found here in the winter: 84 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 441 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 135 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 239 Downy Woodpeckers, and 102 Pileated Woodpeckers.

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*Hermit Thrushes like this one, spotted at Rust Nature Sanctuary during the count, are seen in Loudoun County only in the winter.
Photo by Matthew Felperin, NOVA Park Naturalist*



December 28: A Great Day for Counting Birds, continued from page 4

And, as always, one of the count's highlights wasn't a bird but a Lion's Mane fungi found by the team in the Philomont area.

The 35 people who turned up for the Tally Rally shared stories about what they'd found and missed, and all enjoyed a great and filling meal catered by Mama Lucci's.

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

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, 2020, in your calendar!



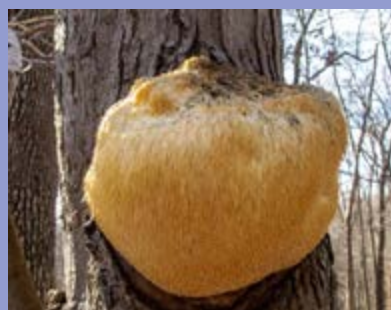
This American Robin was spotted at Rust Nature Sanctuary during the CBC. Photo by Matthew Felperin, NOVA Park Naturalist



Carolina Chickadees sighted during the count included this one observed at the Rust Nature Sanctuary. Photo by Matthew Felperin, NOVA Park Naturalist



This Cedar Waxwing was seen at the Rust Nature Sanctuary during the CBC. Photo by Matthew Felperin, NOVA Park Naturalist



One team discovered this impressive Lion's Mane fungus in the Philomont area. The fungus has culinary and medicinal uses. Photo by Anne Owen



Audubon at Home Program Helps Homeowners Help Wildlife

by Anne Owen, Coordinator, Audubon at Home

There have been some truly shocking reports in recent years of steep declines in insect and bird populations. A 25-year study of flying insects in nature preserves across Germany showed an astonishing 76% decline in biomass. We all know that a car journey in the summer months no longer results in a windshield smeared with squashed bugs. New research published in the journal *Science* reported a nearly 30% decline in wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada since 1970.

Each of us has the opportunity to make a difference by managing our own outdoor spaces in a way that supports native wildlife here in Loudoun County. That's where the Audubon at Home (AAH) Program comes in: Our trained volunteer AAH Ambassadors can provide information and practical recommendations to get started on establishing and nurturing healthy habitat for native wildlife.

AAH's approach focuses on the three things that wildlife needs to thrive — water, food, and shelter, for protection, survival, and to raise young. We also recognize the need to provide these things throughout the year to support the various life-cycle stages. For example, we see fireflies for just a few short weeks in the summer, but for the rest of the year they need habitat (undisturbed fallen leaf litter) for their eggs and larvae to develop and grow.

A key part of the AAH mission is to advocate for the use of native plants. Our local native wildlife has evolved alongside our native trees and plants, and they have developed many wonderful adaptations to coexist. Around 70% of native bee species are specialists that can only use the pollen and nectar from specific native plants. In turn, those plants are dependent on those specific bees for pollination. So, to preserve the diversity of native bee species, we need to ensure the diversity of the native plants on which they depend. Similarly, it's well known that the charismatic Monarch butterfly can only use milkweed for its caterpillars, but many other butterflies and moths also need specific plants for reproduction. In turn, many of our breeding birds are dependent on caterpillars to feed their chicks — a single pair of chickadees needs between 6,000 and 9,000 to feed a single brood! Native plants really do form the basis of healthy habitat.

On the other hand, there are a number of non-native plants that have escaped into our environment and now grow so vigorously



Native plants turn this townhome's backyard into wildlife habitat. Photo by Anne Owen

that they crowd out native plants and offer little in the way of nourishment to wildlife. Some of the most common in our area are Japanese Honeysuckle, Autumn Olive, English Ivy, and Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*). AAH Ambassadors can help identify these plants and offer ways to deal with them.

The Audubon at Home Program is open to residential and commercial properties, homeowner associations, schools, places of worship, parks, and other potentially sustainable wildlife habitats, both public and private. Our goal is for each property

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No space for a traditional wildlife garden? Try planting natives in pots as this homeowner did. Photo by Anne Owen



Audubon at Home, continued from page 6

to become a Certified Wildlife Sanctuary. There are three simple requirements for certification.

- Your property needs at least two critical habitat features — a source of water, a pollinator garden, a meadow, or a rain garden.
- You need to sign our Healthy Yard Pledge that you will use good practices in managing your property for the benefit of wildlife, for example, minimizing the use of artificial pesticides and fertilizers.
- You need to observe at least 10 of our “Sanctuary Species” on your property. These are species that breed in Loudoun and are in need of assistance to continue to thrive in the face of rapid development in the county.

We will be delighted to hear from you, whatever the size of your property — from a balcony to many acres — and also whether you feel that you already qualify as a Wildlife Sanctuary or are just starting out on the journey to support Loudoun’s wildlife.

To find out more about Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s Audubon at Home Program and to download an application form, please visit: <https://loudounwildlife.org/2016/12/wildlife-sanctuary-program/>.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a partner with the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia to deliver the Audubon at Home program in our area.

Join Us March 27 for Wine (and Art) for Wildlife

by Michele Savage

You can help the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy raise funds to fulfill its mission by raising a glass or two Friday night, March 27, at beautiful Sunset Hills. The vineyard will be the setting that evening for this year’s Wine (and Art) for Wildlife, a new spin on the popular annual fundraiser.

What’s new? Loudoun Wildlife has teamed with the Loudoun Arts Council and the local arts community to offer a unique silent auction during the event, featuring birdhouses customized by local artists. Several of these one-of-a-kind birdhouses are on display at Cascades Library in Sterling.

As always, the evening also will include local entertainment by musician Gary Smallwood, local wine, and lots of fun.

Tickets for the 6:30-9:30 pm event are \$50, available online at LoudounWildlife.org.

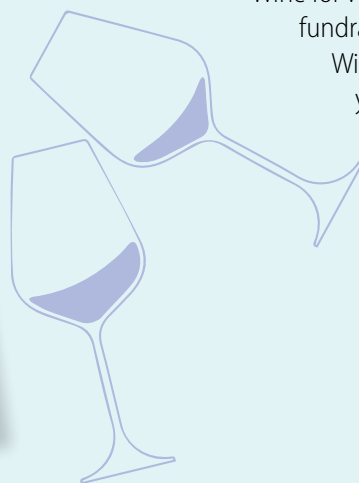
Sunset Hills Vineyard is located off Berlin Turnpike at 38295 Fremont Overlook Lane, Purcellville.

Opportunities are still available for local businesses or individuals to become sponsors of Wine (and Art) for Wildlife. Contact Julie Borneman at jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org for sponsorship information. Loudoun Wildlife is a 501c3 organization, and your donation may be tax deductible.

Wine for Wildlife is an important fundraiser for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Last year’s event at Willowsford in Ashburn raised more than \$11,000, all to support Loudoun Wildlife’s work to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat in Loudoun County.



Several birdhouses customized by local artists — including these by Crystal Mills, left, and Carmen Barros Howell, on display at Cascades Library in Sterling — will be auctioned off during Loudoun Wildlife’s Wine (and Art) for Wildlife on March 27. Photo by Michele Savage





Emma's Story: The Making of a Stream Monitor

by Emma Lloyd with Amy Ulland

I have always enjoyed exploring around my grandparents' wooded stream outside of Hillsboro and finding crawfish and minnows. Until recently I didn't know the diversity of life that existed in that watery ecosystem.

program and become certified to monitor my grandparents' stream!

My mom and I helped Loudoun

Wildlife monitor a part of Tuscarora Creek, which allowed me to experience all parts of the stream-monitoring process, from collecting critters to using a cool phone app to submit our data to VA SOS (and eventually the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality). That's when I understood that not only was stream monitoring

Emma Lloyd, 12, and her mother, Amy Ulland, are Loudoun Wildlife stream monitors.

fun, it was useful and important. I was a citizen scientist!

Next we attended a VA Save Our Streams all-day training session at the Izaak Walton League outside of Leesburg. During this session, we learned that the quality of the data that certified stream monitors collect is of equal value to that of professional scientists. We became skilled in identifying the different

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Emma searches for macroinvertebrates on leaf debris removed from a stream. Photo by Amy Ulland

Last year, during a homeschool biology lesson, I gently turned over some rocks in a small stream bed and used a net to catch whatever might be hiding beneath. I sifted through the debris with tweezers and discovered a dark-colored creepy creature about two inches long with large pincers on its head, which we identified as a *hellgrammite*. I had found my first benthic macroinvertebrate, or bottom-dwelling aquatic animal without a backbone that can be seen with the naked eye. I was hooked!

This past fall I went to a "Catch and Count Creek Creatures" program with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy at the Chapman DeMary Trail in Purcellville. I learned that collecting, identifying, and counting these "macros" can provide us with an indicator of a stream's health. I also found out that I could sign up to volunteer to help monitor the health of different streams around the county with the Conservancy. However, the most exciting part was realizing that I could participate in an upcoming Virginia Save Our Streams (VA SOS) Stream Monitor



Emma takes the temperature of a stream's water. Photo by Amy Ulland



The Making of a Stream Monitor, continued from page 8

benthic macroinvertebrates that we would likely encounter and learned the appropriate procedures to follow when monitoring a stream. Then we went out to a stream site in Leesburg and put our knowledge to use. After passing two exams from VA SOS, I received an email telling me that I was now a certified stream monitor!

Before I started monitoring my own site on my grandparents' property, I wanted a little more experience working with another certified stream monitor. So my mom and I helped monitor two segments of Goose Creek with Christian Bongard of the Goose Creek Association. After that, I felt a lot more confident and ready to begin working at a site of my own.

My grandparents gave us permission to monitor their stream twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. We packed up our supplies and headed over to find a suitable place to begin our research. We found an easily accessible spot that contained a riffle, or shallow, rocky-bottomed area where the water moves quickly. Riffles are important because the movement of the water adds oxygen to the water, allowing the macroinvertebrates to thrive, and the rocks provide shelter for the macros and areas for them to gather food.

My grandfather and I worked together to collect the minimum of 200 creatures we needed for an accurate sample.

We scoured the collection net, looking for any sign of movement, and carefully inspected any leaves and twigs where critters like water pennies and stoneflies like to hide. Then we sorted

our findings into sections of an ice cube tray

I had previously filled with stream water, which allowed us to more easily identify and tally our collection. We then submitted our findings through the app on my mom's phone. I was happy to discover that my grandparents' stream was in relatively good health!

We'll be back to monitor the stream again in the spring, and we'll be inviting a few volunteers to help us. In the meantime, we're participating in the Izaak Walton League's Winter Salt Watch project for my site. I'm also working on creating a PowerPoint presentation about stream monitoring for a 4-H competition. I think it's important to let others know how rewarding and important this kind of citizen science can be!



Emma, accompanied by her grandfather, Borge Ulland, uses a net to collect specimens from the stream she monitors on her grandparents' property in Hillsboro. Photo by Amy Ulland



Volunteers including Emma, seated, take part in a Virginia Save Our Streams training workshop at a stream in Leesburg as part of their stream monitoring certification. Photo by Dawn Merritt/Izaak Walton League of America

Links:

Join a Loudoun Wildlife Stream Monitoring Team: <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/stream-monitoring/>

Virginia Save Our Streams: <https://vasos.org/>

Izaak Walton League's Save Our Streams: <https://www.iwla.org/water/save-our-streams>



Nature Play, *continued from page 1*

in childhood is the single most common influence in forming a lifelong commitment to conservation values. When children play in a wild space day after day, they form an emotional connection with that place. Children today aren't getting the chance to form this personal attachment with natural spaces, even though they are learning impressive amounts of ecology facts through formal education. Since conservation is fundamentally about behaviors, and research shows that human behaviors are driven more by emotions than by knowledge, getting children to personally connect with nature is essential.

At Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, we've been working hard to address this issue, to intentionally restore opportunities for local children to have unstructured play in nature. But as you might expect, it's not easy to have a structured program that's focused on promoting frequent unstructured activities. We've found that a healthy approach includes planning for three things: the right kind of place, the right kind of play, and the right kind of re-play.

The right kind of place for nature play is land that isn't too protected, and is wild in a child's eyes. While adults may think of the wild as being found only in places like wildlife sanctuaries or national parks, children's worlds are tiny, and to a child the wild can be as simple as an overgrown portion of the backyard. It's important to remember as well that kids need to be free to interact with the land by doing things like digging holes, catching insects, or creating hideaways. And even though children's nature play rarely does a substantial degree of ecological damage, care should be taken to avoid spaces that have sensitive species or landforms.

The right kind of play is child-centered play. This means that the activities are initiated and guided by the children themselves, with adults intervening only to assure basic safety. Also, there don't need to be any measurable objectives; it is enough that the child directly interacts with nature through play. It's all about playing with nature!

Lastly, the right kind of re-play refers to the need to have children

regularly visit the same local spaces for nature play. It's these places that will become integrated into the day-to-day rhythm of their lives, and which eventually take a place in their hearts. This is why having nearby nature is critical for kids, and the role of backyards, neighborhood green spaces, and schoolyards should not be underestimated.

As we grow our nature play program at Loudoun Wildlife, we'll be working hard to help local children get the chance to play (and re-play) in nearby natural spaces. Already we've had a great time with our newly created team of Play Rangers, hosting nature

play sessions next to our office at Morven Park in Leesburg, and at local green spaces such as the Chapman DeMary Nature Trail in Purcellville. We're also starting to create enhanced nature play spaces by adding digging pits and piles of sticks for fort construction to area green spaces.

If you're interested in helping with the effort to promote nature play for today's children, there are a number of things you can do. You can create space in your own yard that can serve as a wild place for kids to explore, just by letting it get a bit overgrown and letting kids know it's fair game for digging and building in. Even if you don't have kids of your own, these spaces can become cherished spots for neighborhood children or nieces and nephews (especially if there's a resident nature lover who can

help them with bug catching and fort building as needed!). Another option to promote nature play is as simple as sharing stories from your own childhood with the kids in your life. Tales from years ago can serve as much-needed inspiration, since many kids these days don't have the chance to learn from their peers about ways to play outdoors.

If you'd like to learn more about nature play at Loudoun Wildlife, please contact Meghan Goldman at mgoldman@loudounwildlife.org.

Resources:

Pennsylvania Land Trust Association's "Nature Play: Nurturing Children and Strengthening Conservation through Connections to the Land": https://conservationtools.org/library_items/1360

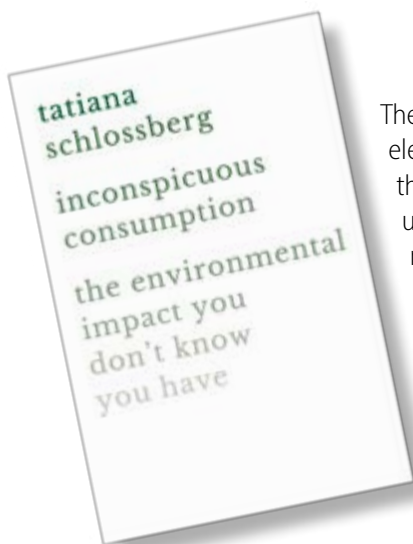


Nolan Reeves, 3, enjoys rainy-day water play in the stream at the Chapman DeMary Trail during the Dec. 29 nature playdate hosted by Loudoun Wildlife and Purcellville Parks and Recreation. Photo by Amie Ware/Purcellville Parks and Recreation



Book Review: *Inconspicuous Consumption* by Tatiana Schlossberg

Review by Steve Allen



Living in my house, I am surrounded by ghosts.

The ghosts to which I refer are electrical ones. "Ghost power" is the term used to describe the use of electricity by devices that need power all the time even when they are not doing the one thing they were designed to do. A quick inspection of my kitchen reveals there are nine devices plugged in to electric circuits. Of those, only the refrigerator is drawing constant power

to do something useful, and one other, the dishwasher, is not drawing power when it is not actually washing the dishes. The other seven are all using ghost power: five of them have clocks, and two are charging handheld battery-operated devices.

My home office has even more ghosts. There are about 15 devices plugged in (plus four surge protectors), most of which are drawing ghost power. As I sit typing this review, I am using only two devices — my laptop and a desk lamp — but at least nine others plus the surge protectors are drawing some power. It's a little difficult to calculate how much of our electric use is attributable to ghost power, but estimates are that it is between 10 and 20% of our monthly bills.

Inconspicuous Consumption by Tatiana Schlossberg illuminates this problem and delivers this message: that we all have a carbon footprint and an environmental impact much larger than we know, or can even imagine.

If you're like me, you use the internet for a lot of things: email, social networking, shopping, streaming video, and reading newsletters like the *Habitat Herald*. You know that you use some electricity to keep your computer running or your tablet or smartphone charged, but have you ever considered how much electricity is needed to keep all that information flowing to you? It turns out to be much more than you ever thought it could be.

We tend to think of "the cloud" as being an ephemeral mass circulating in the atmosphere, but it's not. The physical internet is a huge network of data centers (many of them here in our backyard*), servers, and cables. All of that equipment running all

of the time requires electricity, and lots of it.

In addition to the power needed to run all of that equipment, as more data moves through the data centers, more heat is generated, so more air conditioning is needed, requiring even more electricity, which in turn requires more power plants to supply all that juice. To put that into climate-change perspective, video streaming alone is estimated to generate 50 million tons of carbon dioxide a year, a little less than 1 percent of the carbon emissions in the U.S. That number is expected to increase at least eightfold in the next 10 years.

And it is not just your internet use, it is what you wear when using your computer, going to work, or doing anything else for that matter. The fashion industry has a large environmental effect that's mostly hidden from view.

We all consider denim blue jeans an iconic American symbol of the Old West. It is also an enormous international business — close to \$100 billion is spent on denim clothing every year — with a huge environmental footprint. Cotton takes up about three percent of the agricultural land around the world, and an

equivalent percentage of the water used in agriculture. All of that cotton, 57 billion pounds globally per year, is shipped halfway around the world

to Indonesia and other locations in Asia to be spun into fabric, and then to Bangladesh and China, where it is dyed.

More water is needed to dye the denim blue — thousands of gallons are needed for every dye lot — and the remaining water is flushed out of the factory into the environment. In the region of China where denim is manufactured, the rivers have been dyed blue. The denim is then sewn into garments, millions of which are shipped back halfway around the world for sale.

Do you love that cashmere scarf you got for Christmas? Its ecological footprint is also shockingly large. Most cashmere comes from the grasslands of Mongolia on the edge of the Gobi desert. Until the early 1990s, cashmere was a luxury item, as there were only about 5 million cashmere goats. Fifteen years later, the number of goats has increased to around 25 million. As a result of all those goats, cashmere is much cheaper, but the grasslands around the Gobi are degrading under their hooves at an alarming rate.

This creates a vicious cycle, as less grass means lower production, which means more goats are needed to generate the same amount of cashmere, and so on. As the Gobi grows, dust storms

Continued on page 12

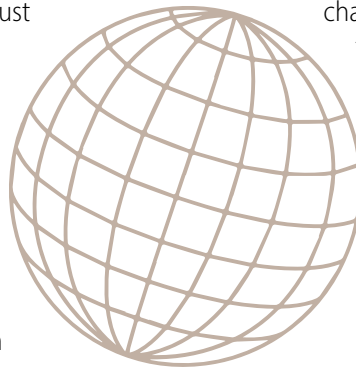


Book Review, continued from page 11

from the desert grow larger, sweeping across China, mixing with smog from Chinese industry and blowing across the Pacific, measurably increasing the number of smog and dust days in California.

Schlossberg covers many other environmental impacts that occur without us thinking about them. For example, changes to the climate in the Midwest because of corn monoculture; the mining practices and recycling issues associated with the precious metals needed for all our tech devices; issues with food such as the impact of organic farming and food waste; trees in the U.S. being harvested for use as fuel in European power plants; and how ride-sharing may increase pollution.

I do have a couple of caveats about this book. First, while Schlossberg does an amazing job of explaining all these issues,



Inconspicuous Consumption is a little short on recommendations on how to address the problems she identifies. The final chapter is only a few pages long and suggests that we try to understand the problems better, ask serious questions of candidates and public officials, and vote — but there's not very much practical advice.

Second, her writing style tends to be a little bit chatty and filled with interjections. A friend of mine described it as "very millennial," but I found it a bit much. That being said, *Inconspicuous Consumption* is an extremely important and eye-opening book, which I heartily recommend that everyone should read.

* Data centers in Loudoun take up 13.5 million square feet with more on the way. Loudoun County estimates that 70% of the world's internet traffic passes through the county.

A New Version of an Old Favorite for Your Gardening Bookshelf

by Michele Savage



Winter can be difficult for those of us missing warm days in the garden among the milkweeds, oaks, and other native plants we've planted and nurtured. So traditionally we spend this season making new plans for our gardens.

We have plenty of inspiration. More and more seed catalogs, gardening blogs and websites,

and books reflect our embrace of native plants. Now, local gardeners can turn to a new version of an old favorite that's packed with practical knowledge about growing native plants here. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has released a revised version of its *Planting for Wildlife in Northern Virginia: A Resource for Enhancing Wildlife Habitat With Native Plants*, which originally was published more than 10 years ago.

This paperback guide is filled with tables of information about native flowers, trees, shrubs, bog and water plants, and more. But beyond how tall your Wild Bergamot grows or its light and soil needs, the book shows it is a host for the Gray Hairstreak butterfly and 12 moth species, and what pollinators are drawn to its nectar. One section of

the book advises gardeners what to plant to attract turtles, dragonflies, and amphibians.

"This is the only publication we know of that features the wildlife value of the plants," said Julie Borneman, president of the Loudoun Wildlife board, native plant expert, and part of the team that revised the book. "The goal is to help people be successful at growing plants and attracting wildlife to their habitats.

Many local gardeners have used Plant NoVa Natives' excellent *Native Plants for Northern Virginia* guide to build the foundation for their native gardens, and *Planting for Wildlife in Northern Virginia* is "the next step," Borneman noted. "The comprehensive list of plants and data-focused layout is for someone who is ready to bring their home habitat to the next level of conservation."

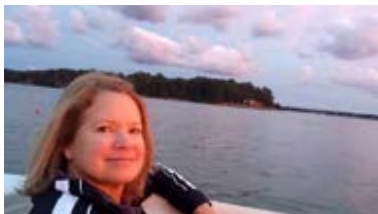
A team of volunteers took more than a year to revise the book. "Ann Garvey and David Edmundson did all of the research, and they were supported by several wildlife experts and proofreaders," Borneman said.

The new *Planting for Wildlife in Northern Virginia* is available for \$7.50 via LoudounWildlife.org or at Loudoun Wildlife's office in The Gatehouse at Morven Park. For purchases of 25 copies or more, contact Loudoun Wildlife about wholesale pricing.



Volunteer of the Quarter: Joanne Davis

by Kim Strader, Volunteer Coordinator



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is fortunate to have so many dedicated and passionate volunteers. While being part

of a thriving metropolitan area presents challenges in preserving and conserving wildlife and wild places, it also provides a vast array of people. Our volunteers range from high school students to retirees, all sharing their interests, knowledge and professional backgrounds. Upon retirement, most people pursue personal interests when volunteering, while some others loved their careers so much that they seek ways to continue doing their work — and Joanne Davis is one of those people!

Joanne attended the Bluebird Program Kickoff meeting in 2019 and followed up with Loudoun Wildlife, letting us know that Bluebirds were one of her favorite birds and that she would like to help on any of our public trails needing assistance. In June, I connected Joanne with Lori Kruse at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve so she could receive training and begin monitoring the 10 nest boxes on the Goose Creek Trail at Banshee Reeks. Joanne also attended the Volunteer Orientation in June, when I met her for the first time. Knowing we would need someone in September to collect, collate, and submit year-end data to the Virginia Bluebird Society, I casually mentioned that we also have a need for data entry people so if anyone enjoyed that type of work to please let me know. Joanne spoke up in her sweet little voice, saying, “I love data.” My reaction was, “You do? How wonderful!” Feeling as if I’d just hit the jackpot, I quickly jotted a note beside her name.

Fast forward several months and Bluebird Monitoring year-end data time was quickly approaching. Executive Director Michael Myers let me know that Lori Kruse at Banshee Reeks informed him that one of her Bluebird monitors was interested in assisting with year-end data collection. I contacted Joanne and arranged a meeting with her and former Bluebird Program Coordinator Janet Locklear to learn what was needed and when. It was at this meeting that we discovered Joanne had retired from a data analyst profession, making her the perfect person for the job.

In the weeks that followed, Joanne’s determination and

resourcefulness were invaluable as she contacted the Virginia Bluebird Society to learn what was needed and the timeline for submission. Additionally, she assisted Lori Kruse in tabulating Banshee Reeks’ weekly data collection sheets so that she understood what the Trail Leaders were expected to do. Joanne’s organizational skills and thoughtfulness shined as she kept track of who submitted their data and contacted those who had not, offering to help in any way she could, including picking up their data and doing the tabulations herself.

Joanne reported the year-end data from the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Bluebird Trails in December 2019, and we were all extremely excited to discover that she had collected and collated data from 40 trails for submission to the Virginia Bluebird Society! Joanne has many ideas on how to use the Trail data to tell the “story” of Bluebird populations in Loudoun County in a way that is visually appealing and easy to understand. Displaying data this way will potentially widen our audience by enabling the layperson to glean information from our data and see the importance of the Bluebird Program as a way to monitor the health of our local environment.

Joanne is a lovely, cheerful, thoughtful, organized, and determined person, and it is these characteristics that made the year-end data collection such a success. We are grateful that she will be staying on with the Bluebird Monitoring Program by assisting Program Coordinator Lisa McKew. While Joanne has only been volunteering since June 2019, her contributions have been invaluable. She combined her love of Bluebirds with her beloved former career in data management to become a valuable member of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s Bluebird Monitoring Program.

Many thanks to Joanne, and all our volunteers, for sharing your current or former professional skills and personal interests to help Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy further its vision of a place where people and wildlife thrive!





Programs and Field Trips



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 7:00 pm. All Loudoun Wildlife members are welcome. Contact Julie Borneman at jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.

Birding Bles Park — Third Sundays: February 16, March 15, April 19, and May 17, 8:00 am. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is pleased to offer a regular bird walk at Bles Park located along the Potomac River in eastern Loudoun. More than 175 different species of birds have been observed at Bles Park in a great mix of habitat. Everyone is welcome, whether you are an experienced or beginning birder. Bring binoculars if you have them. Questions: Contact Bryan Henson at bhenson@loudounwildlife.org.

Bluebird Nest Monitoring Program Kickoff — Sunday, February 2, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Sterling Library. Lisa McKew of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Bluebird Monitoring Program will provide an orientation on nestbox monitoring and the protocol used for collecting and reporting data. She will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails being monitored around Loudoun County, and take us through a slide show about bluebirds, their nesting habits and habitat. *Registration required.*

Exploring Nature in Winter — Saturday, February 8, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Blue Ridge Center. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy naturalists Phil Daley and Paul Miller on this family walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES) 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 cabbages as they peek their 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 truly magnificent setting. Directions to BRCES can be found at www.brces.org. Reservations are suggested. Questions: Contact Phil Daley at 540-338-6528 or pedaley@verizon.net.

The Life of Forests — Saturday, February 29, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Stone Barn at Morven Park. Forests are a vital part of life, both for wildlife and the world's climate. At this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy program, Loudoun County Urban Forester Kyle Dingus will describe how forests develop over time and how they are managed within their development cycles. If time permits, Dingus will lead a short walk. *Registration required.*

9 Ways You Can Help Bees and Other Pollinators at Home — Saturday, March 7, 9:00 am, Wild Birds Unlimited, Ashburn. Virginia is home to a remarkable range of pollinators, among which are native solitary bees. Unfortunately, many pollinator populations are in decline, but we can all take action and change this trend. BEE a pollinator hero and discover what you can do to help native bees in your garden. *No registration required.*

Weird Wonderful Woodpeckers — Saturday, March 7, 8:00 am, Algonkian Sanctuary Trail, Cascades. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a search for all seven local species of woodpeckers. Learn interesting facts about woodpeckers and how to ID them. This fantastic location in eastern Loudoun plays host to lots of bird species during the winter; we'll hope to also find a good selection of ducks and sparrows. Beginning birders welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them and wear footwear that can tolerate muddy or wet conditions. Limit 16. *Registration required.*

Vanishing Vernal Pools and the Amphibians That Use Them: Class and Field Trip — Saturday, March 7, 12:00 – 5:00 pm, Stone Barn at Morven Park. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for this popular crash course on vernal pools and other seasonal wetlands and their inhabitants. This hands-on training begins with a classroom session, followed by a field session when we will visit local vernal pool habitats, encounter amphibians that may include Spotted and Jefferson Salamanders and wood frogs, and search for fairy shrimp. Fee: \$20 members, \$30 non-members. *Registration required.*

Woodcock Outing at the Institute Farm — Monday, March 9, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Institute Farm, Aldie. Witness the incredible courtship display 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 as dusk gathers. *Registration required.* Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org or Emily Southgate at ewbsouthgate@gmail.com.

An Up-Close Look at Sustainable Farming — Saturday, March 21, 1:00 pm, JK Community Farm, Round Hill. You hear a lot about "sustainable farming" but just what does that mean and why should we care? Samantha Kuhn, executive director of JK Community Farm, and Farm Manager Mike Smith will explain as they lead a tour of the farm, which donates its produce to some area organizations that feed those in need. Limit 30. *Registration required.*

Forest Bathing: A Guided Nature and Forest Therapy Walk — Sunday, March 22, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, Lucketts. Spring peepers will be calling us to enjoy their chorus as we wander through JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary in Lucketts. Kim Strader, Certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs, will lead us on a gentle sensory-opening walk to reconnect or deepen our connection with the natural world in a way that supports overall health and wellness. This slow-paced walk will cover no more than a mile in three hours as we awaken our senses and explore the surrounding forests, fields, and vernal pools. The terrain is gentle but there are no trails, so we recommend wearing shoes or boots with good tread that can get muddy or wet. Directions to the site and additional details will be emailed to participants the week prior to the event. Limit 12. Fee: \$30 members/\$40 non-members. *Registration required.*

Writing in Nature: Waking Up — Wednesday, March 25, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Gate House at Morven Park. Crocus shoots poke their heads through the soil, lured by the warming sun. Ferns uncurl their tightly wound fiddles like a slow, deliberate yawn. We, too, cautiously turn our faces to the sun, relaxing stiff shoulders, clenched jaws. Spring. We knew it would arrive, but months of chilled toes and fingers warn, "Not yet!" Who else is up? We will gather at the Stone House to celebrate our passage to a new season, then wander around Morven Park to see what treasures we discover

Volunteer Orientation — Tuesday, March 3, 7:00 – 8:00 pm, Vaughan Room, Morven Park. New and returning volunteers are invited to join us for a volunteer orientation. We will cover the basics of what it means to be a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteer and highlight our various programs. This is a great opportunity to find out about our current volunteer needs and how you can sign up to help! Limit: 25. *Registration required.* Questions: Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader, kstrader@loudounwildlife.org.

Birding the Blue Ridge Center

This monthly walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES), sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, takes us through fields, woods, and other wildlife-friendly habitat. We will explore parts of this beautiful 900-acre preserve and enjoy the varied birdlife. Meet at the Education Center; bring binoculars if you have them. BRCES is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Route 671); detailed directions at www.blueridgecenter.org. Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Fourth Saturdays: February 22, March 28, April 25, and May 23, 8:00 am.



through sight, sound, touch, and taste. We will document our findings and feelings in journals provided by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and report to the group when we re-gather at the Stone House. All along the way, we will hear the words of poets across the centuries who, like us, are inspired to celebrate Spring. Nancy Morgan has led writing workshops in America and abroad. She is director emeritus of the Arts and Humanities Program at the Georgetown Lombardi Cancer Center. Her research study on the health benefits of writing was published in *The Oncologist*. Limit 12. Fee: \$20 members, \$25 non-members. *Registration required.*

Wine (& Art) for Wildlife — Friday, March 27, 6:30 – 9:30 pm, Sunset Hills Vineyard, Purcellville. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy as we celebrate wildlife, art, and wine at scenic Sunset Hills. This year's silent auction will feature birdhouses customized by local artists. Watch social media and local establishments for a preview of the birdhouses. Join us for an evening of local entertainment, local art, and local wine all to support the mission of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. *Tickets required.*

Spring Native Plant Sale — Saturday, April 4, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Main Parking Lot, 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: Julie Borneman of Watermark Woods Nursery in Hamilton; Janet Davis of Hill House Farm and Nursery in Castleton; and Randee Wilson of Nature by Design in Alexandria. The sale, sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, is staffed by volunteers who have knowledge of native plants. Other community groups will also participate, sharing information on how to support local wildlife. *No registration required. Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org or Janet Locklear at jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org.*

Spring Nature Walk — Saturday, April 11, 10:00 am, Balls Bluff Battlefield Regional Park. Walk with a Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy naturalist at Balls Bluff Park to see the forest as it reemerges from its winter sleep. Balls Bluff covers numerous microhabitats — riparian, oak-beech, oak-hickory, flood plain — each of which is home to its own distinct plant and animal communities that will be explored. This will be part of a series that explores the forest on its cycle through the seasons. We'll track the progression from flower to leaf to fruit, observe the succession of understory plant growth, and watch the forest's denizens as they go about their daily lives ... if they let us. Limit 15. *Registration required.*

Spring Wildflowers — Saturday, April 18, 10:00 am, Balls Bluff Battlefield Regional Park. Join John DeMary, well-known local naturalist and retired teacher, on a field trip to explore Balls Bluff Park, a 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.*

A Celebration of Birdsong — Saturday, April 18, 2:00 – 3:30 pm, Stone Barn at Morven Park. Wil Hershberger, award-winning nature photographer, nature sound recordist, and co-author of *The Songs of Insects*, takes us into the wonderful world of birdsongs with his gorgeous nature images and sound recordings. We will be following the increase in birdsong from late winter into spring, see how birds sing, why they sing, and just how extraordinary birdsong really is. *Registration required.*

Vanish Brewery Nature Series: Brews for Bees: The Super Pollinators That Run the World — Thursday, April 23, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Vanish Brewery, Lucketts. Come have a fun night out with an educational purpose. Learn about the many fascinating and bee-utiful native bees that live in our gardens! Hint: Not all of them are fuzzy, live in groups, or even look like what we all know as bees! Discover their habitat needs, the plants they love, and ways you can improve your garden to provide food, shelter, and nesting sites. *No registration required.*

Celebrate Earth Day! — Sunday, April 26, 1:00 pm, B Cord Brewery, Round Hill. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to celebrate Earth Day! Join us for this fundraising event that includes live music, prizes, and a special nature program. This event is one of several events we have planned around the county to help celebrate our 25th anniversary. *No registration required.*

Celebrate Birds, Go Birding! — Join us 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 in our area. To

celebrate this phenomenon, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy invites you to join one of our bird walks at hotspots throughout the county. We also invite you to either sponsor or participate in our Birdathon sometime between May 1 and May 17 — the peak of migration in our area. At this time we have five teams participating in the Birdathon and would love to have more! How many species will our intrepid birders find? Would you like to join them? To support your favorite team or form your own team, visit <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/bird-counts/celebratebirds-birdathon/>. *Registration required for all walks.* To sign up for a walk or another event, visit our calendar at loudounwildlife.org/events. *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org. Celebrate Birds walk locations to be announced soon!*

Birding by Ear Boot Camp — Saturday, May 2, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm, Blue Ridge Center. Join Joette Borzik for a one-day Birding by Ear Boot Camp! We will spend a full day learning bird song in the field on the trails of the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. Some basic birding knowledge is a prerequisite, i.e., being able to identify some of the local common birds by sight. Birding knowledge need not be extensive, but enthusiasm and interest in learning more is expected. Backyard and casual birders who want to step up to the next level of birding are encouraged to attend. Limit 12. Fee: \$50/non-members, \$40/members. *Registration required. Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org or Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

Trails and Ales at Harpers Ferry Brewery — Sunday, May 17, 1:00 pm, Harpers Ferry Brewery, Loudoun Heights. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in celebrating our 25th anniversary! This fundraising event will include live music and prizes along with a nature walk around the brewery grounds. *No registration required.*

Vanish Brewery Nature Series: Adventures with Raptors — Thursday, May 28, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Vanish Brewery, Lucketts. Join raptor expert Liz Denison for an informative Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy program about raptors and their place in our natural world. The program will be followed by an opportunity for everyone to personally visit, interact with, and take photos with her ambassador birds. *No registration required.*

Also, mark your calendars for these exciting upcoming Loudoun Wildlife events:

- 25th Annual Meeting — Sunday, June 7, Ida Lee Park.
- Appalachian Trail Fest — Saturday, June 13, B Cord Brewery.
- Moth Madness — Thursday, June 25, Vanish Brewery.
- Dragonflies and Damselflies — Saturday, June 27, JK Black Oak Sanctuary.
- Backyard Bats — Thursday, July 23, Vanish Brewery.

Dates and locations are subject to change. For up-to-date information on our programs or to register, visit our website at www.loudounwildlife.org or contact info@loudounwildlife.org.



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 hotspot. Bring binoculars if you have them. *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.*

Second Saturdays: February 8, March 14, April 11, and May 9, 8:00 am.



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