

# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

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Winter 2023



## Citizen Science in Action

### Grant Helps Secure Clean Drinking Water for Lucketts Residents

by Amy Ulland, Stream Monitoring Coordinator



Volunteers Sharanya Maddukuri and Anthony Santos and certified stream monitor Jennifer Venable sort macros collected from Limestone Branch Monitoring Site 4. Photo by Amy Ulland



The wastewater treatment facility discharge pipe that empties into the Limestone Branch tributary adjacent to JK Black Oak. Photo by Amy Ulland

A stream can't talk, but the benthic macroinvertebrates living at the bottom of the stream always have a story to tell. In the case of a tributary of Limestone Branch that flows through the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary just outside of Lucketts, these macros sounded the alarm about poor water quality concerns after Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteers conducted two benthic macroinvertebrate surveys in May 2021. This prompted Loudoun Wildlife to reach out to Friends of the Shenandoah River to conduct bacterial testing,

which indicated that high concentrations of *E. coli* were being discharged into the stream from a neighboring wastewater treatment facility (WWTF).

This became not only an environmental concern, but also a human health concern as the area's karst topography results in the surface water quality directly affecting the groundwater quality. Because residents in the Lucketts area source their drinking water from wells supplied by groundwater fed by

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## Executive Director's Message



We want to thank everyone who contributed to our success in 2022. We are so fortunate to have a dedicated and passionate community of members, donors, and volunteers who invest their time, energy, and dollars to increase our collective impact in our community. There are too many accomplishments to list in this short space, and we look forward to continuing to build upon our successes from last year, such as record participation in our Christmas Bird Count.

As nature recharges and prepares for warmer days ahead, so do we. We have an exciting year of programming planned, and we look forward to hosting our wide array of programs and events to inspire and motivate actions to protect wildlife

and healthy habitats. We have new projects to complete at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, ongoing citizen science programs, fascinating education programs, and engaging habitat conservation programs planned for you. This year also marks an important opportunity to get involved in shaping local policy with the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite process wrapping up later this year. You can make a difference for wildlife in Loudoun!

This year we have a new twist as part of our Birdhouses of Loudoun auction with the inclusion of half-barrel planters in addition to rain barrels and birdhouses. These one-of-a-kind functional art pieces are a great way to support wildlife and add a little charm around your house. Bidding will be open from February 24 until March 3.

If online auctions aren't your thing, you can join Loudoun residents for the Community Foundation's local online day of giving, Give Choose, on March 28 to show your support for your favorite local charities.

As always in April, we will host spring ephemeral nature walks and the Spring Native Plant Sale. Due to scheduling conflicts this year, our Spring Native Plant Sale will be taking place on Earth Day, April 22, at Morven Park. Spring is always a great time to plant natives! And our annual Celebrate Birds! walks, with our Birdathon, will start in April and continue into May.

The Dulles Greenway is hosting the third annual Run the Greenway on May 6. It's a great excuse to get in shape, so you can log more miles outside enjoying nature and wildlife.

Thank you for supporting Loudoun Wildlife and contributing to our success!

Happy trails,  
Michael

**Managing Editor:** Michele Savage

**Lead Editor:** Steve Allen

**Contributing Editors:** Mary Ann Good, Sharon Plummer  
Nan Siegel, Dan Sill

**Design:** Katie Shupe, Chroma Imaging, Herndon, VA

**Printer:** Mr. Print, Purcellville, VA

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Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a nonprofit 501c3 nonprofit 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 Jim McWalters.

### Office Information

Please check [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org) for hours.

Phone: 703-777-2575

Address: The Gate House, 17638 Old Waterford Road,  
Leesburg, VA 20176

Mailing address: PO Box 1892, Leesburg, VA 20177

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Vice President  
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Michael Myers [mmyers@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:mmyers@loudounwildlife.org)  
Jim McWalters [jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org)

Brian Magurn [bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org)  
Michael Sciortino [msciortino@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:msciortino@loudounwildlife.org)  
Scott Harris [sharris@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:sharris@loudounwildlife.org)

Sherri Bartlett [sbartlett@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:sbartlett@loudounwildlife.org)  
Julie Borneman [jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org)  
Barbara de Rosa-Joynt [bdrioynt@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bdrioynt@loudounwildlife.org)  
Jay Frankenfield [jfrankenfield@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jfrankenfield@loudounwildlife.org)  
Allison Gallo [agallo@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agallo@loudounwildlife.org)  
Scott Harris [sharris@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:sharris@loudounwildlife.org)  
Bruce Hill [bhill@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bhill@loudounwildlife.org)  
Jim McWalters [jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org)  
Brian Magurn [bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org)  
Michael Sciortino [msciortino@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:msciortino@loudounwildlife.org)  
Jennifer Venable [jvenable@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jvenable@loudounwildlife.org)  
Pat Whittle [pwhittle@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:pwhittle@loudounwildlife.org)

Jenny Erickson [jerickson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jerickson@loudounwildlife.org)  
aah@loudounwildlife.org  
Joe Coleman [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org)  
Bryan Henson [bhenson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bhenson@loudounwildlife.org)  
bluebird@loudounwildlife.org  
Anne Ellis [aellis@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:aellis@loudounwildlife.org)  
Allison Gallo [agallo@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agallo@loudounwildlife.org)  
Trinity Mills [tmills@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:tmills@loudounwildlife.org)  
Dave Manning [dmanning@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:dmanning@loudounwildlife.org)  
Allison Gallo [agallo@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:agallo@loudounwildlife.org)  
Gerco Hoogeweg [ghoogeweg@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:ghoogeweg@loudounwildlife.org)  
Michele Savage [msavage@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:msavage@loudounwildlife.org)  
Julie Borneman [jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jbormeman@loudounwildlife.org)  
Janet Locklear [jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org)  
Doreen Varblow [dvarblow@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:dvarblow@loudounwildlife.org)  
BJ Lecrone [bjlecrone@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bjlecrone@loudounwildlife.org)  
Atziri Ibanez [aibanez@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:aibanez@loudounwildlife.org)

Amy Ulland [aulland@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:aulland@loudounwildlife.org)  
Kim Strader [kstrader@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:kstrader@loudounwildlife.org)



## Advocating for Wildlife in Zoning Ordinance Rewrite: Learn How You Can Help

by Trinity Mills, Conservation Advocacy Specialist

For those keeping up with the county's Zoning Ordinance Rewrite (ZOR), the next portion of the draft text for review by the Planning Commission was released in early January preceding the Planning Commission's public hearing. We continue to collaborate with members of the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition to monitor this process. Currently, this portion of the draft is being reviewed by the Planning Commission in work sessions in preparation for sending it to the Board of Supervisors.



To learn more about the rewrite, watch the "Advocacy 101: The Zoning Ordinance" video on Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's YouTube channel.

Our Advocacy 101 event in November was all about the rewrite, so be sure to check out the recording of this event on our YouTube channel — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjivJP56cog> — to learn more about the ZOR process. You will also learn what you can do to get involved to ensure that wildlife gets their due in the final text. We encourage you to stay engaged in this process and hope you will join us for our in-person volunteer event to kick off the final stage of the ZOR once it moves to the Board of Supervisors in 2023. Check out the event calendar for details and more information!

### Uplighting, Solar Project, and Route 15

At the December 6 Board of Supervisors business meeting, the Board voted on three items relevant to wildlife conservation.

The first was a vote resulting in the approval of an application to allow upward-facing decorative lighting on the Equinix

data center in Ashburn. "Uplighting" is prohibited by current zoning regulations, and staff recommended denial of the application. These lights are unnecessary and would contribute to light pollution and disrupt nocturnal wildlife that relies upon dark skies. Data centers have been implored to implement efforts to make their buildings more aesthetically pleasing. The Board voted to approve this application on the reasoning that Equinix was heeding this request and that the data center is located close to Dulles airport, which is already a significant source of light pollution. We continue to monitor similar applications that will likely arise as a result of this approval.

Supervisors also approved an application that amended zoning to allow for construction of a by-right solar array on 835 acres of mature forest and wetlands on the Dulles airport property. The first avenue proposed would clear hundreds of acres of forest and impact nearly 80 acres of wetlands. The airport authority's own study indicated that 80% of the power needs could be provided by building solar on existing structures (such as buildings, parking lots, and garages). There is also discussion of using a combination of these two options. It was noted after further review of the requirements that the applicant is required to come to a site agreement with the county government even with the by-right zoning reinstatement. We will continue to monitor this project through the planning phase, and will advocate for siting that reduces forest impact as much as possible.

The Board voted to approve a number of short-term improvements to Route 15, including rumble strips and enforcement areas. We have been staying involved in this process to advocate for the implementation of efficient and effective safety improvements that may mediate the safety concerns on Route 15 and negate the need for a bypass through JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.



A Red Fox may be observing birds and birders in the field during the December 28 Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Michael Sciortino



*Citizen Science in Action, continued from page 1*

streams, the quality of these streams can affect the quality of their drinking water.

In January 2022, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy received a \$41,432 grant from the Tides Foundation on behalf of the Google Data Centers Grants Fund to support a “Securing Clean Drinking Water for the Lucketts Community” project. This yearlong project focused on:

- Determining the extent of *E. coli* contamination in two streams.
- Informing the community about this contamination and providing educational resources related to drinking water quality.
- Empowering the community in knowing if their drinking water was contaminated and offering solutions.



Certified stream monitors Emma Lloyd and Emily Maltman observe a macro collected from the Limestone Branch Monitoring Site 1. Photo by Amy Ulland

To determine the extent of *E. coli* contamination in the Limestone Branch tributary and Clarks Run in the Lucketts area, Loudoun Wildlife volunteers used a combination of bacterial and biological water quality testing. This included the collection and testing of 29 rounds of *E. coli* samples at six stream sites and two WWTF discharge pipes, as well as benthic macroinvertebrate testing at three sites in the spring and fall. (Find data from these tests at <https://loudounwildlife.org/2022/03/lucketts-water-quality-monitoring-sites/>.)



A water sample collected for *E. coli* analysis for the project. Photo by Amy Ulland

Over 70% of *E. coli* samples from all stream sites had *E. coli* concentrations higher than the threshold for recreational use (235 CFU per 100 mL of water) as defined by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VA DEQ). These *E. coli* values tended to spike — sometimes over 41 times the safety threshold — following rain events, which was likely due to runoff from area *E. coli* sources such as horse, cow, and wildlife waste. Other sources of *E. coli* include sewage coming from failing residential septic systems and wastewater treatment facilities.

The Limestone Branch WWTF discharge pipe samples exceeded the VA DEQ facility permit limit of 126 CFU in 15 out of 28 sampling events, with two of these samples having an *E. coli* concentration 192 times the permit limit. Loudoun Wildlife provided these results to VA DEQ, which in turn shared them with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — which was already investigating this WWTF. Ultimately, EPA mandated that the owners of this WWTF had 2.5 years to plan for the construction and completion of a new facility.

To inform the Lucketts community about the extent of this *E. coli* contamination and provide educational resources, Loudoun Wildlife hosted a town hall-style meeting, created a project webpage, and worked in partnership with the Lucketts Ruritans, who graciously published articles about the project in their spring and fall Lucketts News and Notes newsletters.

Forty-five people attended a meeting at the Lucketts Community Center in April that included a panel of speakers from the Loudoun County Health Department, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, Virginia Cooperative Extension’s Loudoun branch, and a professional geologist, who covered topics relating to the project, including *E. coli*, proper well and septic maintenance, affordable drinking water testing, and the interplay of karst topography and water quality. (Read more about this data at <https://loudounwildlife.org/2022/04/resources-well-water-and-septic-systems/> and <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/stream-monitoring/clean-water/>)



Attendees at the Loudoun Wildlife-hosted meeting at the Lucketts Community Center in April. Photo by Amy Ulland

The project assisted the residents of the general Lucketts area by providing educational, testing, and technological resources resulting in clean drinking water. Among those helped were two underserved minority communities within the village of Lucketts, who were extremely concerned about the quality of their water.

Loudoun Wildlife provided comprehensive drinking water assessments to 17 Hispanic families, consisting of 65 individuals, living in two mobile home park communities. Each family was spending up to \$3,600 a year on bottled water, as they believed their water wasn’t safe to drink or cook with.

Data showed that their drinking water



was completely safe to use, though "very hard" with a high mineral content. Still, the families indicated that they did not trust the results and would continue to drink bottled water. Loudoun Wildlife then purchased electronic water descalers and high-quality countertop water filtration systems for the families to allow them to feel safe consuming their tap water. These descalers and filtration systems will result in a savings of up to \$14,400 for each family over four years, and up to \$244,800 for all 17 families over four years.



An electronic water descaler installed at a mobile home park residence in Lucketts. Photo by Amy Ulland

Loudoun Wildlife also provided no-cost well-water quality panels to six households in the greater Lucketts area and provided the homeowners with resources about how to deal with the presence of coliform bacteria, lead, and iron.

Through this grant project, Loudoun Wildlife demonstrated the positive impacts that citizen science can have at a community level by turning our water quality data into action. This resulted in positive tangible impacts for the Lucketts community, including improvements in human health, increased awareness of surface water and drinking water quality issues, and economic relief for underserved minority communities.

## Bird Count Sets Record for Human Participants

by Joe Coleman and Bryan Henson, Birding Coordinators



Even veteran birders may be surprised by what they see during a bird count. Following the calls of Red-shouldered Hawks in Purcellville on Dec. 28, one team spotted a Red-shoulder (left) chasing a much larger Great Horned Owl. Photo by Liam McGranaghan

Not only are Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) a highlight of the year for the birding community, they are a snapshot of local bird populations. Because they are done every year under the same strict count protocols, they provide invaluable scientific information on long-term trends.

Except for the number of participants (157), which was considerably higher than any previous year, the 26th Central Loudoun count held December 28 was not record-breaking but still very impressive. On the high side of average for the most part, some numbers were down, especially for waterfowl and blackbirds. This was probably the result of several days of extreme cold that immediately preceded the count and froze even running water.

For the first time ever, two Peregrine Falcons were found on the count. They were seen at almost the same time but 3.5 miles apart on opposite sides of the Luckstone Quarry in Ashburn, where they have been documented nesting. Other highlights included finding more Red-shouldered Hawks (186) and Bald Eagles (67) than on any of our previous CBCs. In addition to high counts of



This Bald Eagle was one of 10 that birders spotted at the Loudoun County Landfill on CBC day. Photo by Bob Abrams

Herring Gulls (726), two juvenile Iceland Gulls (tying our previous high count for that rare species) were among the many birds found at the County Landfill. While Ring-billed Gulls are the most common gull in our area in the winter, the team at the landfill was excited to find a Ring-billed Gull that was hatched and banded on June 25, 2020, in Varennes, Quebec.

*Continued on page 12*



# Making a Meadow? Agenda Matters

by Susan Abraham



A volunteer works among the faded last blooms and ripening seeds of asters in the Harrison Street meadow in Leesburg in late October. Photo by BJ Lechrone

Grasslands, meadows, prairies, and savannahs — these unique habitats have important differences in structure, life cycles, and complexity, yet each of them is dependent upon disturbance to persist in the environment. Fire, grazing, water inundation, and windthrow are some historic disturbances in our not-too-distant past that created conditions for these habitats to establish and thrive.

Today, agricultural and land development practices as well as fire suppression have profoundly altered the vast prairies once dominant in the Midwest, reducing them to remnants found on rocky, elevated soils, difficult to develop. Eastern meadows suffer similar challenges, as well as the constant pressure of succession to woodland habitats. Add the great threat of introduced weeds that outcompete our native vegetation for light, nutrients, and space and you have the perfect recipe for low-value landscapes.

The art and science of meadow making is young in our culture, thousands of years old for indigenous peoples, and millennial for Mother Nature. Careful observation of indigenous practices and knowledge of ecological principles can assist us in establishing a meadow. Making a meadow provides valuable habitat, essential ecological services, and breathtaking beauty.

Every meadow maker has an agenda. Early cultures capitalized on forest openings, creating rich ecotones (areas of transition between different habitats), to

attract grazers and a diversity of edible and medicinal herbaceous plants not found in shaded woodlands. Employing fire and cuts, they managed a system of meadows in their forest farming practices. Contemporary meadow agendas may include pollinator habitats in a field adjacent to an organic farm or an outdoor classroom, support for grassland birds, or preparation of depleted soils for a future woody landscape.

Once an agenda is understood, a mode of establishment can be determined. Clearing a meadow site by mechanical or chemical means requires a significant investment of money and time. A stripped area may foster quick seed sprouting rates, but it can also invite serious weed infestation. Although some projects may have the resources for this approach, it has been my experience that many do not.

If we consider what would be the least intervention necessary to begin the process of meadow making, we begin to manage our expectations in line with modest practices. Shepherding existing seed banks, suppressing introduced weeds through timed cuts, and planting native species into disturbed or bare areas over time is

now my preferred approach to making a meadow. A meadow's first year, its infancy, may require consistent care: some watering and weeding. During the second year, the toddler stage, it grows in fits and starts. The third-year adolescent meadow begins to shine, as plants find their niches, and by the fourth



A volunteer spreads seeds and mulch in the Harrison Street meadow in late October. Photo by BJ Lechrone



Volunteers work to remove weeds and plant seeds in the Harrison Street meadow in Leesburg in late October. Photo by BJ Lechrone

year its character is revealed. Every year, every season, every day, a meadow changes — a morning meadow looks quite different from a meadow at dusk. The way a summer breeze dances through the meadow is distinct from the flutter of birds alighting on native grasses poking through its winter coat.

The Harrison Street Meadow project in Leesburg (where a section of the W&OD trail bisects Harrison Street) is an example of this approach. A small pollinator meadow was established by enthusiastic area residents and Loudoun Wildlife members with support from the City of Leesburg, The Leesburg Garden Club, and NOVA Parks. Volunteers planted a variety of native plugs several years ago, weeding and mowing the site regularly. Sadly, when the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted volunteer activities, the meadow became overrun with introduced weeds.

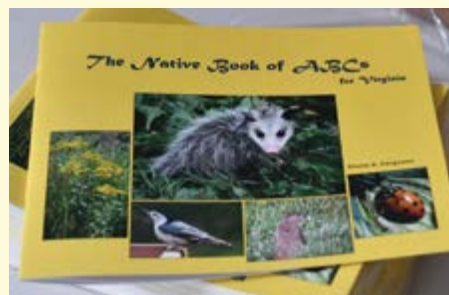
The agenda at this juncture is to build upon initial efforts and develop a thriving pollinator habitat. Planting native grasses into existing bare spots will help provide competitive advantage over introduced weeds and give structure for flowering plants. Monthly cuts or mowing until mid-July heat arrives will also help keep weed seeds from developing, eventually allowing the native summer flowering plants to dominate as they become prevalent in the seed bank. Over time and with committed management, the Harrison Street Meadow will create a unique habitat for wild and human visitors.

**Susan Abraham** is a former professor in graduate studies at the George Washington University Sustainable Landscape Design program. She holds a master's degree in sustainable landscape design, a BFA, and is a certified Watershed Steward and a Virginia Master Naturalist.

## From Childhood Love of Nature to *The Native Book of ABCs for Virginia*

by Sheila Ferguson

Where does an interest and love of nature come from? For most of us, it begins in childhood. Starting when I was a kid, my Dad showed me all kinds of cool things in nature. One memory that stands out is sitting with him on the hillside near our house one evening watching bats flying around. He told me they were catching insects, and how beneficial they were to our vegetable garden. Needless to say, I grew up thinking bats were amazing creatures.



As an adult, that love of nature fueled my interest in nature conservation. A few years ago, I started thinking about what could I do, as an individual, that would help people develop a conservation ethic? As Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum famously said, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."

I hit on the idea of writing a children's book as one small way to introduce children to the natural world around them. Each letter of the alphabet has a photo of a native plant or animal accompanied by brief text. *The Native Book of ABCs for Virginia* is the first book in what I hope will be a series, one for each state in the U.S.

I also decided that I wanted to target underserved children because learning about nature should be for everyone, not just those who can afford to pay for it. Therefore, I needed to find a nonprofit partner who could obtain grant funding to publish the book and give it away for free to children whose families can't afford to buy it.

In 2019 Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy agreed to the partnership, and Executive Director Michael Myers began looking for grant opportunities. In 2021 Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation provided funds to publish and distribute the book to underserved youth in Loudoun County. In 2021 the book was distributed to all Loudoun County Public School students in the first grade. (Since there are underserved youth at all public schools, not just Title 1 schools, the decision was made to distribute the book to all schools.)

I hope to be able to partner with other nonprofits in Virginia to find grant funding for wider distribution throughout the state. As I write books for other states, I would like those to follow the same model of distribution to underserved children at no cost.



# Winter-warming Memories of Monarch Season

Article and photos by Nancy Pierce Morgan

A Monarch lightly lands on the bright orange blossoms that cover the Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) in my garden. As August comes to a close, she traverses the bush purposefully, deliberately visiting every bloom cluster. Weeks later, tiger-striped caterpillars, from the tiniest quarter-inch to the plumpest and boldest, devour leaves in a methodical, typewriter-like movement, like someone eating corn on the cob, before moving to the next leaf. Caterpillars battle rivals with a head-bumping “get off my leaf!” maneuver, the youngest quickly scrambling on their little black boots to an unoccupied leaf to continue the feast.

Sturdy branches of an adjacent Butterfly Bush (non-native *Buddleia davidii*) provide a perfect staging platform for the transformation from caterpillar to chrysalis. In a circus-worthy act, the caterpillar hangs vertically, then forms a J shape. Over a period of days, each proceeds to shed its tiger stripes, antennae and all, flinging the now useless costume to the ground, then wiggling like a camper settling into a too-snug, bright-green sleeping bag. The shrub is soon laden with jade green chrysalises edged in gold beads, cleverly hidden from view. My son's sharp eye spots the first tiny chrysalis suspended from the underside of a leaf. In time, the jewel-like ornaments turn jet black with orange patterns, signaling imminent emergence.

Despite a nearly constant vigil, the dramatic opening happens in seconds and seems impossible to witness. After gauging the length of time spent in the chrysalis, I set up camp by the specimen closest to the garden edge where my iPhone camera might capture the process — if my timing is right. After crouching and nursing aching knees, I spread a beach towel on the lawn, open my laptop, and sit, back propped against the house, camera trained on my subject, elbow against knee as a makeshift tripod.

The sun warms my face; I swivel my neck periodically to avoid stiffness. After two and a half hours I concede that viewing the actual emergence is not realistic. It might be days more; I begin to feel guilty about my lack of productivity. As I gather my things, one “elbow” suddenly pops out of the chrysalis. “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, it's happening!” I quickly retrain the camera on my subject.

MONARCH  
CATERPILLARS  
FEAST ON  
BUTTERFLY WEED  
IN THE AUTHOR'S  
GARDEN.

A TELLTALE  
GLIMPSE OF WING  
PATTERN SHOWS  
THAT BUBBA THE  
BUTTERFLY IS  
READY TO MAKE  
HIS ENTRANCE.





A sudden, silent burst of the chrysalis is followed by a slow-motion backflip into the sunlight. An inflated lower torso (abdomen) appears, followed by a black and white polka dot upper torso (thorax). Stained-glass wings emerge, neatly folded like a Japanese screen. Legs frantically grasp the familiar surface of the chrysalis. The Monarch slowly rotates left, then right, as if exercising untested legs. The proboscis uncurls and curls, all systems moving through their functions in preparation for the impossible (my word) journey ahead. Vivid orange and black wings dry and slowly unfold, surrounding the body like a billowing gown. Over the next few minutes, a clear reddish-brown liquid pools on the leaf below. I wonder if this is the reason for the inflated torso; perhaps the liquid builds up to force the chrysalis to break open. The immense body, at first like an oversized caterpillar, eventually narrows to the familiar slender shape seen when Monarchs take flight.

This was the moment when I vowed to be a full-service way station for Monarchs. I learned they have all senses, so I spoke to them, sang to them, hoping my yard had superior attractions that would be the focus of gossip in Mexico.

I attempted to keep track of each caterpillar, but some escaped my vigil. One was scaling the white stucco wall of my house, the equivalent of climbing Everest. He periodically leaned out from mid-section up to survey his progress. It was hopeless, I surmised, breaking a branch off the Butterfly Bush and placing it near him. He gratefully climbed on, enjoying the lift back to square one, where he fastened his chrysalis attachment to a leaf and dutifully curled to a J. All had fed, traveled to their chrysalis campsite and transformed except one, whom I named Bubba. Bubba, larger than the others, just couldn't get enough leaves. I thought he might burst. "Bubba," I said, "times a-wasting. All your siblings have moved on, and I'm afraid the weather might change and you'll be left behind. Or what if a bird comes along? Woodchucks pass by at night; you wouldn't stand a chance...." But Bubba kept eating. And then he was gone.

Sitting at my writing table, I looked out the glass door and saw something dangling from the arm of the rocking chair on the porch. "Bubba! you made it! Way to go!" Turns out it was Bubba's sister, whom I immediately named Rocking Chair Monarch (RCM). Bubba had nestled deep down in the Butterfly Bush to camp out in his chrysalis.

*Continued on page 10*



IT ALL BEGAN WITH  
MILKWEED (BUTTERFLY WEED)  
AND VISITING MONARCHS.



BUBBA TUCKED INTO HIS  
CHRYSALIS AMONG THE BUDDLEIA  
LEAVES.



*Winter-warming Memories, continued from page 9*

One morning I saw an object caught in a spider web on the sunroom window, curled, blackened, with trace orange markings. A large spider was preparing its feast. Judging from the amount of decay, I believe it was the mother, who is said to die after laying her eggs. I raced outside to reclaim her lifeless body, placing her deep in the Spirea hedge, surrounded by pink flowers, out of her children's view.

The most memorable moment of Monarch Season was the simultaneous emergence of Bubba and his intrepid sister, RCM, the caterpillar who journeyed to the base of the Butterfly Weed, crossed the slate porch, climbed the leg of a wooden rocking chair and fastened herself to the underside of the chair arm. RCM climbed out of her chrysalis and, finding no viable traction on the smooth



chair arms, remained suspended on her translucent chrysalis for a day or two. I kept a constant vigil and was treated to a view of a tiny head and antennae peeking over the chair arm at me. Rushing outdoors I saw her in full view. As I admired her ingenuity and achievement,

Bubba appeared in the Butterfly Bush across the way, stumbling around. "Bubba! you weren't eaten by a bird! Welcome!" Noticing RCM's struggle with footing, I snapped off another branch, positioned it below her, and she lightly stepped on, accepting a ferry ride to her brother's shrub. Now, I thought, she will get to know her brother, converse with him, and they can keep each other company on the trek to Mexico. How many motel keepers would go the extra mile like this?

As RCM found her footing and exercised her legs, she made her way to the topmost flower cluster, preparing for takeoff. Bubba was deep in the shrub, losing his balance. But their pre-journey preparation was imperiled by the remnants of Hurricane Ian. At the very moment RCM was perched to launch on October 4, dark clouds and a fierce wind blew in, chilling the air severely. Like soldiers on command, the two Monarchs moved into a parallel position to protect their wings, and fastened tight to the branches. There they perched, immobilized for three days, two nights of pouring rain and buffeting winds. I didn't sleep. I considered bringing them inside or creating a protective structure over them. But humans are known for doing more harm than good. I had already moved RCM from a dry shelter on the porch to the most vulnerable place near her brother. So instead I brought two chairs outside, covered them with a bed sheet, and placed them just beyond the shrubs to block the wind and screen them from predators. But what if the wind knocks over the chairs and crushes the Monarchs? I woke multiple times to check, and the chairs held. They must be hungry! Online sources recommend fruit juice poured in a shallow dish with a paper towel serving as a trestle they could feed from. But they didn't budge.

The last day with Monarchs was truly a grand finale. All the knowledge I'd gained over the past two months prepared me to fully appreciate the miracle I witnessed, an intimate association with nature that transformed my actions and advocacy. Morning brought continued chill, clouds, and rain that paralyzed their wings. Brother and sister remained clamped to adjacent branches, wings aligned to channel fierce wind gusts between the corridors of those beautiful stained-glass panels.



No motion for three days. Are they alive? What will reengage them? Consulting BJ Lechrone, an Audubon at Home ambassador for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, I learned the temperature must be at least 55 degrees to warm

and activate their wings. Today the sun was predicted to return, the temperature rising to 55 at about 11:00 a.m. Patience. I brought all my dinner ingredients outdoors, sitting in RCM's rocker, peeling, chopping, stirring in full view of the Monarch siblings. 10:00 a.m.: 50 degrees. I offered a pep talk. "Today's the day, guys, I'm almost sure of it. You have been so patient, vigilant. Your time to fly is near." I sang an improvised version of "Where is Home" from the musical *The Visitor*, about the plight of immigrants: "Where is home? Oh where is home, our home? / Is it Virginia, or is it Mexico? / Dear Bubba and dear RCM, — it's — time — to — go."

Suddenly one wing moved. I checked the temperature — exactly 55 degrees, amazing! Both Monarchs stirred on cue. Slowly but surely, they readied their bodies. A flock of geese flew over. I warned them, "Stay away from those guys — that V thing could be treacherous." RCM climbed around in the bushes, moving her wings, pausing, resting, repeating. Bubba was still lethargic, one wing bat, then time out. "Hey! why don't you two fly together and keep each other company?" Differences in their movements suggested that probably wouldn't happen. Suddenly RCM leaped from the shrub to the top of the sheet-covered chairs, beating her wings furiously and then up, up, straight up, over the roof, and she was gone.



I cheered for her, then turned to her brother. Not much happening. Minutes passed and he started to climb adjacent branches, losing his balance, falling on his back. He climbed over to the completely denuded Butterfly Weed branches, made his way up and down each barren stalk in vain, then returned to the Butterfly Bush near his chrysalis. "Hey, your sister's already..." He climbed onto the last of the blooming flower stalks and, one by one, dipped his proboscis into each flower and drank deeply — every stalk, every bloom. His sister had taken off with no nourishment. Neither were able to reach the fruit juice. But Bubba wasn't leaving without a hearty meal. Once he had his fill, he wasted no time, leaping into the air like a superhero, soaring around the White Pine, high into the sky, loop de loops, dips and dives, quite an airshow for 30 minutes. And then he was gone. That night I thanked the full moon for lighting their way, and pictured the great party awaiting them across the border.



Two days later, the silence was palpable. Monarch Season had been a musical event, a dance, a painting, a miracle, a lesson about the impact of some of the tiniest lives on our planet. I peer out the glass door in case a hidden chrysalis has produced another visitor. Next spring, I will purchase more Butterfly Weed plants from the Loudoun Wildlife

Conservancy Native Plant Sale. When August comes, I will be ready.

**Nancy Pierce Morgan** is director emeritus of the Georgetown Lombardi Arts and Humanities Program. She leads Loudoun Wildlife's monthly *Writing in Nature* program, which is open to all who register to attend at [loudounwildlife.org](http://loudounwildlife.org).



## Book Review: *Eating to Extinction* by Dan Saladino

Review by Steve Allen

The story, sadly, is always the same.

Over hundreds, or even thousands, of years, a varietal of a common crop called a landrace\* evolves by a combination of natural selection and selective breeding by regional farmers. It meets perfectly the local growing conditions — soil, climate, pests, etc. — and becomes embedded in local diets and culture. Then, in the second half of the 20th century comes the “Green Revolution,” and with it the landrace is forced off the land, pushed out of the marketplace, and driven to near extinction.

*Eating to Extinction* by Dan Saladino is the story of these landrace varietals: how they developed, why they are important to local cultures around the world, and why the genetic diversity they provide is important to us all. Saladino travels to 30 countries on six continents, seeking out the determined growers trying to keep alive their landraces and the local cultures that have grown with them.

As the world’s population grew, the need for increased productivity grew with it. Crop scientists developed new varietals that produced higher yields but sacrificed genetic diversity. Crops became increasingly hybridized, often resulting in so-called F1 hybrids that produce extraordinary yields but require enormous amounts of water, fertilizer, and pesticides. These “improved” varietals are also incapable of reproduction on their own, so farmers must purchase seed from large corporations every year.

Little by little, farmers switched from the traditional landrace to the new hybrids, either by economic necessity or political

coercion, and the landrace became extinct or nearly so. In some cases, the landrace survives only as a handful of seeds in a strategic seed bank somewhere in the world.\*\*

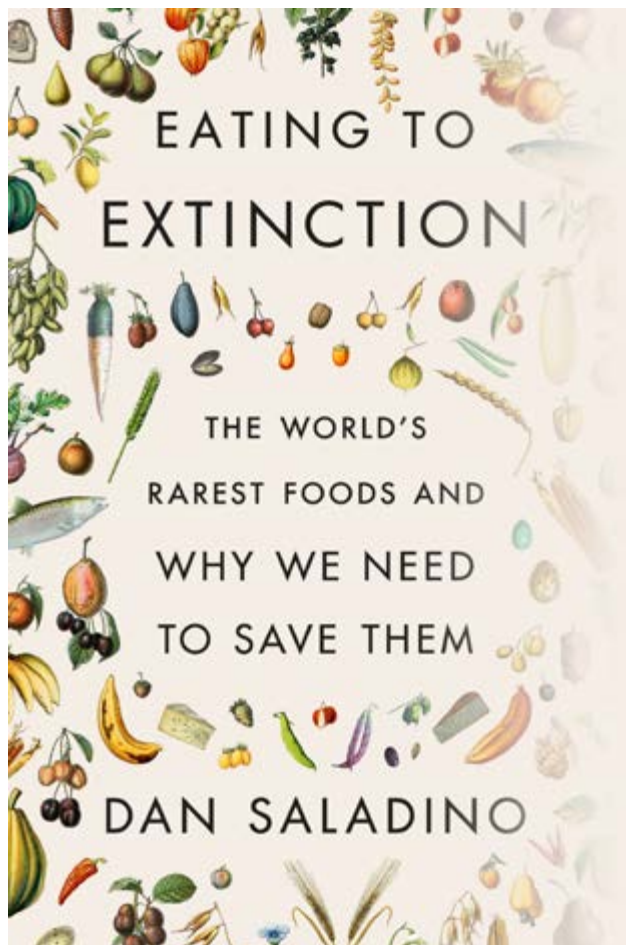
The success of the Green Revolution is spectacular and, at the same time, concerning. In the 50 years between 1970 and 2020, the world’s population doubled while grain production

tripled. At the same time, the increasing lack of diversity in our diets is shocking. Fifty percent of all calories consumed by humans on the planet derive from just three grains: wheat, rice, and corn. Potatoes, barley, soy, and sugar account for another 25%.

The perceived problem with landraces is that the large international food conglomerates don’t want them. These large producers need vast amounts of an ingredient like wheat flour that is always the same in terms of flavor and moisture content so that they can consistently produce an identically tasting product every time. They do not want idiosyncratic products that have inconsistent, different, or stronger flavors because every individual plant pulls different combinations of trace minerals from the ground. Thus, the only market for landrace grains, vegetables, and other agricultural products is the local one, and producing

them excludes local growers from more lucrative international markets.

*Eating to Extinction* is several books at once: a travelogue to rural places around the world, a history of agriculture, and a clarion call about the need to save the world’s rarest and most endangered foods. It is a delicious yet disturbing story.



\*First coined about 100 years ago, the word “landrace” is from the German “landrasse” for country-breed.

\*\*Seed banks are underground vaults around the world that store hundreds of thousands of samples of plant seeds in deep-freezes. While they are a vital resource, they can also become the victims of local and international political upheaval. The principal seed bank in the Middle East was originally located in Iran, then moved to Syria, and recently to Lebanon.



# Volunteers of the Quarter: Cindy and George Bertholdt

by Kim Strader, Volunteer Coordinator



Earlybird (Cindy Bertoldt)



Wingman  
(George Bertoldt)

Loudoun Wildlife is fortunate to have around 430 volunteers who contribute over 11,000 hours a year to support our work. The vast majority of our volunteers are individuals, but we also have a few families and multiple couples volunteering together, like Cindy and George Bertholdt. Anyone who regularly follows the Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam Program (<https://loudounwildlife.org/education/eagle-cam/>) may know them as Earlybird and Wingman.

Cindy and George were among the first people to volunteer when the Eagle Cam program was established in 2021. This program is unique for Loudoun Wildlife because it is an all-remote opportunity that attracts volunteers from around the country and has a worldwide audience. We have never met the Bertholdts in person, but from the start, it was clear their help would be invaluable as we soared into experiencing the life of Bald Eagles through the live-stream camera.

Cindy (aka Earlybird) began the couple's journey into remote eagle cameras by volunteering with the [American Eagle Foundation](#) as a monitor for the U.S. National Arboretum nest in 2017, while George continued to work full time. Cindy quickly discovered it was extremely helpful to have a camera operator to assist with the nest

monitoring, but one was not always available. She told George about her dilemma, and when he retired in 2018, George became her "Wingman," providing the support she needed. Thus, the Earlybird and Wingman dynamic eagle-cam duo was born, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy benefits greatly from their participation in the Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam Program.

Together the Bertholdts observe and report the Greenway eagles' activities in the [Nest Activity Log](#). Cindy's creative narrative is fun to read as she brings the eagles to life by documenting the daily lives of Rosa and Martin. We learn about nest arrival and departure times, nest work, mating, nest visits from other wildlife, and food/prey delivery. In early February we hope to see egg laying! George's legendary camera work not only facilitates observing and documenting eagle activity, it also provides excellent footage of our pair of Bald Eagles. George gladly shares his camera experience with fellow volunteers, providing camera training and backup technical support by monitoring camera health and system settings.

The Bertholdts' work can also be seen in the many videos, photographs, and screenshots posted on the Dulles Greenway Eagles' [Flickr](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#) pages. We often use their work for the Friday Eagle posts on the Loudoun Wildlife [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

We are fortunate that Earlybird and Wingman (Cindy and George) are on board with our program and share

their tremendous knowledge of eagles, experience with operating remote cameras, and skills for engaging with a worldwide audience. Everyone who interacts with the Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam has benefited from this couple's involvement. Many thanks to Cindy and George Bertholdt — and to all of the couples, families, and individuals who volunteer with Loudoun Wildlife. Your involvement is vital to helping create a place where people and wildlife thrive together.

*Birding, continued from page 5*

The count also set records for some other species: Killdeer (42), White-breasted Nuthatches (276), Northern Mockingbirds (357), Song Sparrows (783), and Swamp Sparrows (69). And while the number of Eastern Bluebirds (770) was smaller than last year's record-setting 800, it was the second highest ever, continuing a successful trend for that species.

Continuing an unwelcome trend, however, White-crowned Sparrows dropped to their lowest number ever, 12.

Three groups are invaluable to the success of the count — the sector and team leaders, the many participants that join those leaders in the field, and the numerous landowners who give us permission to visit their properties. The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy thanks all of them for making this count the success it has been for so many years.

Please join us for the next CBC — it's not too early to put Wednesday, December 28, 2023, in your calendar!

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



# Programs and Field Trips

Unless otherwise specified, contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org) with questions.

## 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. Sign Up Online.** Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).

**Second Saturdays:**

**February 11, March 11, April 8, 8:00 am**

## Birding Bles Park



Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is pleased to offer a regular bird walk at **Bles Park**, located along the Potomac in eastern Loudoun. More than 175 different species of birds have been observed here 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. Sign Up Online.** Questions: Contact Bryan Henson at [bhenson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bhenson@loudounwildlife.org).

**Third Sundays:**

**February 19, March 19, April 16, 8:00 am**



## Birding BRCS

The **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship** (BRCS) is a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun. With its diverse wildlife habitats, including meadows, streams, and heavily forested slopes, BRCS draws a wide variety of birds and other creatures. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on our monthly walk and see what's there! Meet at the Education Center; bring binoculars if you have them. BRCS is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671); detailed directions at [www.brcs.org](http://www.brcs.org). **Registration required. Sign Up Online.** Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).

**Fourth Saturdays:**

**February 25, March 25, April 22, 8:00 am**

## 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 Jim McWalters at [jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org) for additional information.

## Writing in Nature — First Thursdays: February 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, Gate House at Morven Park.

Join Nancy Morgan, director emeritus, Georgetown Lombardi Arts and Humanities Program, for this monthly opportunity presented by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to enjoy the combined health benefits of time spent in nature and writing thoughts and feelings. Writing is often considered a solo, reflective practice, but writing in the company of others can be a supportive, community-building activity that encourages regular practice. Each session is a stand-alone event; come when you are able. Registration is open through the morning of the workshop. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

## Winter Walk — Saturday, February 11, 1:00 pm, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.

Join naturalist Jake van Schilfgaarde on this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy winter walk to discover and discuss how animals and plants adapt to the coldest months of the year. This will be a relatively easy, but wet, walk during which we will examine the trees, plants, animal signs, and insects we find along the trails in this unspoiled setting. Participants should wear sturdy, water-resistant footwear and dress for the weather. Family-friendly; *limit 12*. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.** Note: Due to the environmentally sensitive habitat and rare species, JK Black Oak is not open for general public access.

## Bluebird Kickoff — Sunday, February 12, 2:00 pm, Virtual.

Kiley Gannaway, Volunteer Education Assistant for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Bluebird Monitoring Program, will provide an orientation on bluebirds and nest box monitoring. She will give an overview of the program, discuss the current trails we monitor in Loudoun, and take us through a slide show all about bluebirds. The discussion includes tips about landscaping for bluebirds as well as leaving natural cavities and providing nest boxes. Participants interested in joining a monitoring team for the 2023 season can sign up during the meeting. Those interested in monitoring their own home nest box can register during the meeting as well. Join us to learn more and get involved! **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

## Native Wildflowers from Spring Ephemerals to Fall Favorites — Wednesday, February 15, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Brambleton Library.

Virginia Master Naturalist Ami Mason will walk us through a year of natives for the home garden and discuss the importance of wildlife relationships to the development of flowers throughout the year. This program is co-sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Loudoun County Public Library.

## Our Wild Bees — Thursday, February 16, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Rust Library.

This talk, presented by T'ai Roulston, will highlight the diversity, natural history, and importance of the wild bee pollinators that live among us. It will also discuss their conservation status and how we can think of and develop our own yards as an integral component of local pollinator habitat. This program is co-sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Loudoun County Public Library.

## Waterfowl Field Trip — Saturday, February 18, 10:00 am – 12:30 pm.

Winter brings a good variety of waterfowl to Loudoun, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is offering a field trip to find these attractive creatures. We will visit a couple of local hotspots where we should find many of the species that regularly visit the county. Locations will be determined a few days in advance of the trip and emailed to registered participants. *Limit 12*. **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

## Advocacy 101: Public Speaking — Wednesday, February 22, 7:00 pm, Ashburn Library.

At Loudoun Wildlife's second Advocacy 101 event for 2023, we will follow up on our previous topic, Writing Your Public Official, with tips and tricks on how to be comfortable and effective in public speaking. Showing up and sharing stories is the most effective way to advocate to our county officials. Join us in Meeting Room C of the Ashburn Library to learn and practice raising your voice in person at Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors public meetings! **Registration required: Sign Up Online.**

## Birdhouses of Loudoun Online Auction — Friday, February 24, 12:00 pm, through Friday, March 3, 10:00 pm.

Another exciting online auction to benefit Loudoun Wildlife is coming! Up for bidding are beautiful and unique functional as well as artistic birdhouses and other works by local artists, as well as experiences, including an exclusive picnic tour of JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. Watch our



social media for a preview of the 2023 birdhouses. This auction will not disappoint — don't miss out! Details, including a link to the auction site, will be available at [loudounwildlife.org](https://loudounwildlife.org).

**Native Plant Book Club — Tuesday, February 28, 7:00 pm, Birch Tree Bookstore, Leesburg, or Virtual.** Join our partners Watermark Woods Native Plants, Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL), and Birch Tree Bookstore for Read! Plant! Grow! Book Club, an LCPL program that focuses on native plants. At the first meeting we'll discuss the book *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* by Andrea Wulf. You may borrow this book through LCPL or purchase it at Birch Tree Bookstore. Attend online or in person. To attend online, go to the LCPL calendar (<https://library.loudoun.gov/> and click Event Calendar) to get the link to the program. Come prepared to share your thoughts and questions as we examine how important gardening and agriculture were to our founding fathers and how this passion influenced the decisions they made as they were creating the nation. This program is co-sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and LCPL; see details at <https://www.birchtreebookstore.com/event-details/read-plant-grow-book-club-that-focuses-on-native-plants-2>.

**Woodcocks at the Institute Farm — Friday, March 3, 6:00 pm.** Witness the incredible courtship displays of the woodcock, one of our most fascinating avian residents. On this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy outing, we will watch and listen for the woodcock's "peent" at the Institute Farm near Aldie. Limit 9. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Birding at Broad Run Stream Valley Park — Saturday, March 4, 8:00 – 11:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife in search of birds at this park along Broad Run, which combines a rich flood plain on both sides of the stream, edge and meadow habitat, and multiple ponds. The varying habitats should provide the participants with a good variety of overwintering birds and possibly some early migrants. Parking information will be emailed to registered participants. **Registration required and limited: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Native Wildflowers from Spring Ephemerals to Fall Favorites — Wednesday, March 8, 7:00 pm, Virtual.** Virginia Master Naturalist Ami Mason will walk us through a year of natives for the home garden and discuss the importance of wildlife relationships to the development of flowers throughout the year. This program is co-sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife and the Loudoun County Public Library. To join, go the LCPL calendar (<https://library.loudoun.gov/> and click Event Calendar).

**Woodcocks at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary — Sunday, March 12, 7:15 pm.** Join us for an evening walk at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. We'll take a short walk on this special property looking for birds, and then, as dusk settles in, we'll hope to hear the "peents" of American Woodcock and see their display flight. *Limit 10. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#). Note: Due to the environmentally sensitive habitat and rare species, JK Black Oak is not open for general public access.*

**Plant This, Not That — Tuesday, March 14, 7:00 pm, Virtual.** Julie Borneman, owner of Watermark Woods Native Plants, will discuss why and how best to use native plants in your yard, factors to consider when choosing plants, and alternatives to common non-native landscape plants. Learn how to be a better steward of your own property, to enhance our ecosystem as well as maintain a pleasing aesthetic. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Dulles Greenway Wetlands Bird Walk — Saturday, March 18, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a bird walk at the Dulles Wetlands. Built in the early 1990s to replace wetlands lost when the Dulles Greenway was built, these wetlands along Goose Creek near Oatlands are a great place to observe a wide variety of birds, including small sparrows with their cryptic plumage, beautiful waterfowl, stately wading birds, and a magnificent pair of Bald Eagles that have successfully nested there for over a decade. Expect to encounter rough terrain where walking is difficult. *Limit 10. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#). Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).*

**Night Amphibian Walk at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands — Saturday, March 25, 6:00 – 9:00 pm.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a unique opportunity to explore the world of amphibians (and perhaps a reptile or two) at the Dulles Wetlands at night. This guided walk will focus on the amphibians that inhabit the various wetlands on the property. Waterproof footwear and a flashlight/headlamp will be a necessity. *Limit 6 adults. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

**Creek Critters of the Catoctin — Sunday, March 26, 1:00 pm.** Join the Purcellville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Purcellville Tree and Environment Sustainability Committee, and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to get up close and personal with the creek critters living in the South Fork of the Catoctin Creek at the [Chapman-DeMary Trail](#). Loudoun Wildlife Stream Team members will discuss the natural history of these critters, help participants learn how to identify them, and explain how they can help us determine the health of a stream. **Registration required after March 1 at the Purcellville Parks and Recreation website, <https://www.purcellvilleva.gov/720/>**

**Events-Activities. Questions: Contact Amy Ulland at [aulland@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:aulland@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Give Choose — Tuesday, March 28.** Give Choose is 24 hours of giving organized by the Community Foundation for Loudoun and Northern Fauquier Counties to benefit local charities serving our community. The goal is to inspire our community to come together to give generously to charities that make our community the best place to grow up and grow old. With a donation as little as \$10, you can support wildlife habitat and help make Loudoun a place where people and wildlife thrive together. To learn more and to support Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on this day, visit our website at <https://loudounwildlife.org/event/give-choose/>. (Early giving begins March 14, and the donation link in the profile will appear then.)

**Conservation Advocacy: Volunteer Kickoff Event — Wednesday, March 29, 7:00 pm, Location TBD.** After the first five successful sessions of Advocacy 101, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy invites you to our Conservation Advocacy Volunteer Kickoff Event! Come meet your fellow Conservation Advocacy volunteers, enjoy refreshments, discuss topics of interest/concern and potential advocacy campaigns, and get ready for the final stretch of advocating for wildlife in the concluding stages of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite using tools and knowledge from our Advocacy 101 series so far! **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Vernal Pools: Introduction to a Unique Wetland Habitat — Date/Location TBD.** Vernal pools, also known as ephemeral or seasonal pools, are an important yet often overlooked type of wetland. As the name suggests, they are temporary pools, only holding water for a brief time each year. During that time, they are home to mysterious shrimp and developing dragonfly larvae, and serve as a critical breeding ground for several of our local salamander and frog species. These vernal pools are declining rapidly due to development. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a look into the wildlife that utilize these pools, and learn what we can all do to help protect these sensitive wetlands. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary Workdays — Saturday, April 1, 9:30 am to 1:00 pm.** Our first monthly workday of 2023 at JK Black Oak will focus on invasive species removal in our deer exclusion areas and around a vernal pool in the oak-hickory forest. We will also start building a fence around the vernal pool to exclude deer and allow tree seedlings to grow and prosper. We will start a little later than usual to give the day time to warm up. Additional information and directions to the site will be provided before the event. Twenty volunteers are needed and must be at least 16 years old to participate. Future workdays



are scheduled on May 6, June 3, July 8, August 5, September 2, October 7, November 4, and December 2. *Note: Due to the environmentally sensitive habitat and rare species, JK Black Oak is not open for general public access, and we can only accommodate confirmed volunteers for this event. Questions and to sign up: Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader at [kstrader@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:kstrader@loudounwildlife.org).*

**How to Certify Your Home as an Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary — Thursday, April 6, 7:00 pm, Virtual.** Want to find out how you can support wildlife habitat in your yard? Join over 350 Loudoun Sanctuaries and benefit your wild neighbors while enjoying glimpses into their activity. Nan McCarry, Loudoun Wildlife Audubon at Home ambassador, will highlight the features of these properties, the wildlife they attract, and the requirements to become a certified property. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Spring Wildflowers at Balls Bluff — Saturdays, April 8 and 15, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for one (not both!) of these field trips to explore this beautiful wooded riverside park and see the early spring wildflowers that enrich the Potomac River Valley. We will also watch for early migrating birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. *Limit 15; sign up early for this popular event. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

**Annual Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival — Saturday, April 15, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, and Sunday, April 16, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm, downtown Leesburg.** The annual Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival is a great way to kick off your spring activities! Visit Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's booth for hands-on activities for kids of all ages, see what bear scat really looks like, quiz yourself on different wildlife tracks and signs, and pick up lots of free handouts with ideas for the whole family to get outside and explore nature. For more information, visit <https://www.leesburgva.gov/departments/parks-recreation/events/flower-garden-festival>.

**Spring Native Plant Sale — Saturday, April 22, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Morven Park, main parking lot.** A landscape alive with birds, butterflies, bees, and other animals is the sign of a healthy environment. Piedmont native plants thrive in Loudoun and offer the added benefits of their beauty and value to the ecosystem. Enhance the biodiversity and success of your landscape with native plants available at this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy-sponsored sale. Flowers, shrubs, trees, vines, and ferns will be available from Watermark Woods Native Plants, Hill House Farm and Nursery, Nature by Design, and Seven Bends Nursery. **Questions: Contact Janet Locklear at [jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org).**



**Celebrate Birds, Go Birding! — April 22 through May 21.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in celebrating bird migration, one of our planet's greatest wonders! From mid-April through early June, millions of birds journey north from their wintering grounds. Some will stay and nest in our area, but many will only stay long enough to feed and replenish their strength before heading further north. It is possible to observe well over 100 species of birds in Loudoun in a single day. To celebrate this phenomenon, we invite you to join one of our bird walks at hotspots throughout the county. We also invite you to either sponsor one of our teams or participate in our **Birdathon**, Loudoun Wildlife's largest fundraiser, sometime between April 22 and May 21 — the peak of migration in our area. How many species will our intrepid birders find? Would you like to join them? Support your favorite team or form your own team by signing up online. **Registration required for all walks; [Sign Up Online](#). Questions: Contact Joe Coleman at [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).**

**Celebrating Birds regular monthly bird walks, including Blue Ridge**



**Center, Saturday, April 22; Banshee Reeks, Saturday, May 13; and Bles Park, Sunday, May 21; all starting at 8:00 am (see inset boxes for details on these walks)**

**Celebrating Birds Evening Walk at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands — Tuesday, April 25, 6:30 pm.** Numerous birds, including a pair of Bald Eagles, nest in these wetlands along Goose Creek near Oatlands, and many others visit during migration. It is also home to beavers and river otters, and the frog chorus can be deafening in the spring. Join us for a visit to this wonderful natural resource on a spring evening, when the wetlands is a magical place. Waterproof footwear, long pants, and insect repellent are advised. Expect to encounter rough terrain where walking is difficult. *Limit 12. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*



**Celebrating Birds Walk at Broad Run Stream Valley Park — Saturday, April 29, 8:00 am.** Join our leaders in search of birds at this surprisingly rich park along Broad Run which combines a rich flood plain on both sides of the stream, edge and meadow habitat, and multiple ponds. The varied habitat should provide the group with a good variety of migrating birds from shorebirds to warblers, as well as residents. Parking information will be emailed to registered participants. *Limit 14. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

**Celebrating Birds Walk at Goodstone Inn — Wednesday, May 3 (tentative), 8:00 am**



**– 11:00 am.** Join us for a bird walk at this private country estate in southwestern Loudoun. Goodstone has trails along the Goose Creek and in surrounding fields and old woods just a couple miles north of Middleburg. Meet at the lower parking lot of the Inn. *Limit 12. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

**Conservation Advocacy: Environmental Justice — Wednesday, April 26, 7:00 pm, Virtual.** Environmental advocacy is practiced across cultural borders, as environmental issues threaten the whole globe and affect every one of us. However, it has been shown time and time again that certain groups are disproportionately impacted by environmental threats, with minority and disadvantaged groups bearing the brunt of degradation. Join us to learn about how we can advocate for wildlife in the communities that need it the most. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).**

**Loudoun Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS 2023) — Thursday, April 27, 5:00 – 8:00 pm, Trailside Middle School.** Find new ways to connect with nature and support environmental stewardship in Loudoun. Students in grades K–12 share their artwork and efforts to reduce waste, conserve energy, improve water quality, protect habitat, and solve ecological challenges. Community groups offer hands-on activities, resources, and volunteer opportunities. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is co-hosting this showcase along with Loudoun County Public Schools, Loudoun Environmental Education Alliance, and Northwest Virginia Regional GREENetwork. Learn more at [loudounnature.org](http://loudounnature.org).

**Run the Greenway — Saturday, May 6.** We're excited to participate in the Dulles Greenway's Run the Greenway race! This event offers a unique opportunity for runners to raise money for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and give back to Loudoun! Participants can choose between a 5K, 10K, Kids Fun Run, or virtual race. You can sign up as an individual or as part of a team, and 100% of the funds raised on behalf of Loudoun Wildlife will come directly to us. Run local. Support local. Sign up here and start raising money for Loudoun Wildlife: <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Dulles/RunTheGreenway>. The cars are making way for runners, joggers, and walkers of all ages! Get ready to make a difference and see the toll road as you've never seen it before.

**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](http://www.loudounwildlife.org) or contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).



People and Wildlife  
Thrive Together

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy  
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Leesburg, VA 20177

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## Join us Feb. 24-March 3 for the 2023 virtual Birdhouses & Barrels Art Auction to benefit Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy!

Birdhouses!

Half-barrel  
planters!

Experience  
packages!

Rain  
barrels!

And more!



Bidding begins online at noon Feb. 24. Details: <https://loudounwildlife.org/2023/01/birdhouses-of-loudoun-2023/>