

Habitat Herald

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Summer 2023



*Green Herons, like this one spotted at Meadowbrook Farms Park, were once rare here but now can be found throughout the county.
Photo by Eric Anderson*

Birds, Birds, and More

The Many Successes of Our Latest Birdathon Fundraiser

by Joe Coleman, Birding Coordinator



Participants in this year's 13 Birdathon teams, 10 Celebrate Birds walks, and the Big Sit combined their efforts to find 157 species of birds, the same number as last year.

And as of mid-June, the Birdathon had raised a record \$22,836 for Loudoun Wildlife!

More than 50 people, adults and children, participated in the Birdathon or led walks for this year's Celebrate Birds series. Not only did they raise an incredible amount of money, they gave us a great snapshot of bird migration in Loudoun County in spring 2023, which can be compared to previous and future years. Without their observations and everything these volunteers did, this event would not have been possible or nearly as successful.

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Executive Director's Message



Summer is always an exciting time of year as the days are longer and hotter, and the return of insects becomes more obvious with dragonflies, bees, moths, butterflies, and others busily flying around, pollinating, and positively contributing to our ecosystem. I'm looking forward to getting out and counting butterflies on August 5 as part of our annual Butterfly Count again this year.

I want to take a moment to thank all our members and volunteers who have made this year so successful thus far. Over the last few months we have had amazing turnout and support for our

events and programs, from our Birdathon to the Annual Meeting to the Milkweed Sale and so many other events and programs in between. At our Annual Meeting it was particularly inspiring to hear and learn about the impact so many of our programs are having on youth in Loudoun County. Thank you to everyone who contributes to our success!

And we're looking forward to closing out the year strong as well. We are so excited to bring back Walk for Wildlife this year. We're hoping to engage even more people for this unique event that combines collecting citizen science data, getting outdoors to your favorite nature places, and raising funds to support our programs. We also have another exquisite quilt to raffle, an ongoing opportunity that will run from our Fall Native Plant Sale until our Walk for Wildlife closing celebration. There'll be lots of opportunities to purchase tickets and see

the quilt at outreach events such as the Bluemont Fair.

Some of our most anticipated programs showcase live animals, and we have some good news for you. We will be hosting two live raptor programs with Liz Dennison and her animal ambassadors. Be sure to check out all our upcoming programs and events for more details. From helping stock your garden, yard, or porch with native plants, to getting outside counting birds, butterflies, or just enjoying nature and learning more about our natural world, we hope you will be as inspired as we are to do your part to thrive together with nature.

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

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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 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

Executive Director
President
Vice President
Secretary
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Brian Magurn
Michael Sciortino
Mike Scott
Amy Ulland
Jennifer Venable
Pat Whittle

mmyers@loudounwildlife.org
jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org
sharris@loudounwildlife.org
bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org
msciortino@loudounwildlife.org

sbartlett@loudounwildlife.org
jborneman@loudounwildlife.org
jfrankenfield@loudounwildlife.org
agallo@loudounwildlife.org
sharris@loudounwildlife.org
bhill@loudounwildlife.org
bkimmel@loudounwildlife.org
plyttle@loudounwildlife.org
jmcwalters@loudounwildlife.org
bmagurn@loudounwildlife.org
msciortino@loudounwildlife.org
miscott@loudounwildlife.org
aulland@loudounwildlife.org
jvenable@loudounwildlife.org
pwhittle@loudounwildlife.org

Operations Staff

Amphibian Monitoring
Audubon at Home
Birding Coordinator
Birding Assistant
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Butterfly Count Coordinator
Butterfly Count Assistant
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Trinity Mills
Dave Manning
Allison Gallo
Gerco Hoogeweg
Michele Savage
Julie Borneman
Janet Locklear
Doreen Varblow
BJ Lechrone

jerickson@loudounwildlife.org
aah@loudounwildlife.org
jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org
bhenson@loudounwildlife.org
bluebird@loudounwildlife.org
aellis@loudounwildlife.org
agallo@loudounwildlife.org
tmills@loudounwildlife.org
dmanning@loudounwildlife.org
agallo@loudounwildlife.org
ghoogeweg@loudounwildlife.org
msavage@loudounwildlife.org
jborneman@loudounwildlife.org
jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org
dvarblow@loudounwildlife.org
bjlechrone@loudounwildlife.org



Conservation Advocacy

From Zoning Rules to Dark Skies and Everything in Between

by Trinity Mills, Conservation Advocacy Specialist

The end is almost in sight for the long Zoning Ordinance Rewrite (ZOR) process that began with completion of Loudoun County's 2019 Comprehensive Plan. Loudoun Wildlife has been closely monitoring the ZOR from the beginning.

The rewrite process entered its final stage at the beginning of June when the county's Planning Commission reviewed the draft text one last time before forwarding it to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation for approval. Once approved, the new zoning ordinance will replace the one that was adopted in 1993.

Loudoun Wildlife volunteers helped review the full draft text when it was released, to see what improvements had been implemented to incorporate more environmental protections.

We found that many of our concerns about open space standards, especially concerning native plant placement, had been addressed. For those that were not, such as specific dark sky protections, we were in conversation with the environmental representatives on the Zoning Ordinance Committee to submit motions for the Planning Commission work sessions on June 5 and 9.

The Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on the updated ZOR draft document on July 26. The public may also offer input during other review meetings in the fall.

Loudoun Wildlife's other ongoing conservation advocacy campaigns include:

Plans for Former Westpark Golf Course

The county recently acquired the 134 acres of this former golf course in Leesburg. The land was placed under

conservation easement for the purpose of preserving the natural landscape, and the property is now slated to become a park for passive recreation. Typically, a passive park may consist of walking and biking trails and include many natural and minimally disturbed areas.

Within the confines of what is allowed per the conservation easement, the park will be designed with input from the community. Information and design meetings have been held over the last few months. Loudoun Wildlife will stay involved in the process to ensure that, as it is cultivated for recreational use, this new park remains conservation-focused and that wildlife-friendly practices that build up nature are implemented.

Changes at Mickie Gordon Park

We have been working with concerned community groups to oppose an application for changes at Loudoun County's Mickie Gordon Park in Middleburg. Many local residents have said they find the major additions, including lighted fields, unsuitable for this rural location.

The plans for the park have been shifting, however. Following massive public opposition expressed at a June 29 community meeting, the county paused the application process for reassessment.

Loudoun Wildlife is monitoring this evolving issue and will submit written comments in advance of a future public hearing. Protecting dark skies and minimizing light pollution from athletic fields, especially in natural areas, is an important part of our habitat conservation work.

Help Us Help Wildlife!

For updates on all of our conservation advocacy efforts: <https://loudounwildlife.org/conservation-advocacy/current-campaigns/>

To join Loudoun Wildlife or renew your membership: <https://loudounwildlife.org/donate/join-renew/>



The Larkolinks Birdathon team seeks birds beside the Potomac along Riverpoint Trail in Leesburg. Some teams braved unseasonably chilly mornings during the April-May Birdathon. Photo by Dolores Goodson



Restoring the Oak-Hickory Forest at JK Black Oak

by Sheila Ferguson and Gerco Hoogeweg

If you look at the oak-hickory forest at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary from the outside, it looks like a healthy forest. Once you walk into it, however, you see a very different picture. You'll notice that there are very few tree saplings. Mature trees that die from disease or storm damage are not being replaced by young, growing trees. Look around at the floor of the forest and you see plenty of greenery, but much of it is invasive, which has little or no value to local wildlife.

What's going on in the forest that the canopy and understory are not regenerating with native vegetation? The primary agent of destruction is the White-tailed Deer, in ways both direct and indirect.

Each spring, thousands of native tree seeds germinate and begin growing in the oak-hickory forest. Walk through the forest then, and you'll see tree seedlings a few inches tall. However, by fall few seedlings remain, and by the next spring almost none are left. Although it is true that many of these seedlings wouldn't make it to maturity due to other causes, deer browsing ensures that pretty much none do.

What the deer do not eat are nonnative trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, allowing them to flourish and displace native species. The deer further aid

invasives by dispersing their seeds, which stick in their hooves or to their coats as they move about the forest. Deer also spread invasive seeds when they eat the fruit of invasive plants



Volunteers haul heavy materials through forest and field to a work site at JK Black Oak. Photo by Sheila Ferguson

such as Multiflora Rose and Oriental Bittersweet and pass the seeds of these fruits in their droppings, spreading the plants to new areas. So deer represent a double whammy in the forest: they eat the native vegetation and help the invasives grow and spread.

Several years ago, the JK Black Oak Committee began discussing the idea of putting in some deer exclusion fences to see what would happen, but funding was an issue. In the fall

of 2022, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy received a generous grant from Microsoft in collaboration with the Society for Ecological Restoration for habitat restoration in the oak-hickory forest. This grant enabled us to install three deer exclusion fences and cages to protect an additional 100 tree seedlings in the forest.

Installation of the fences required a substantial amount of planning, including deciding where to locate the fences, choosing what materials should be used, creating a work plan, and having enough volunteers to support the work. Since we would all be learning as we went, we started with the smallest enclosure of 25 x 25 feet, with the goal of installing increasingly larger fences. This turned out to be a key decision that allowed us to work out some of the unknowns when using a deer-fencing kit. The

100-foot deer fence kit we ordered contained a fence roll that was indeed exactly 100 feet. This left no margin of error when situating the four corner posts. To ensure that we did not run out of fencing, the corner posts would be placed about 24 feet apart.



The first step in the installation of the poles was to hammer in the ground sleeves (in which the poles are inserted) using a mechanical post pounder. We thought the post pounder would make it easy. We were wrong. The ground was hard enough that it took two people and a lot of work to get each sleeve in. Another issue was not having enough tools and equipment (for example, ladder, hog ringer, and crimping tool). Having just one of each quickly resulted in volunteers waiting for a specific task to be completed before they could get going. We also learned that assembling the gate for the fence on the forest floor is not a good idea. Nuts and bolts are easy to lose and hard to find again.

Installing the second deer fence, measuring 50 x 50 feet, went more smoothly. We drilled pilot holes that made hammering the sleeves into the ground very easy. The gate was assembled in advance in a workshop, and having more tools and more volunteers made the installation process go faster. The fencing was cut into 50-foot segments, but even that required many hands, as the fencing was rather floppy and difficult to handle when lifting it into position.

The third deer fence presented a new challenge because of its size. With a total length of nearly 470 feet, this fence encloses 0.62 acres around a vernal pool and much of its catchment. Using a 500-foot deer fence kit as our starting point, we added wooden posts every 50 feet to



Even in winter, volunteers continue work on fencing to protect new native tree saplings from voracious deer. Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg

provide additional structural strength. The first challenge was simply getting all the materials (11 ten-foot wooden posts, 33 metal posts and sleeves, concrete, and five 100-pound rolls of fencing) through the forest to the work site. It took several trips with everyone carrying materials to get all the materials there.

Spreading out the process over three monthly work days, we first installed the wood posts and then started on the pilot holes and sleeves for the metal posts. During the second work day, a team of volunteers installed three guide wires at different heights to connect the fence to. Another team was installing the post hooks for the fencing, and yet another team was cutting the fence roll to 50-foot pieces except for the last 100 feet. With 10 of us, we managed to hang

up that 100-foot section of fence while carefully unrolling it in a vertical position and walking it into place. That gave us a total of 400 feet of fencing installed. On the third work day, we finished attaching the fencing, installed the remainder, and began clearing invasives inside the fence.

In coming years, we'll be monitoring the deer enclosures to remove invasives and keep track of which native plants germinate and grow inside the fences.

Please note: To protect the environmentally sensitive habitat and rare species, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary is not open for general public access.

"The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself." — William Blake





In Praise of the Audubon at Home Experience — and Native Plants

by Scott Harris

I have lived in Purcellville for over 25 years, on a small quarter-acre suburban property within the town limits. We are lucky, in that our quarter acre backs up to our community common land, which encompasses a section of Catoctin Creek and is further abutted by the town's Suzanne R. Kane Nature Preserve. So my tiny lot feels a lot bigger than it is.

When we moved in, way back in 1997, the land was a former cornfield as part of a now-defunct farm.

We kept some of the forestland that surrounds the creek in our backyard, but the rest of the lot was scraped of all its topsoil and planted with fescue, as is so often the case.

Being an avid gardener, I began creating beds and planting bulbs and perennials, mostly in an effort to shrink the amount of grass to mow. Early on, we consulted with a landscape architect, and she put together a plan for planting trees and shrubs on our property. I didn't realize or appreciate it at the time, but she chose native varieties of plants for us, like mountain laurel, dogwood, winterberry hollies, etc.

It wasn't until recently, having become a member of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, that I really began to appreciate the role that native plants play in our local ecosystems. I heard about the Audubon at Home program and decided to sign up — if only to learn a little bit more about my property and its potential.

The Audubon at Home application starts with a survey: Do you provide habitat for pollinators? Is there a water source for animals? Do you use sprays/insecticides? And so on. As I was filling out the survey, I realized that I had come quite a long way in the last quarter century, and things were looking very good for my property actually qualifying as it is. The final section of the survey was demonstrating that at least ten target species (like bats, birds, salamanders, etc.) have been seen on the property. As an avid iNaturalist user, I was able to give exact time and date stamps of our animal visitors for the application.

Pretty soon after sending in the application, three Audubon at Home ambassadors, Jennifer Lumley, Sue Russell, and

Susan Ferster, showed up for an on-site visit. That visit was really more of a learning session for me. We walked the property and talked about my intentions, both past and present. In general, I wanted to create a more inviting space for pollinators, have a low maintenance yard, and produce pretty blooms to look at, while still fitting within my HOA's constraints to have a neat and tidy-looking, mowed front

lawn. The three ambassadors could not have been more wonderful. They were friendly, knowledgeable and helpful, and had so many ideas for how to improve my property. In the end, we made several discoveries (both pawpaw and green ash saplings in my rear forest!) and they made several recommendations for improving the beds I have.

Armed with the final survey report, which was chock-full of recommended plant species, tips on how to control invasives, and other helpful resources, I headed off to Watermark Woods — Native Plants to fill my shopping cart. I came home with ten different species of plants, including false indigo, Wild Senna, Mayapple, goldenrod, and Spicebush. Spending one glorious day of gardening, I got all the plants (over

50!) into the ground. I've been watering and checking on them frequently, and am happy to report the first blooms are emerging!

One thing that surprised me about the Audubon at Home certification experience was how well the natives take to the beds I already have. Having wrestled with the standard "garden center" perennials before, my success rate was usually 50-60% for any given plant. Many times the non-native plants I bought would perish because they're not meant for our zone or climate. The advantage of the native plants is that they're ideal for the climate, soil, and pH conditions already present, making for healthy transplants. They've looked great from the day I planted them!

It's been a great experience, and I'm really looking forward to hopefully seeing some butterflies and birds this summer in my new garden. Thanks to Sue, Susan, and Jennifer for their advice, and happy gardening to all!



Homeowners Scott and Becky Harris show off the sign designating their Purcellville property an Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary. Photo courtesy of Scott Harris



Know Your Hickories

by Jennifer Lumley, Audubon at Home Ambassador

I walked past a Mockernut Hickory (*Carya tomentosa*) tree after the ripe nuts had fallen to the ground and had the idea to bring some home, shell them, and add their meats to a batch of shortbread. Writing

that in a sentence was easier than carrying it out as a task, a process that required smashing each hard, thick inner husk with a hammer, then using a metal pick to pry out tiny nut crumbs. The shortbread was the most fragrant and flavorful I've ever had, but even if I were to purchase a hickory nut cracker (it is telling that specialty tools are made for this), I wouldn't repeat the experiment. I would try the reportedly thinner-husked Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) nuts.

Shagbark Hickory is present in Loudoun but not native here, while Mockernut, Pignut (*Carya glabra*), and Bitternut Hickories (*Carya cordiformis*) are. All four species have feather-compound leaves with toothed edges that occur in an alternate pattern along the twig. Bitternut Hickory nuts are true to their name and unsuitable for shortbread, and though hogs like the hickory named in their honor — Pignut — they are not generally considered to be delicious for humans.

We can split these trees into two groups based on the number of leaflets along the stem. The Mockernut and Bitternut usually have seven to nine leaflets, while the Shagbark and Pignut usually have five. To distinguish the Mockernut from the Bitternut, look for wooliness on the stem and leaf back,

then check for an orange tint on the leaf, and a noticeable odor (often described as spicy) when the leaf is crushed. These traits are more reliable than comparisons of leaf size and

shape, which can vary a lot depending on the age of the tree or height of the leaf within the tree canopy. When the trees are in fruit, telling the two apart is easy. Look for a thick brown shell that splits almost to the base when ripe in the case of the Mockernut, and a yellow-green nut with raised seams for the Bitternut.

The Shagbark and Pignut are also easy to tell from one another based on the ripe nuts. The Pignut has a smooth brown shell in the shape of a teardrop, while the Shagbark nut looks more like a squat, brown, four-part pumpkin. Identifying these last two trees based on their leaves is difficult, so look instead at bark and habitat. The mature Shagbark has bark that is in fact shaggy. It peels away from the trunk in long strips. It also generally prefers rich damp soil along streams, while the Pignut — like the Mockernut — is

found more often on ridges and in somewhat dry soil. The Bitternut shares the Shagbark's preference for moister habitat.

Hickories are large, slow-growing, long-lived trees whose leaves turn shades of warm bronze and rich, golden yellow in fall. They are larval hosts for the beautiful Luna, Funeral Dagger, and Giant Regal moths. And the edible nuts are incomparable in shortbread.



The compound leaf of a native Pignut Hickory, showing its typical five leaflets plus three teardrop-shaped immature nuts.

Photo by Jennifer Lumley



This Rusty Blackbird at Broad Run Stream Park was one of only a few spotted by our birders this year. The once-abundant species' numbers have plummeted 85-90% in 40 years. Photo by Michael Sciortino

A chatty Yellow-Breasted Chat greets birders near the parking lot at Sweet Run State Park. Photo by Eric Anderson

A Pileated Woodpecker takes flight. Photo by Linda Colucci

Birds, Birds, and More, continued from page 1

While the team competition in the Birdathon is fun and honor-system based, it's still serious. The Fully-palmated Birders (Michael Sciortino, Michael Myers, Mike Scott, and John Denice) barely inched out Gone Pishing (Bryan Henson, Allison Gallo, and Jane Yocom) for the "Most Species Award" by finding 126 species, compared to the latter's 125. And even harder to believe, without the Birdathon rule that every species *must be observed by at least two team members*, the two teams would

have tied at 127 species.

The Fully-palmated Birders hiked more than 17 miles searching for birds over their two-day observation period. While last year's effort was defined by the number of waterfowl they recorded, this year was defined by the greater number of warblers, proving that waiting a couple of weeks into migration season can make a big difference.

Although Gone Pishing was inched out of the "Most Species Award," they did win the "Most Money Raised Award"

by bringing in \$5,184 for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Their highlights included dynamite views of a Kentucky Warbler, a bird that is usually heard but not seen. They were also thrilled to find a female Common Merganser with at least a dozen ducklings.

The Flying Kites (the Anderson family) won the "Most Species Found by a Family" award. Over two days of birding, they observed 97 species throughout the county, and ended their Birdathon with incredible views of a



A family of Common Mergansers swim together on the Potomac along the Berlin Turnpike.
Photo by Bryan Henson

A Red-shouldered Hawk devours a snake it has captured on an Ashburn Farm trail.
Photo by Karenn Awtry

pair of Mississippi Kites, their team's namesake.

I Believe in a Thing Called Dove, also known as married couple Eric Auld and Stasia Kemp, participated in their first Birdathon and won the award for "Most Species Found by First Timers" with 56 species.

The "Most Species Observed by Fledgling Birders" award went to the Fearsome Fledglings, who not only found 46 species but took the time to draw some of them. The team is

a group of friends and siblings ages six to 10 (Charlie and Henry Kabealo, Elle Koh, Aiden Fletcher, and Griffin Yealdhall), and Sarah Kabealo, the only adult member, who provides advice, binoculars, bird guides, and occasionally snacks.

While it's always great to find out how successful the most experienced birders were, the Birdathon reports from the families, the fledglings, and the beginners are the most fun to read. If you haven't already done so, take a

few minutes and read all the reports at: <https://loudounwildlife.org/2023/05/birdathon-team-summaries-2023/>.

Every year I'm struck by how all the teams share their wonder and awe of the natural world, and how precious Loudoun County's wildlife and natural areas are — thank you!





Celebrating Our Annual Meeting With Awards, Stream Critters, and More

by Kim Strader, Volunteer Coordinator

Annual meetings offer a great opportunity to celebrate Loudoun Wildlife's volunteers and accomplishments. This year was no exception with nearly 100 people in attendance on June 4 at Ida Lee Park. We kicked off the event with a social half-hour when people got the opportunity to ask questions about our latest advocacy campaigns, hear about projects at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, learn about Loudoun County Public Schools Regional Science Fair winners' projects, and see live benthic macroinvertebrate "stream critters."

The business portion of the meeting included approving meeting notes, reviewing the state of the organization in 2022, and hearing the treasurer's report. Additionally, new Board members were elected, so we welcomed Bruce Kimmel, Peter Lyttle, Mike Scott, and Amy Ulland.

Amy, who also coordinates Loudoun Wildlife's stream monitoring activities, delivered the meeting's keynote. In a talk entitled "From Data to Action: How Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Stream Team is Making a Difference," Amy spoke about the Secure Clean Drinking Water for Lucketts Project, the Salt Watch Program, and stream monitoring. Her presentation also included a hands-on exercise on identifying benthic macroinvertebrates.

An important part of every Annual Meeting is the presentation of awards, including the Roger Tory Peterson Young Naturalist Awards. This year we recognized ten Loudoun County students for their excellent nature journals, created through an integrated K-12 classroom program inspired by Peterson, the world-renowned field guide author and illustrator.

Additionally this year, participating teachers received enhanced "Peterson Packs," thanks to additional grant funding to give teachers more supplies and materials to develop their students' knowledge about nature. Participating teachers received over \$1,000 worth of field guides, binoculars, compasses, magnifying glasses, blank journals, and other supplies to use in their classrooms.

Of course, we always set aside time during the Annual Meeting to acknowledge our volunteers, the lifeblood of

Loudoun Wildlife and the seeds to our success. This year's Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Volunteer Award recipients are:

Volunteer of the Year: Cathy Lemmon



Cathy Lemmon

This award recognizes someone who is not a board member or program coordinator and actively participates in multiple Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy programs. Cathy Lemmon has logged 453 hours since she began volunteering in 2020. She is the trail leader on two Bluebird Monitoring Trails (Morven Park and River Creek), an Audubon at Home Ambassador, and a Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam volunteer. Throughout the first year of the Eagle Cam Program, Cathy was instrumental in organizing and developing processes. Going into our second season with the Eagle Cam, she assisted with writing the Eagle Cam Volunteer Handbook, advised on procedures to implement, and organized the Eagle Cam Slack channels. Cathy is a pleasure to work with and is always exploring ways to streamline things to make it easier for her fellow volunteers.

The Joe Coleman Award: Amy Ulland

The Joe Coleman Award is presented to a board member or program coordinator for their exemplary contributions and achievements. Amy Ulland, our Stream Monitoring Program coordinator, is a tireless advocate for water quality and the health of our streams. This is reflected in her many hours of



Loudoun Wildlife Executive Director Michael Myers with Amy Ulland

volunteer work, her excellent organizational skills, and her efforts to involve a variety of people to participate in our stream monitoring projects.

Amy also understands how stream monitoring data can be used as an effective tool for change. In 2022 she administered and conducted a \$41,432 grant from the Tides Foundation's Google Data Center Grants Fund to "Secure Clean Drinking Water for Lucketts." This involved the collection and analysis of over 250 samples of stream and wastewater treatment facility effluent for E. coli levels — resulting in the EPA mandate for construction of a new wastewater treatment facility next to JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, she organized and presented an educational town hall meeting about water quality for Lucketts area residents. The project also included drinking water testing for 23 families, and provided 17 families from two underserved communities in Lucketts with high-quality drinking water filters to defray the cost of buying bottled water for drinking and cooking.

Outstanding Leader Award: Julie Borneman

The Outstanding Leader Award helps Loudoun Wildlife recognize someone who is truly special and has given a countless amount of their time and effort to help our organization. This award has only been given once before, to Ann Garvey. This year we decided to recognize another outstanding leader, Julie Borneman.

Julie's accomplishments and activities are numerous. In addition to being our past board president, she has been a vital contributor to almost every one of our projects and programs. We are thankful for all the time, energy, and donations she has made to the organization over the years. Native plant education, plant sale donations, fundraising (including the annual Birdhouses of Loudoun auction), administrative duties, program implementation ... the list of Julie's contributions goes on. We can think of no one more deserving of this award than Julie.

Congratulations to all the award winners, and to all our volunteers for your dedication to Loudoun Wildlife and to creating a place where people and wildlife thrive together.



Julie Borneman



A Wild Turkey strides across a field as the Fully-palmed Birders team adds it to their tally of species for this year's Birdathon. Photo by Michael Myers

They're Here: What to Do When You See a Spotted Lanternfly

Perhaps you've read it in a recent news article or seen warnings from local gardeners posted on social media: The invasive Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is rapidly expanding its foothold in the United States, claiming new territories each year since it was first reported in the Philadelphia area in 2014. And it's every bit as destructive to some crops, including grapes, as experts have been predicting.

Loudoun County's first Spotted Lanternfly infestation was reported last summer in Leesburg, and locals should expect to hear more about — and very possibly see — these colorful Asian plant hoppers this year. What to do if they spot one? **"Squash it! Take a picture! Report it!"** Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun advises in a video on the county's website, <https://youtu.be/9PnwiSFUbqg>. Residents should report all sightings through a form at <https://www.loudoun.gov/FormCenter/VA-Cooperative-Extension-28/Spotted-Lanternfly-Report-Form-2022-292>

Loudoun Wildlife has been following the advance of the Spotted Lanternfly since at least 2017, when it was first detected in nearby Winchester. Here are some important facts about this destructive invader, excerpted from our archive:



Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) second- and third-instar nymph (black); fourth-instar nymph (red body). Photo by Stephen Ausmus/U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service

- The Spotted Lanternfly nests primarily on Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), another invasive species that is native to Asia, but also has a taste for other trees it finds here, including Black Walnut and native maples. The lanternfly is a particular threat to agriculture in our region, feeding on commercially valuable crops such as grapes, apples, and other foods. These pests also feed on ornamental and native vegetation in home gardens and other landscapes. They secrete a sticky, sweet honeydew that also attracts other insects and promotes mold growth.
- Adults are about an inch long and a half-inch wide with their wings folded. The forewings are mainly gray with black spots near the base and a darker region at the tip with lighter veins. The hind wings are a bright scarlet at the base, with an area of black with a white band. The abdomen is yellow, with black bands down the center.
- Spotted Lanternfly's habit of laying eggs on any outdoor surface (including trucks, lawn furniture, play equipment, etc.) has contributed to its spread.
- Along with squashing/killing adults and nymphs, management includes scraping off egg masses, using targeted insecticides, tree banding, and removing host trees. One adult management technique that has had some success is the removal of *Ailanthus* trees in an area, leaving a few "trap" trees that are then treated with a systemic insecticide.

Resources:

"Stay Vigilant to Prevent Spread of Spotted Lanternfly" by Kerry Bzdyk, Habitat Herald, Volume 24, Issue 3, Summer 2019 — <https://loudounwildlife.org/2019/08/spotted-lanternfly/>

"Spotted Lanternfly: Almost Everything You Need to Know," presented May 2022 by Beth Sastre, Commercial Horticulturist from the Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun Office, via Loudoun Wildlife's YouTube channel — <https://youtu.be/q81AxCrFMfs>

Spotted Lanternfly information and reporting through Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun — <https://www.loudoun.gov/5101/Spotted-Lanternfly>



Programs and Field Trips

Unless otherwise specified, contact 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.

Second Saturdays:
August 12, September 9, October 14, 8:00 am

Birding Bles



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.

Third Sundays:
August 20, September 17, October 15, 8:00 am



Birding Sweet Run

Sweet Run State Park, previously known as the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, has 894 acres of diverse habitat consisting of vernal pools, meadows, ponds, streams, and a rich oak-hickory forest in northwestern Loudoun. It borders the Appalachian Trail and is only a couple of miles from the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Sweet Run is a wonderful sanctuary for Loudoun wildlife, with numerous bird species utilizing its richness. These walks are sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy; bring binoculars if you have them. Sweet Run State Park is located just north of Neersville at 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671); directions at www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/sweet-run. **Registration required.** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Fourth Saturdays:
August 26, September 23, October 28, 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 for additional information.

Writing in Nature — 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 for each session is open through the morning of the workshop. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **First Thursdays:** August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, Gate House at [Morven Park](#).

Creek Critters of the Catoctin — Sunday, August 27, 1:00 pm, **Chapman DeMary Trail**. 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 creatures, help participants learn how to identify them, and explain how they can help us determine the health of a stream. **Registration required** through the Purcellville Parks and Recreation website. **Questions:** Contact Amy Ulland at aulland@loudounwildlife.org.

Advocacy 101: Energy Infrastructure Projects — Wednesday, August 30, 7:00 pm, **Virtual**. Loudoun's position as one of the fastest growing counties by population warrants a discussion of our county's increased need for power. Loudoun's "Data Center Capital of the World" title puts power in a whole new perspective. Energy infrastructure projects differ from typical development projects — and have different impacts on wildlife. Join us to learn about what makes power consumption such a key topic for wildlife and habitat conservation in Loudoun County, and learn what you as an advocate can do differently to help protect wildlife against power projects. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#)

JK Black Oak Workday — Saturday, September 2, 8:00 to 11:00 am. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary is a beautiful 89-acre wildlife preserve located in Lucketts. Join us for habitat restoration projects that include invasive plant removal and trail maintenance. 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. Please be aware that you may encounter poison ivy and ticks at the work site. Long sleeves and pants, gloves, and insect repellent are recommended. *Note: Due to the environmentally*



These Pileated Woodpecker nestlings stole the show during a Celebrate Birds walk held at Bles Park in May, but the group also got to see other natural wonders, including an Eastern Painted Turtle that was presumably laying eggs. Photos by Bryan Henson



*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. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader at kstrader@loudounwildlife.org.*

Native Plant Sale — Saturday, September 9, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Morven Park, main parking lot. Native plants add beauty and interest to your garden year-round and provide habitat for wildlife. Autumn is an optimal time for planting trees and shrubs. These, plus flowers, vines, and ferns, will be available for purchase from four native plant nurseries. The sale, sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, will be staffed by volunteers knowledgeable about native plants. For additional information and updates, visit the [Event page](#) on our website. **Questions:** Contact Janet Locklear at jlocklear@loudounwildlife.org.

Birding Algonkian — Sunday, September 10, 8:00 am, Algonkian Park. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a search for birds at this large popular park in eastern Loudoun with extensive frontage on the Potomac River. Its rich bottomland forests, extensive wetlands, and grassy areas are home to numerous species of birds. We will comb the park searching for migrants, residents, and lingering summer birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. We will meet at the parking lot near Shelter 1. (Inside the park, take the road toward Volcano Island.) **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#).

Raptors of Virginia — Friday, September 15, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, Vanish Brewery, Lucketts. It's always a thrill to watch a Red-tailed Hawk soar beneath a bright blue sky or hear a Barred Owl call on a cold, clear night. Have you ever wondered where they live, what they eat, or how they raise their young? We invite you into the personal lives of the magnificent birds of prey that live right in our own backyards. You'll meet our Wildlife Ambassador hawks and owls up close and learn to identify our native species, how their presence provides a valuable contribution to the health of our environment, and what we can all do to help them thrive in our increasingly human world. And you might even get to take a selfie with an owl! This family-friendly

program is cosponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Vanish Brewery.

Hawk Watch — Saturday, September 16, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, Snickers Gap, Bluemont. Every autumn, thousands of hawks migrate south along the Blue Ridge. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy at the [Snickers Gap Hawkwatch](#), one of the best hawk-watching sites in the region, to view this phenomenon. If the weather cooperates, we should see several kinds of hawks. If we're lucky, we might even see a major push of Broad-winged Hawks as they pass over from their summer homes in North America to South America. Bring a chair if you plan to stay a while. **Limit 15. Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

A Year in the Life of an Owl — Sunday, September 17, 2:00 – 3:30 pm, House 6 Brewery, Ashburn. Owls are immediately recognized by everyone — even the youngest child. They have a special place in literature, mythology, and our hearts. But what is it that sets owls apart from other raptors? You will meet our four Wildlife Ambassador owls up close as they help us share what it means to be an owl. We'll explain their "superpowers" of night vision, remarkable hearing, stealth flight, and invisibility. We'll clear up some common misconceptions and divulge a few surprising owl secrets. We'll also give you some hints about where to find owls right in your neighborhood and suggest ways we can all help owls thrive in our increasingly human world. And maybe you'll get to take a selfie with your favorite owl! This family-friendly program is cosponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and House 6 Brewery.

Walk for Wildlife Fundraiser — October 1–31; Kickoff — Saturday, September 23, 12:00 – 3:00 pm, Morven Park. Walk for Wildlife is a monthlong event in which you see how many wildlife places you can visit and how many species in nature (plant/animal) you can identify, using the iNaturalist app to post the species you identify. This Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event is a fun way to get outside and observe, on your own or in a group, and you can help support



our programs that benefit wildlife and healthy habitats. Want to get all the details about participating? Come by the Gate House at Morven Park on September 23 to pick up your t-shirt, see some friends, ask questions, learn about iNaturalist, and get excited about Walk for Wildlife. Learn more about Walk for Wildlife at <https://loudounwildlife.org/2023/05/walk-for-wildlife/>.

Walk for Wildlife at JK Black Oak — Sunday, October 1, 10:00 am. Kick off the Walk for Wildlife with a group walk with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy leaders to look for all the critters that JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary offers. This unique property features late-season bloomers, vernal pools, meadows, and mature forest that should provide us a rich selection of insects, herps, migrating birds, and plants. Curious about using iNaturalist and participating in Walk for Wildlife? Curious about the JK Black Oak property? Then this is the walk for you. *Limit 15. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

Advocacy 101: Collaborative Workshop with Audubon Society of Northern Virginia — October, date TBD, Virtual. Our October Advocacy 101 event will be a collaborative workshop hosted by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Date and further details to come!

JK Black Oak Workday — Saturday, October 7, 8:30 – 11:30 am. Join us at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary for more habitat restoration projects that include invasive plant removal and trail maintenance. *Please see the Saturday, September 2, entry for additional details and precautions. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#). Questions: Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader at kstrader@loudounwildlife.org.*

Walk for Wildlife at Morven Park — Saturday, October 7, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy leaders to get outside and take a walk in nature! Morven Park has beautiful ridge trails with vernal pools and mature forest that should provide a variety of insects, herps, birds, and plants. *Limit 15. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

Birding at Izaak Walton League — Sunday, October 8, 8:00 am. The Loudoun County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League manages a rich natural property in western Loudoun that contains a wide variety of habitats and, as a result, supports a lot of birds, especially during migration. In partnership with the Chapter, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Allison Gallo and Bryan Henson will lead a bird walk there. *Limit 8. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

Fall Color Walk — Saturday, October 21, location and time 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 Emily Southgate and Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a walk in the woods 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. *Limit 20. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#).*

Hail to the Trail — Sunday, October 22, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Chapman DeMary Trail. Hail to the Trail celebrates environmental recreation, exploration, and education. Hail to the Trail, the annual Purcellville Green Expo, is hosted by the Town of Purcellville's Tree and Environmental Sustainability Committee. This event is free and open to the public, and is great for families, students, and scouts. Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy will lead a hands-on activity to help participants learn more about the environment. Come for guided nature walks, tree planting, the town's annual Arbor Day celebration, live animals, plastic bag collection, live music, nature art projects and games, displays, energy activities, and more. Visit their [website, https://www.purcellvilleva.gov/999/Hail-to-the-Trail---Purcellville-Green-E](https://www.purcellvilleva.gov/999/Hail-to-the-Trail---Purcellville-Green-E), for additional information.

JK Black Oak Workday — Saturday, November 4, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Join us at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary for more habitat restoration projects that include invasive plant removal and trail maintenance. *See the Saturday, September 2, entry for additional details and precautions. Registration required: [Sign Up Online](#). Questions: Contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Strader at kstrader@loudounwildlife.org.*

Walk for Wildlife Closing Celebration — Sunday, November 5, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Catoctin Creek Distillery, Purcellville. Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy for a nature-enthusiast gathering at Catoctin Creek Distillery to celebrate [Walk for Wildlife](#). We'll hand out prize medals and share some highlights from the event along with celebrating citizen science efforts and the positive impact they have on our community.

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.



A Little Glasswing butterfly lingers on Swamp Milkweed. By late summer, butterflies are at their most abundant in Loudoun. Please consider joining our Annual Butterfly Count on August 5. Learn more and register at <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/butterfly-count/>. Read the count's results in the fall issue of the Habitat Herald. Photo by Michael Myers



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WALK FOR WILDLIFE

October 1-31

GET OUTSIDE, HAVE FUN, AND RAISE FUNDS
TO SUPPORT LOUDOUN WILDLIFE!

-  How many wildlife places can you visit?
-  How many species can you count?
-  How many miles can you walk?

Details: <https://loudounwildlife.org/walk-for-wildlife/>

Members of the Double Stuft Oreos team gather pondside at Bles Park during their first Birdathon. Photo by Heather Dionne

