Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Right, Two-spotted Bumblebee on Coreopsis. Photo by Anne Owen

Above, Brown-belted Bumblebee on Butterfly Weed. Photo by Anne Owen

Below, Eastern Carpenter Bee on Bee Balm. Photo by Amie Ware

Left, Perplexing Bumblebee on Common Milkweed. Photo by Anne Owen

Conservation of Bees Is Different Than the Conservation of Birds

by Sam Droege

We know birds, we watch them, we tally them, we feed them, we keep them. They are protected by federal laws because they migrate across state and international boundaries. They were the among the first group of animals we studied and tried to conserve when we realized that, left unregulated and unprotected, birds were going extinct. No surprise that now we have many bird conservation laws, more conservation studies, and parks and refuges are set up to preserve these species. From a bird angle, this means that we target the preservation of natural habitats and basically dial the vegetation from grassland to forest depending on what species we want to benefit. There is nuance, but most of the time it is about the plant *structure* of an area, not about the plant *species* in that area.

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Executive Director's Message

As we entered summer, Virginia reopened more and more businesses and functions. At Loudoun Wildlife, we're taking a phased approach to restarting in-person programs when we can implement precautions to minimize the risk of COVID-19 being transmitted. Audubon-at-Home visits have begun, and leaders of our annual Butterfly Count modified their plans to have smaller teams conduct our citizen science data collection. We're tentatively planning to restart small in-person nature and bird walks in the coming months, so be sure to check our website for any updates. And we're excited to bring you our first ever fall Birdathon. The Birdathon is typically in the spring, but we're looking forward to hosting it during fall migration. There's still time to form your own team, or you can support one of our existing teams. We hope that you're enjoying our virtual programs and content, and we look forward to resuming in-person events where possible.

We unveiled a 25th Anniversary logo thanks to local graphic designer Mary Gustafson at our Annual Meeting this year. We would like to thank Mary for refreshing her original Loudoun Wildlife logo design for our special anniversary. At our virtual Annual Meeting, we celebrated our volunteers and elected new board members. We encourage you to check out our website to learn more about our newest board members. We're excited for the passion and expertise each of them brings to our organization. We've also posted our Annual Report on our website. We decided not to print copies of our Annual Report this year, but we hope you enjoy the digital version. We would like to thank volunteers Nan Siegel and Mark Drefs for editing and compiling another visually stunning Annual Report this year.

To celebrate our 25th year, we are hosting a 25th Anniversary Gala in October! While we were hoping to honor this special occasion with everyone in-person, instead we're going to bring this event to you virtually. Watch your email for updates on how you can participate in this special event.

We're proud to announce that we've reached our goal of raising $10,000 to complete our endowment challenge matching grant to create a $20,000 endowment on our behalf with the Community Foundation! Of course, you can still make a donation to support our endowment and leave a legacy for wildlife in Loudoun County. We're excited to have a funding source that will perpetually generate revenue for our organization. We want to thank everyone who has made this possible, especially Edwin and Melody Rood for matching gifts to reach our goal.

We hope that you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy during these challenging times, and we hope you're able to get outside to enjoy the awe and wonder of our natural world.

Happy trails,
Michael

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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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Conservation of Bees Is Different Than the Conservation of Birds

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Ah, but for bees (our 450-plus native species, that is) it is all about the plant species, not the plant structure. Furthermore the only part of the plant bees really care about are flowers — specifically the pollen of those flowers. Why is that? It's about their babies. You see, many bee species only provide pollen to their young from a limited taxonomic group of plants. If those plants are not there, those bees are not there. They are that picky, and the very varied chemical composition (both nutritionally and in terms of distasteful — or poisonous! — compounds) of our plants reflects those choices. An example of this is Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), with its pink pollen, which is the plant needed by the *Andrena erigeniae* bee.

So, in its most compressed form, we must all realize that which blooming plants live on the forest floor, populate our wetlands, live in hedgerows, survive in lawns, live in old fields, and that we plant are critical. You cannot simply seed clover and congratulate yourself. Actions can be as simple as:

- Planting/encouraging a wide variety of native plants.
- Eliminating/discouraging invasive plants (they *attract*, but rarely *support* native bees).
- Shifting toward maintaining open landscapes instead of planting trees on all of them.
- Greatly reducing deer herds.
- Choosing plants to use/encourage first from this list: https://jarrodfowler.com/specialist_bees.html
- Shifting from lawns to curated landscapes of native plants.

Do it, friends.

Native bee expert Sam Droege is a biologist at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center.

"With non-native plants you can get a lot of bees coming to a number of different kinds of plants, but think of these plants as bird feeders for the crow and sparrow bees. So if you put a bird feeder in the middle of the city, you get lots of birds but you are not getting flamingos, warblers, and shearwaters, you're getting crows, chickadees… the things that don't need our help, but the things we love having around."
– Sam Droege

The Andrena nida bee feeds its young only willow pollen. Willow trees have more bee specialists than almost any other plant on the continent.
USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab Team photo

Best Plant Genera for Native Bee Specialists in the Mid-Atlantic*

Plant Genera	Native Bees
Solidago, Goldenrods	35 spp
Symphyotrichum, Asters	32 spp
Viola, Violets	26 spp
Helianthus, Sunflowers	18 spp
Oenothera, Evening primrose	17 spp
Salix, Willows	16 spp

Resources:

A list of specialist bees of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States: http://jarrodfowler.com/specialist_bees.html

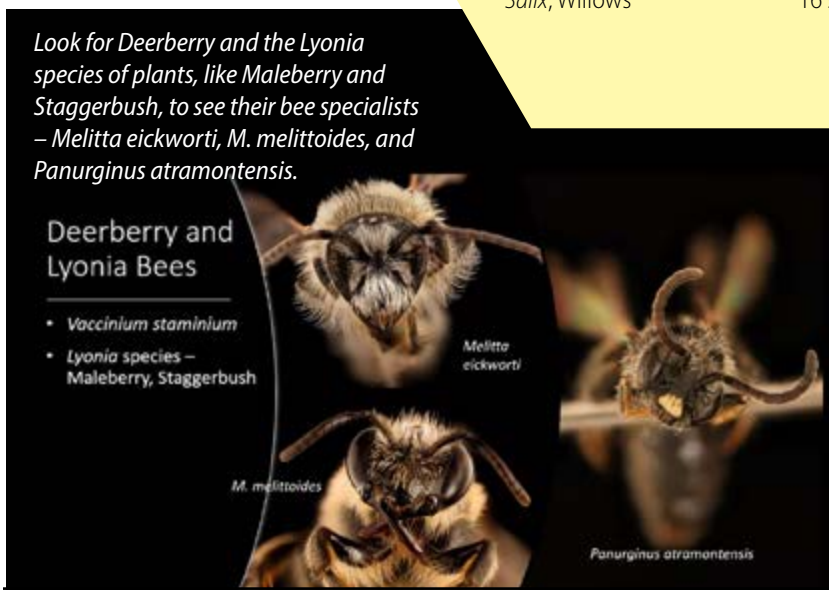
Look at the photos of the USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab Flickr Page http://www.flickr.com/photos/usgsbiml

USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab (BIML) Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/usgsbiml/

Connect with Sam Droege at the U.S. Geological Survey: https://www.usgs.gov/staff-profiles/sam-droege

List of native plants for native bees from Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy http://bit.ly/NATIVEBEES

Look for Deerberry and the Lyonia species of plants, like Maleberry and Staggerbush, to see their bee specialists – Melitta eickworti, M. melittoides, and Panurginus atramontensis.



USGS Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab Team photo

141 Bird Species and a Flying Squirrel

by Joe Coleman, Birding Coordinator

One hundred and forty-one! That's the number of bird species seen by 50 participants in their yards and nearby parks and preserves during the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's World Migratory Bird Day/Global Big Day weekend on May 9 and 10.

Sometimes the most exciting find during one of these counts isn't a bird — this year it was a Flying Squirrel, seen and photographed by Jane Yocom and Mary Ann Good.

Loudoun's birder extraordinaire, Bruce Hill, found the most species, 117, while birding on both the 9th and 10th.

Avian highlights included a Glossy Ibis along the Goose Creek, two Trumpeter Swans in Aldie (probably part of the non-migratory population that has been slowly branching out from Fauquier County), a Common Merganser with nine ducklings on the Potomac River, a Common Nighthawk, a Virginia Rail, two American Woodcocks, Bonaparte's Gulls, and a first-year male Summer Tanager.

Some rare finds have been reported recently by local birders but were elusive on count days. A Cattle Egret — only the second record for this species in the county — was seen a couple of days before the count in the Waterford area, but not found on the 9th or 10th. A Mississippi Kite was spotted on both May 8 and 11 but not during the count. This species has only recently begun nesting in Loudoun County.

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Flying Squirrel. Photo by Jane Yocom

Summer Tanager. Photo by Joseph Shankin

Great Horned Owl. Photo by C. Crichton

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher. Photo by Michael Myers

Prairie Warbler. Photo by Michael Myers

Spotted Sandpiper. Photo by Michael Myers

Green Heron. Photo by Michael Myers

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The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy thanks everyone who participated in the count or supported the organization with a donation. These donations help pay for our environmental education programs and conservation efforts.

The inspiring results of the World Migratory Bird Day/Global Big Day count are especially welcome this year. Quarantine regulations and closures have led Loudoun Wildlife to cancel or reschedule many events, including its popular annual Birdathon, usually held in May. Loudoun Wildlife plans now to hold this year's Birdathon during fall migration and will announce a date and other details later.

Please Your Bumblebees With *P. digitalis*

by Michele Savage

I'm not new to gardening, but I am very new to native gardening. Before moving to Loudoun four years ago, I had filled all my previous gardens with traditional cottage-style choices like foxgloves, hollyhocks, and English roses — all beautiful, all non-native, all somewhat popular with some pollinators but not the healthiest choice for all of them. So when I decided to take the native-plant plunge in my new garden, I began to look for native substitutes for my old favorites. The *Penstemon digitalis* I planted last year has exceeded my cottage-garden dreams and (more important) pleased an endless supply of bees.

A bumblebee burrows into a Foxglove Beardtongue flower. Photo by Michele Savage

Also known as Foxglove Beardtongue, this native shares part of its common and scientific names with the non-native foxglove varieties I've grown and loved. But the tubular white flowers of this showy native's 3-foot stalks look more like those of another non-native favorite of mine, snapdragons.

Penstemon digitalis is considered semi-evergreen, but planted in full sun by the southern wall of our house, my plants' base leaves remained surprisingly green during our mild winter. I've read that some gardeners use it as a winter groundcover, but there is so much more to recommend it.

Mine bloomed with abandon from very late May well into June, and bees were its constant companion. *P. digitalis* is known for its special value to native bees, including Mason, Digger, and Leaf-cutting bees. We saw many Masons and honeybees on ours, but the most prevalent visitors were the bumblebees, who burrowed into one white bloom after another and never seemed to mind how closely we watched. *Penstemon digitalis* is also an important nectar source for butterflies, moths, and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. It is even a caterpillar host for the Buckeye butterfly and eight moth species. No baby Buckeyes here yet, but I'll keep hoping and checking!

After a brief but busy season of sustaining its insect admirers, my *Penstemon digitalis* is developing the seeds that will ensure its return in greater numbers next year, I hope. This short-lived perennial can reseed rather freely, I'm told. But I won't mind if it does, and neither will the bees.

Resources:

Missouri Botanical Garden — https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=286985&isprofile=1&basic=penstemon%20digitalis

"Native Plants for Northern Virginia" (Plant NoVa Natives, 3d ed. 2017).

"Planting for Wildlife in Northern Virginia." (Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, 2019).

Minimize Man-Made Hazards to Wildlife on Your Property

by Anne Owen, Audubon at Home Program Coordinator

As well as encouraging property owners to provide the essential elements of healthy habitat — native plants, water, and shelter — Audubon at Home also recommends checking for any man-made hazards that could harm the very critters that we hope to encourage coming into our outdoor spaces. Take the quiz to see how critter-friendly your yard is.

1. Do you use pesticides?
2. Do you use poison or glue traps for rodents out-of-doors?
3. Could there be lead on your property — e.g., from items used for hunting or fishing?
4. Do you let domestic cats outdoors?
5. Could your windows cause bird-strikes?
6. Do you leave outdoor lights on at night?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, please read on to find out more.

Pesticides. Overuse and misuse of pesticides, even so-called organic pesticides, is a major cause of the precipitous decline in insect biomass around the world. There is no such thing as a pesticide that is specific to mosquitoes or ticks, or any other perceived nuisance. When we spray pesticides they will to a greater or lesser extent kill whatever insects they come into contact with — and insects fulfill several critical roles in the ecosystem, including pollination, decomposition of organic matter, and moving energy up the food-chain by eating plants, then becoming meals for other critters. These references from the Habitat Network provide suggestions for alternative approaches for ticks and mosquitoes:

Pesticides, even those "targeted" to particular pests, essentially will kill whatever insects they come into contact with. Photo by Anne Owen

"Managing Yards and Green Spaces to Minimize Tick Populations": https://content.yardmap.org/learn/managing-tick-populations/

"Discouraging Mosquitoes While Still Providing Habitat for Other Wildlife": https://content.yardmap.org/learn/mosquitoes/

Outdoor poison or glue traps for rodents. Both of these can result in collateral damage, and neither can be considered particularly humane, as both approaches lead to a slow death. The carcasses of poisoned rodents can contain residues that are lethal for hawks, owls, and other animals that consume them. Many creatures other than target rodents can and do get stuck on glue traps, from snakes and amphibians to small birds and desirable mammals like shrews. Find out more about safe rodent control strategies here: http://saferodentcontrol.org/site/rodent-control/

A glue trap intended for rodents instead traps these Five Lined Skinks. Photo by Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

Lead. Lead gets into the environment through shot and fishing weights. The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center reports that over 80% of the scavenging patients they admit (for example, eagles, vultures, and opossums) are poisoned with lead. To reduce the risks to wildlife, switch to non-lead ammo and fishing tackle. Find out more with this Fact Sheet from The Wildlife Society: http://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FactSheet-Pb_FINAL.pdf

This Great Horned Owl fledgling was poisoned by eating a poisoned rodent. Photo by Blue Ridge Wildlife Center

Cats. Domestic cats make wonderful pets, but they are a non-native and potentially invasive species. Outside the home, they become highly efficient, indiscriminate predators of birds, small mammals, and other critters. The American Bird Conservancy estimates that cats kill some 2.4 billion birds each year in the United States alone. We

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Minimize Man-Made Hazards to Wildlife on Your Property, continued from page 6

strongly recommend that cats be kept indoors. This is always an emotive topic, but please take the time to read this study, "The Impact of Free-ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife of the United States": https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms2380

Window Collisions. Every day at least one million birds are killed in window strikes in the USA, according to a 2014 study. Birds may see a reflection of habitat or see through a window to house plants or vegetation on the other side, then strike the solid glass, trying to reach what they see. Reduce the risk by leaving external bug screens in place year-round and keeping slatted blinds half-closed. The Cornell Lab has a number of other low-cost solutions available at this link: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/

Bug screens and closed blinds minimize the risk of bird collision. Photo by Anne Owen

Outdoor lights. Artificial lights are problematic for both insects and migrating birds. Many species of birds migrate at night, following visual cues from the moon, stars, and the setting sun. Artificial lights draw them in and then they hesitate to leave. Birds have been observed trapped in the beams of floodlights and lighthouses, flying until exhausted. About half of all insect species are nocturnal, and many are attracted to lights, mistaking them for the moon. About one third of insects trapped in the orbit of a light die before morning, either of exhaustion or predation. Artificial lights also affect mating signals, navigation, foraging, and the development of juveniles, according to various studies. The solution is simple — turn off outdoor lighting whenever possible. More information:

Birds: https://www.audubon.org/conservation/project/lights-out

Insects: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/22/light-pollution-insect-apocalypse

With awareness and a little effort we can significantly reduce the impact of man-made hazards. Thank you for going the extra mile to protect wildlife in Loudoun County.

Growing and Thriving at Black Oak

Last November, nearly 100 volunteers helped Loudoun Wildlife plant 260 native trees and shrubs at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, part of our habitat restoration efforts there. Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader made a late spring visit to check on the fencing we installed to prevent deer browse. She reported that almost all new plants were doing well in their new home, though a few showed signs of stress, probably as a result of cooler weather and a late freeze in May. The new trees and shrubs included Hornbeams (*Carpinus caroliniana*), Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*), Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), Flowering Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*), Hackberry (*Celtis occidentialis*), Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), and Red (*Quercus rubra*), White (*Quercus alba*), and Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*).

Photos by Kim Strader

Weeds and Weediness: A Look at the Origins of the Plants We Love to Hate

by Nan McCarry

What is a weed? Many of us may have heard that Ralph Waldo Emerson defined a weed as "a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." However, there are any number of definitions of weeds and weediness. Some definitions depend upon how humans feel about weeds. A "plant in the wrong place" is one, but other definitions have more to do with how the plant functions in the landscape: "pioneers of secondary succession" – that is, plants that grow back after disturbance due to fire or other clearing of the vegetation.

Some of the properties of weedy plants that allow them to colonize disturbed landscapes include having many small seeds and/or tough taproots and being able to germinate quickly when exposed to sunlight. Many of them spread clonally as well. Many weed seeds can remain viable for decades in the soil seed bank. That's why we get weeds whenever we turn over the soil! Some thrive in freshly tilled soil, while others are adapted to the compacted soil that humans create by their activities.

I particularly like the definitions that describe weeds as plants which thrive in landscapes disturbed by humans. It is said that Mother Nature abhors a vacuum. Weeds are opportunists that will fill an ecological niche left open by disturbance. Anytime we cut or burn existing vegetation, create paths, roads, or railways, abandon a field, or turn the soil, we are creating "disturbed" landscapes. For this reason, some definitions of a weed focus especially on weeds as plants that "follow" humans around. We may not want them around, but it is our activity that creates habitats in which they flourish. Botanist Edgar Anderson in his

Clover *(Trifolium repens) was not considered a weed in lawn grasses until about 60 years ago, and in fact used to be part of the mix of seeds sold for establishing lawns! Clovers serve a great purpose in lawns, as they have a symbiotic relationship with bacteria that fix nitrogen in the soil. When chemical companies developed weed killers that could eliminate most of the plants in the lawn while sparing the grasses, they convinced the public that we didn't want clover in the lawn.*

Crabgrass *(Digitaria sanguinalis), which many homeowners consider a serious weed in their lawns, was actually cultivated in central Europe as a cereal until the 1800s. Crabgrass is one of many grasses brought to the Americas by Europeans for foraging for livestock. It is thought that it did not become a "problem" in the lawn until the 1930s. Crabgrass is host to the Fiery Skipper butterfly.*

Photos by Nan McCarry

Queen Anne's Lace *(Daucus carota subsp. carota) smells a bit like carrots. It is a crop wild relative to the domesticated carrot (Daucus carota subsp. sativus), which is a different subspecies within the same species. It's thought that the domesticated carrot evolved from something that looked like Queen Anne's Lace. A non-native, it is considered noxious in some states.*

book *Plants, Man, and Life* called weeds "artifacts" — that is, things that would not exist if humans hadn't produced them. In Anderson's words, "though man did not wittingly produce all of them, some are as much dependent upon him, as much a result of his cultures, as a temple or vase or an automobile." Anderson said that "the history of weeds is the history of man."

Weeds have been around for a long, long time. Archaeologists have found what they call "proto-weeds" from a hunter-gatherer settlement in Israel dated to 23,000 years ago. With the evolution of agriculture, around 10,000 years ago, weeds really took off. In fact, the presence of certain weed species indicates to archaeologists that agriculture was occurring at a site. At this time humans began disturbing ever larger portions of the landscape by fire and other means. The acts of clearing, cultivation, and collection of crop seeds favored not only the crops but the weeds. If you think about organisms in terms of their strategies for survival and reproduction, being a weed that is unconsciously gathered and spread by humans is a good one, given how many human beings there are. No wonder we gardeners can't get rid of them!

In many cases, a crop and its weed relative evolved from the same progenitor wild plant, and there are many crops with a closely related weed species or variety that remain with us today. In many cases, these relatives, which continue to evolve in the wild, hold precious genetic diversity needed by breeders, since crop plants hold very little genetic diversity. There is a need to conserve these "crop wild relatives" worldwide. Like crops, these weeds are dependent upon the disturbed areas humans create for their continued existence.

It's helpful to think of weeds and weediness as being on a spectrum — from those plants with the "weediest" habits, which prefer disturbed sites, to those on the other end of the spectrum, which do best in more "closed" habitat — such as a forest with long-lived tree species and little opportunity for sunlight to reach the ground.

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Chenopodium. *Speaking of weeds that are related to crops, the Chenopodium genus has an interesting story. The chenopod that we may be familiar with is Chenopodium album, called goosefoot or lamb's quarters. It thrives in human-made disturbed areas like the edges of parking lots. Chenopodium seeds are the dominant weed seed in the soil seed bank on many farms. When I see goosefoot or amaranths appearing in my lawn or garden, it makes me reflect on the agricultural history of the land. A close relative, Chenopodium berlandieri, formed a part of a suite of plants, now mostly evolved back into weedy and wild plants, that were domesticated by American Indians. A huge cache of seeds of C. berlandieri, thousands of years old, was found in a rock shelter in Ohio, and the seeds show evidence of domestication (domesticated plants are those that have been changed by their interaction with humans to the point where they are dependent upon human care and are genetically different from their wild progenitors). Only two of the crops from this complex survived — sunflowers and a species of squash. An anthropologist at Ohio University, Paul Patton, has been breeding chenopods to try to re-establish this "lost crop" and have farmers adopt it. It is also related to quinoa (Chenopodium quinoa).*

Common Milkweed *(Asclepias syriaca) is the host plant for the Monarch caterpillar, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy has been part of the nationwide effort to encourage planting of milkweed. Many other plants that we are now putting in our gardens are on this weedy end of the spectrum, but that's not a bad thing. The mountain mints (Pycnanthemum spp.) are also aggressive natives that many of us enjoy having in the garden because of the number of bees that forage on it and because it can crowd out less desired plants.*

Weeds and Weediness, continued from page 9

There is also a spectrum of what we humans consider weeds and are willing to tolerate or even value in our landscapes. These landscape preferences are changing, largely because of the efforts of organizations such as Loudoun Wildlife and Audubon at Home, which encourage homeowners to value plants such as common milkweed because of the wildlife value they offer. Weeds perform many ecosystem services in the landscape. For example, when weedy pioneer species move into a newly disturbed landscape, they hold the soil in place, preventing further erosion.

Nature makes disturbed habitats, as well. Weedy pioneer species thrive on riverbanks, steep cliffs, and where trees fall in a windstorm, leaving an open, sunny site. It's been suggested that many of the weeds we know today descended from plants that colonized the areas where Pleistocene glaciers advanced and retreated, leaving bare, unvegetated ground.

It is said that most of our gardening and farming is "holding back natural plant succession." Thomas Rainer and Claudia West point out, "All gardening is an attempt to halt ecological succession and freeze it at a point that pleases us aesthetically," and agriculture specialist Preston Sullivan says "weeds are evidence of nature struggling to bring about ecological succession." Creating lawns favors weeds for the same reasons. If we stop mowing the lawn, what comes up are pioneer species, as the lawn moves along through the process of succession.

The plants pictured throughout this article are just a few from the weedier end of the spectrum -- from those that are a nuisance to those we accept for their ecosystem services, such as providing habitat for wildlife or because they are edible. These plants are all listed as "weeds" in Virginia Tech's Weed Identification website.

Plantain *(Plantago mayor) is from Europe. It probably arrived in the Americas in the early 1600s as weed seeds mixed with crop seeds. American Indians referred to it as white man's footprint, as it followed Europeans everywhere they went. It is a sign of wet or compacted soil.*

Pokeweed *(Phytolacca Americana) is a native that will probably come up in your yard if you stop mowing. It's quite weedy, and it's a hard decision whether to let it spread or not because it's pretty and the fruits feed 30 different bird species. Some people eat the young leaves, but the whole plant is considered to be toxic.*

Golden Ragwort *(Packera aurea) is one of those weedy, aggressive native wildflowers that many of us are using to outcompete invasive plants. Nancy Lawson calls this fighting "plants with plants." Golden Ragwort blooms early, adds color to the garden, and is an attractive groundcover later in the season. For more ideas see Nancy Lawson's article listed in the Resources below.*

Resources and Further Reading

Anderson, Edgar. Plants, Man, and Life (Missouri Botanical Garden, 1952).

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Loudoun Wildlife Goes Virtual With 25th Annual Meeting

by Kim Strader, Volunteer Coordinator

Another Annual Meeting is in the history books for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. It was a historic event because it is our 25th Anniversary, and because of the coronavirus health crisis, we brought it to our audience live via GoTo Meeting rather than in person. As a bonus to conducting the meeting in this format, we can always relive the moment because the Annual Meeting was recorded for the first time ever!

Watching the recording is just like being there live. You can witness us juggle a few technical challenges, hear about the state of the organization, see the awards presentation, and learn something new from the keynote address by native bee specialist Sam Droege, a wildlife biologist for the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. It was a meeting to remember, and if you missed the fun of joining it virtually on June 7, we have it for you to enjoy on Loudoun Wildlife's YouTube Channel.

It is no secret that volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. They are the seeds to our success. They are the heart of Loudoun Wildlife. For this reason, we always set aside time during the Annual Meeting to acknowledge our volunteers and to present two awards: Volunteer of the Year and The Joe Coleman Award.

Volunteer of the Year: Bryan Henson

Many of you may know Bryan Henson from the regular monthly bird walks he leads at Bles Park, but this is not all he does at Loudoun Wildlife. He is also the assistant birding activities coordinator, a certified stream monitor, a Butterfly Count leader, and a nature walk leader. He is always willing to lend a hand when it comes to projects at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, the Native Plant Sale, and fundraising events. Last year Byran recorded more than 150 volunteer hours.

Loudoun Wildlife Board President Julie Borneman presented the Volunteer of the Year Award to Bryan while acknowledging that he and his wife, Allison Gallo, are our dynamic duo, contributing to the success of many Loudoun Wildlife programs.

The Joe Coleman Award: Anne Owen

The Joe Coleman Award is presented to a Loudoun Wildlife board member to recognize their exemplary contributions and achievements. Anne Owen served on the board for three years before recently stepping down. She is well known through her coordination of the Loudoun Wildlife Audubon at Home (AAH) Program. From her own yard, to training new AAH Ambassadors, to working with people to help them achieve Audubon certification, she is the embodiment of Loudoun Wildlife's mission to inspire, motivate, and engage people to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat. Many thanks to Anne for contributing more than 350 volunteer hours last year and over 800 hours since we implemented our new volunteer hours recording system in the fall of 2018.

Keynote Speaker

Last but not least on the virtual Annual Meeting agenda was Sam Droege's presentation. He spoke of the relationship of conservation efforts for birds and those for bees. Often how we manage habitat in the U.S. is based on the needs of birds, which require large and varied habitats. We are beginning to study the habitat needs for bees and insects and learning that most of them are specialists, requiring specific plants for survival. Sam focused on strategies to support our region's more than 450 species of native bees. Because each species co-evolved with a specific genus or species of flower that supports its life cycle, his key recommendation is to plant as many different native plant species as possible to ensure each bee can find what it needs to survive.

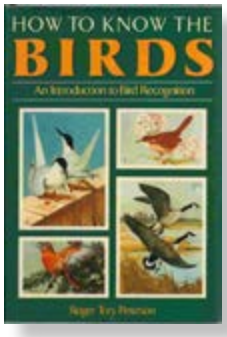
Despite a few technical challenges and a slight delay, the 25th Anniversary Annual Meeting was a success and is now available for all to see on Loudoun Wildlife's YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjU8yywkpQU. Our virtual events continue to evolve and adapt so we can continue to provide the high-quality content you have come to know and love from Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

Congratulations to our award recipients, Bryan and Anne, and many thanks to all of our volunteers, members, and donors for your continuing support during this time. We miss seeing you all and look forward to when we can once again gather in person. Until then, we wish you happy, socially distanced days in nature!

Four Books About Birding

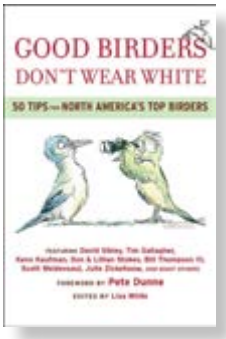
Review by Steve Allen

This may get a little confusing as we discuss four books, two of which have exactly the same title as each other, and the other two have almost exactly the same title as each other. Trust me, it will all eventually become clear.



by Roger Tory Peterson

by Ted Floyd



edited by Lisa White

edited by Lisa White and Jeffrey A. Gordon

Seventy years ago, Roger Tory Peterson, author of the first great field guides to the birds, wrote "an introduction to bird recognition," which he called ***How to Know the Birds***. Aimed at beginning bird watchers, the book was part Birding 101 textbook and part sales brochure for the Peterson field guides.

Unfortunately, Peterson's book has not stood the test of time. While the chapter on what to generally look for in terms of field marks, behavior, and song is still very useful, I would not recommend it to a beginning birder for several reasons, although experienced birders might find it nostalgic.

The standard names of many of the birds mentioned in the book have changed since the book was published. While most of these changes involved adding a geographic term (*Northern* Cardinal, *Eastern* Phoebe) or some other descriptive (*Yellow-bellied* Sapsucker, *Great-crested* Flycatcher) to the bird's name, a few of them are wholly unrecognizable. Do you know the modern names for these birds: 1. Baldpate; 2. Man-o'-War-Bird; 3. Old Squaw; 4. Water Turkey; 5. Wood Ibis? (Answers are at the end.)

The world has changed in many ways since 1949, and Peterson's book does not reflect those changes. A list of the challenges that birds face today would include, at a minimum, climate change, habitat reduction, light pollution, outdoor cats, and skyscrapers. Peterson mentions none of these. In fact, the only concern mentioned in the book is the hunting of raptors, which he refers to several times, and which is now illegal in most cases.

Birding has also changed, especially in the last decade. In Peterson's time, all you really needed was a pair of binoculars and a Peterson's Field Guide. Now, there are all sorts of technological innovations: digital field guides, digital cameras, apps like Merlin and eBird, sound recordings, and more.

To fill this lack of an introduction to the world of birding in the modern age, Ted Floyd, editor of *Birding* magazine, has adopted Peterson's title but completely changed the approach to the subject. This new ***How to Know the Birds*** is organized as a year in the life of a birder with 200 one-page chapters each highlighting a common bird you might find during the year, although many of these chapters have little to do with that bird. For example, the bird featured in Chapter 1, *Spark Bird!*, is a Cedar Waxwing, but it is really about the concept of a "spark" bird, the bird that ignites your lifelong passion for birding. Another chapter ostensibly about Pileated Woodpeckers is actually about how birds get their names and who gets to decide that nomenclature.

Other sections of the book cover various aspects of modern birding such as birdsong, migration, conservation, technology, volunteering, and finally a philosophical look into the future. All told, this is a useful and interesting addition to the birding library, and recommended reading for all birders.

Good Birders Don't Wear White, edited by Lisa White, and ***Good Birders Still Don't Wear White***, edited by Lisa White and Jeffrey A. Gordon, fill a similar niche as Floyd's volume does. Each contains about 50 short chapters by various prominent and professional birders: bird tour leaders, field guide writers, bird sanctuary directors, nature photographers, and artists. Both are fun and easy reads, recommended for birders of all ages and experience.

The first volume contains tips from top birders about getting started in birding. They include tips about setting up feeders in your yard, listening for birdsong, improving your bird photography, and numerous other aspects of birding.

The title, which I've heard in the field, relates to a pair of Eared Quetzals, a neo-tropical rarity that nested in a preserve in southern Arizona and would get highly agitated whenever a birder wearing white joined the birders watching the nest. This led to a magazine article which extrapolated broadly about why birds would be upset by white clothing. A follow-up chapter questions all of that, suggesting that if you are looking for Eared Quetzal nests in southern Arizona, you should probably not wear white, but it's okay to do so elsewhere.

The second volume (***Still Don't***) is more philosophical, with many of the same authors discussing why they are so passionate about birding. Some have become closer to their children through a mutual love of birds. Another helped to reclaim a local park by reporting every bird he finds on eBird. A third has cultivated his love for Mexican food after every bird walk. What unites them: their passion for birding has helped to inspire their passion for other aspects of their lives.

Answers to the quiz: 1. American Wigeon; 2. Magnificent Frigatebird; 3. Long-tailed duck; 4. Anhinga; 5. Wood Stork

Yesterday and Today

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the Spring 1998 issue of* Habitat Herald. *Barbara Holland was the best-selling author of several books and an editor of the* Herald *from 1996 to 2002. This article proves again that some things never change.

Backyard Wildlife: The Downside

by Barbara Holland

Loudoun County is generously blessed by deer. With more than 60 per square mile, the estimate is 20,000 to 25,000, and at times most of them seem to be in our backyard munching on the perennials. [The] deer supervisor for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries reports that our deer are well-fed — as many of us know from personal observation — and he estimates that the population could double or triple before any of them start to go hungry.

White-tailed Deer photo by Michael Myers

Gardeners trade tips on how to discourage them in the garden, but most of the helpful hints have limited effects. Human hair collected from the barbershop, predator urine purchased at great expense, dried blood — what do we think they are, stupid or something? Maybe from Monday till Wednesday they'll shy away, but by Thursday they realize that human hair is no more threatening than the family cat, and they're back in the flowerbeds again.

Probably it's easiest to work around them. There are available lists of plantings that deer, it's said, don't eat. However, deer differ in their dining tastes, and some of Loudoun's, like the county itself, are becoming more sophisticated. Plantings unmolested by deer for 30 or 40 years are suddenly the *specialite du jour*. Most of the lists tell you they don't eat broad-leafed rhododendrons, and they didn't eat the fine, tall native ones my mother planted in 1960 until 1994. That was a hard winter, granted, and you couldn't begrudge them, except that they developed a taste for the stuff and have pruned the bushes into bizarre-looking trees every winter ever since.

A friend in the Park Service told me the only thing deer really, really don't eat is Colorado blue spruce. Anyone who's ever tried eating it can understand why.

All the lists tell you deer don't eat daylilies. Mother planted daylilies here and when I came in 1990 I expanded and added to her collection until, every summer, I had a paradise of them stretching across the hillside for two months of astounding color. In early spring, deer ate the young shoots, but they quickly recovered. Then three or four years ago some fool showed a deer a Chinese cookbook that suggested stir-frying daylily buds, and ever since then the deer, skipping the wok, have stripped every one of the thousands of daylilies of every bud before it opened.

I know some people who live in deer-free areas, and I dig up my daylilies and pass them on. The purple coneflowers have taken over their hillside. Deer don't eat them. I do miss the daylilies, though.

According to the official word, deer don't like:

Shrubs and Vines: Clematis, Euonymus, juniper, Pampas grass, barberry, Scotch broom, shrubby cinquefoil, wild lilac, and our own amiable native spicebush.

Ground Covers: Creeping St. John's Wort, carpet bugle, English ivy (invasive), myrtle, peppermint, or spearmint.

Flowers and Herbs: Ageratum, anemone, bells of Ireland, black-eyed Susan, bleeding heart, bracken, calla lilies, Canterbury bells, chain fern, chives, chrysanthemums, coneflowers, coreopsis, daffodils, fescue grass, foxgloves, gaillardia, Iceland poppies, iris, lady ferns, tulips, wood ferns, yarrow, or zinnias.

Other things they won't eat include the spiny, unkillable Japanese privet invading my woods, poison ivy, the Oriental bittersweet and Japanese honeysuckle killing the trees, the kudzu creeping in from the road, or the garlic-mustard crowding out the wildflowers.

In short, if you don't want it, they don't either.

Programs and Field Trips

Unless otherwise specified, contact info@loudounwildlife.org with questions.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board Meeting — Board meetings are every other month on Tuesday's at 7:00 pm. All Loudoun Wildlife members are welcome. *Contact Julie Borneman at jborneman@loudounwildlife.org* for additional information.

Dragonflies and Damselflies — August 8, Virtual recording. Loudoun County is home to over 70 species of dragonflies and damselflies. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Allison Gallo and Bryan Henson for a fun and educational virtual event exploring these fascinating insects and see them up close. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

HOA Native Plant Landscape Tour: Broadlands Wildlife Habitat — August 15, Virtual recording. Join the Broadlands Conservation Landscaping Committee and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for an in-depth look at the Broadlands Native Plant Demonstration Garden and Wildlife Habitat. This garden, which is supported by the HOA, was designed and installed by John Magee in Fall 2012. Learn which plant species have thrived here and how the garden has changed over eight years. Committee members will discuss challenges they've faced and the maintenance of the garden. Receive guidance on the best plants to use and how to design a native plant garden that is appealing to your HOA board. ***Registration required.*** *Questions: Contact info@loudounwildlife.org*

Moth Madness — Friday, August 28, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm, Morven Park, Leesburg, and Saturday, August 29, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, Neersville. Come discover why moths constitute about 90% of all the Lepidoptera on the planet: not bad for a group of animals that flew with some of our most well-known dinosaurs! Join Dr. David Adamski in reviewing the most common moth families found in the Capitol Region. After sunset, he'll help us identify the moths that are attracted to his blacklight set-up on our Woodend grounds. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Bees: The Super Pollinators That Run the World — Virtual event. Date and time TBD. 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. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Fall Native Plant Sale — CANCELED. Due to continuing concerns about COVID-19, the plant sale that was scheduled for September 12 will not take place. Promoting native plants is an important part of Loudoun Wildlife's mission. Native plants add beauty and interest to gardens year-round and provide important habitat for wildlife. Each patch of habitat in a native plant garden becomes a collective effort to nurture and sustain the landscape for birds, butterflies, bees and other animals. Restoring native habitat is essential to preserve biodiversity. A fall planting of natives generally outperforms those installed in the spring. For more information about native plants and their vital role in our world, *visit Loudoun Wildlife's Facebook page and loudounwildlife.org.*

HOA Native Plant Landscape Tour — River Creek, September 12, Virtual/In-person TBD. Join designer Susan Abraham, Conservation Landscapes, for a tour to survey conditions of this floodplain park at the confluence of the Goose Creek and Potomac River. A variety of habitats have been established in the park, and each season brings surprises as they mature. Dry and riparian woodlands, short and tall meadows, and a thriving bioswale anchor the restoration efforts that River Creek residents support. The River Creek community in Leesburg will host a tour of Confluence Park on September 12 at 10:00 am. ***Registration required.*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org*

"In wildness is the preservation of the world."
— Henry David Thoreau

Snickers Gap Hawk Watch — Saturday, September 19, 11:00 am. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Gerco Hoogeweg for a fall hawk watch. We plan to meet at 11:00 am in the parking lot at Snickers Gap, where we will spend a few hours hawk watching and hopefully see a major push of Broad-winged Hawks. Bring lunch and a chair. Participants will be expected to social distance. ***No registration required.***

Hawks: Hunters on the Wing — Date and location TBD. While several hawks and other birds of prey live and nest in Loudoun County, many also overwinter in our area and even more migrate through in the fall. Liam McGranaghan, raptor enthusiast, avid falconer, hawk bander, and educator, will introduce the many different birds of prey that one may find here at

Photo of Ring-necked Snake by Sharon Plummer

this time of year, describe their natural history and their migratory habits. Registration required as attendance will be limited for this program to ensure social distancing. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org*

Fascinating Facts about Bears — Virtual event. October 15, 7:00 pm. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Jenny Swiggart as she discusses the many fascinating and interesting facts about bears native to the area. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Forest Bathing: A Guided Nature and Forest Therapy Walk — Sunday, October 18, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, Neersville. Enjoy an afternoon of forest bathing in the mountains of western Loudoun County. 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, sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, will cover no more than a mile or two in three hours as we awaken our senses and explore the surrounding forests and fields. Additional details will be emailed to participants a week ahead. Limit 9. Fee: $30 members/ $40 non-members. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Leave No Trace Awareness Virtual Workshop! — Thursday, October 22, 7:00 pm. Join Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics Master Educator Jessie Myers for a one-hour Leave No Trace virtual awareness workshop. Learn about the history and principles of the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and gain valuable knowledge, skills, and motivation to enjoy the outdoors responsibly and help spread the message of responsible recreation. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Changing Seasons Walk — Saturday, October 24, 10:00 am, Location TBD. As the days get cooler and frost is in the air, deciduous trees and shrubs put on an autumn show in all shades of red, yellow, orange, and purple. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a walk in one of Loudoun's local woodlands to enjoy all the colors that Mother Nature provides this time of year. We'll discuss various tree species and why trees change their color in the fall. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

Backyard Bats — Virtual event. Date and time TBD. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for an informative live webinar program to learn about our local bats! Leslie Sturges of the Save Lucy Campaign will describe the fascinating and enchanting world of bats, our only flying mammal, and how important they are. She will also introduce the seven species of bats, some of which are common and some rare, that call Loudoun County home. ***Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions:*** *Contact info@loudounwildlife.org.*

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. ***Registration required.*** *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.*

Second Saturdays:
Sept. 12, Oct. 10, and Nov. 14, 8:00 am

Birding Bles Park

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. ***Registration required.*** *Questions: Contact Bryan Henson at* bhenson@loudounwildlife.org.

Third Sundays:
Sept. 19, Oct. 17, and Nov. 21, 8:00 am

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. ***Registration required.*** *Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or* jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Fourth Saturdays:
Sept. 26, Oct. 24, and Nov. 28, 8:00 am

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People and Wildlife Thrive Together

Pure Green Sweat Bee photo by Anne Owen