

# Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XXXI, Issue 2, Spring 2026



Lisa Treichel delivers trees and shrubs to the Pin Oak pool. Photo by S.A. Ferguson

Vernal pools play a critical role in supporting wildlife, making their restoration a high priority at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. Two of our vernal pools, the LeSabre and Pin Oak pools, have been degraded over the years by trash and encroaching invasives. Restoration of these two vernal pools is the focus of our most recent grant-funded project at JK Black Oak. The restoration will improve habitat for wildlife, with a focus on amphibians that rely on the pools for breeding. Over time, the improved habitat should result in an increase in the diversity and number of species using the pools.

## Restoring Two Vernal Pools at JK Black Oak

By Sheila Ferguson and Gerco Hoogeweg

The vernal pools restoration project is our most ambitious one yet at JK Black Oak, and the one that has been most impacted by weather. We had planned on completing the project in a single year, but nature had other ideas. The trouble started in the fall of 2024, when there were no acorns for collection at JK Black Oak. The few acorns produced were eaten by wildlife before we could get to them. (Although acorn production varies from year to year, having so few is unusual.) The lack of acorns meant we could not propagate native oaks from the property for planting in 2025. Then in the winter and spring of 2024/2025, the vernal pools did not fill with water. Although the lack of water did not affect restoration activities, it did mean that amphibians could not breed.

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Planting almost 300 perennials into the steep slope of the LeSabre pool proved challenging for volunteers. Photo by Gerco Hoogeweg



Volunteers removing trash from the LeSabre vernal pool. Photo by S.A. Ferguson



Jesse Edwards and Jenny Erickson discuss restoration of the LeSabre vernal pool on site. Photo by S.A. Ferguson

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# Executive Director's Message



*Hello, Loudoun Wildlife family!*



The familiar signs of spring are here: birdsong at dawn, frog calls at night, blooming flowers, budding trees ... and a surge of activity at Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. It's always remarkable to see just how much this organization accomplishes year-round, and by "organization," I don't just mean our small-but-mighty staff, but our volunteers, donors, partners, supporters, and friends of all types. We don't exist without you, and neither does the impactful work we accomplish together every day.

A powerful example is the record-shattering Give Choose fundraising event we just completed. Thanks to so many of you, we raised more than \$20,000, including a \$10,000 matching pool made possible by a generous individual donor and our partners at Abernethy & Spencer Greenhouse and Garden Center. Those dollars translate directly into impact, powering the work you'll read about in this issue.

Our Spring Native Plant Sale continues to grow, raising awareness about invasive species and helping residents make more wildlife-friendly choices at home. This year also marked our first as an official partner in "Scrape for the Grape," a countywide effort mobilizing volunteers to combat the invasive Spotted Lanternfly and protect local vineyards.

From April 18-May 17, our Birdathon invites participants to become "community scientists," contributing valuable data on bird migration across Loudoun County while having a great time outside with family and friends. (Form your team now and get out there!) Our Peterson Young Naturalist Program recently trained 53 teachers, which means we're now bringing the proven mental and social-emotional benefits of Nature-Based Learning to more than 8,000 K-12 students this year alone.

Hands-on conservation work is also blooming. Our Garlic Mustard Pull at Ball's Bluff helps protect our spring ephemerals, while restoration workdays at JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary are improving a globally rare wetland habitat. At the same time, our Stream Monitoring, Bluebird Monitoring, Amphibian & Reptile Monitoring, and Birding programs continue to engage volunteers across the county. And soon we'll be gearing up for our annual Butterfly Count on August 1.

Beyond the field, our Conservation Advocacy efforts are helping shape environmental policy, with several key bills advancing during this year's Virginia General Assembly.

So step outside as often as you can this spring, draw a deep breath of that fresh air, take in the renewal all around you, and spare a moment to appreciate your place among that timeless beauty. Then allow yourself a moment of pride and satisfaction, knowing that you're helping to preserve that feeling for future generations to experience. And that makes you ... a true force of nature.



*TOM*

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Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. We protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat, shaping a Loudoun where people and wildlife thrive together. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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# Conservation Advocacy: More Lucketts Bypass Decisions Loom, and Other Issues We're Monitoring

by Trinity Mills, Conservation Advocacy Specialist

## **Route 15 Lucketts Bypass**

The Lucketts Bypass project that would negatively impact JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary continues to be a complex and mercurial issue. We've engaged with multiple sectors of the community, and we remain committed to advocating for Route 15 fixes that would have the least detrimental effects on the Lucketts community, JK Black Oak, and the overall environment. Communication from the county to the public on the issue has been sparse, but we expect that the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors may endorse a potential funding mechanism application that will determine the location and scale of the project in the summer of 2026. For updates, check <https://loudounwildlife.org/conservation-advocacy/>.

## **Paris Mountain Resort**

We're still awaiting the official filing of the application for the Paris Mountain Resort, a potential new hotel complex looking to span 146 acres of steep slopes across three counties, with the building envelope entirely in the farthest southwest corner of Loudoun County. We're working with a coalition of organizations to oppose this project and are beginning an effort to investigate (through acoustic monitoring) the potential presence of threatened or endangered bat populations in proximity to the property ahead of the filing.

## **Groundwater**

Through our involvement with the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC), Loudoun Wildlife is involved in efforts to bring awareness to the serious groundwater depletion problem in Western Loudoun. In March, the county Board of Supervisors created a proclamation regarding Groundwater Awareness Week, and in April LCPCC held several educational

community meetings on the topic. Find more information on this education campaign online (<https://loudouncoalition.org/loudoun-county-groundwater-study/>).

## **Western Loudoun Rural Uses and Standards**

The Loudoun Board of Supervisors is expected to endorse the initiation of draft text for the Western Loudoun Rural Uses and Standards Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Amendments following a series of direction meetings with the Transportation and Land Use Committee (TLUC). Loudoun Wildlife gave input when discussion of the direction included habitat impacts, including relating to the Mountainside Overlay District. In January, motions by the TLUC countered many protections for the district that residents had been asking for. These discussions are expected to continue when the issue comes before the full county board in May.

## **Active Recreation in the Floodplain?**

On March 18, the TLUC held discussion on an item concerning adjustments to county policy about land uses in the floodplain. A push to allow for active recreation (such as ballfields, including associated parking) in the floodplain manifested in September when the Zoning Ordinance Committee recommended proceeding with a study to investigate the feasibility of allowing such uses as a way to resolve current inconsistencies between the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan. The TLUC recommended proceeding with correcting the issue by incorporating county staff's suggestion, which would amend the Zoning Ordinance to disallow active recreation uses in major floodplains. This item will need a final endorsement on direction by the full Board of Supervisors.

## **Westpark & Dry Mill Branch**

The Board of Supervisors on April 21 endorsed the site plan for the county's new park at the former Westpark golf course. The park is for passive recreational activities, and the latest version of the plan has far fewer issues than it originally did; several of our initial concerns were addressed. However, amid the final design endorsement, conversations about an upstream zoning violation brought into question the efficacy of the on-site stream restoration that is part of the plan.

Loudoun Wildlife's stream-monitoring efforts show acceptable conditions of Tuscarora Creek/Dry Mill Branch upstream from a property conducting intensive commercial use out of compliance with zoning regulations, including inadequate erosion and sediment control and infringement on the stream's buffer. Downstream from this site, however, our stream-monitoring results show unacceptable conditions, reflecting increased sedimentation and chemical levels — at the exact location where the county is planning to expend considerable resources on a mitigation project. We're telling the county it's critical that they address the violations proactively to ensure that taxpayer dollars and government resources are being used responsibly — and in a manner that will actually accomplish the environmental goals to protect water quality and improve the local ecosystem.

## **General Assembly 2026**

The 2026 General Assembly session has concluded. While many of our priority bills on a variety of topics failed to make it through, a number of good bills landed on Gov. Abigail Spanberger's desk. Even better,

*Continued on page 5*



*Restoring Vernal Pools continued from page 1*

Restoration work began in November 2024, and thus far 10 volunteer work days — plus many other days for planning, prep, and setup — have been devoted to restoring the two pools.

There are some common elements to both vernal pools. Both were surrounded by invasives that needed to be removed, and both needed to be planted with native trees and shrubs after the invasives were removed.

Usually, restoration projects at JK Black Oak involve protecting existing tree seedlings with fencing or tree cages instead of planting seedlings. However, the areas around the LeSabre and Pin Oak pools are so overrun with invasives that there are no seedlings to protect, and the seedbank is full of invasive seeds that will germinate and likely overwhelm any natives that might emerge.



## Pin Oak Vernal Pool Restoration

The Pin Oak pool, located at the southern edge of the property in an area that once was pasture, was completely surrounded by a thicket of Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). These invasive shrubs grow and spread rapidly, and we've had a lot of practice removing them at various places on the property. By the end of April, volunteers had removed over 200 Autumn Olives to create a large, cleared buffer around the pool.

A stand of Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) on one side of the pool was another story. In the summer of 2024, we experimented with two methods to kill this invasive non-native, both of which proved unsuccessful. So we came back a year later using a higher concentration of herbicide to hack and spray the trunks. If they leaf out this spring, we'll know they are still not dead.

The next step was to install the deer

enclosure fence in the newly cleared area. This was the fourth enclosure fence installed at JK Black Oak. At nearly 600 linear feet, it is the largest one yet. Working with small teams focusing on specific tasks, the fence was installed over the course of a couple of work days. Having learned from previous mistakes, this time we had enough equipment and were spread out to work. The fence will protect the native trees and shrubs planted around the pool from being eaten by White-tailed Deer.

Inside the fence, we planted 75 seedlings in October. Once the Trees of Heaven are dead, they will be taken down to avoid falling on the fence, and replaced with native trees and shrubs.

## LeSabre Vernal Pool Restoration



In November 2024, the LeSabre pool restoration began with native tree and shrub planting in an area above the pool where invasives had been cleared. The most useful tool for digging holes in this compacted ground was a pickaxe. By the summer of 2025, all but two of the shrubs and trees were doing surprisingly well in spite of the lack of rain.

After working on the Pin Oak pool in April, we returned to the LeSabre pool in May. Usually the pool would still be full of water this time of year, but the ongoing drought meant that there was nothing but mud. That allowed us to do another round of trash removal. This was our fourth or fifth round of trash removal since 2021, and we have removed over 2,500 pounds of scrap metal. Why is there so much trash at the LeSabre pool? It was used as the local dump, probably during the 1960s and '70s, based on the trash we've found, including an abandoned Buick LeSabre.

Erosion of the steep slope on one side of LeSabre had resulted in sediment buildup in the pool. We had planned to remove it in summer when the pool would be completely dry. However, once

again the weather did not cooperate. July brought higher than normal amounts of rain, turning the bottom of the pool to mud. By late September the pool was finally dry, and a layer of sediment could be removed. The removed sediment was used to reduce the steepness of the slope. Erosion control mats were installed, and logs were placed parallel to the slope to stabilize the bank.

Tree and shrub planting took place in November 2025, with volunteers adding 58 more woody natives to those planted the previous year. Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*) and Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) were planted next to the earlier location in the compacted soil. Water-loving Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) were planted at the edge of the pool, and south of the pool we planted Common Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*). On the last work day of 2025, 287 herbaceous natives were planted into the slope.

Unlike the Pin Oak pool project, no enclosure fence will be installed. The topography of the LeSabre pool area makes the installation all but impossible. Instead, we are using 4-foot fencing that encloses narrow areas (which deer will not jump into) and tree cages to protect seedlings at risk of deer browse.

## Looking Ahead



This year, we will continue removing invasives around the LeSabre pool and finish planting trees and shrubs at both vernal pools. All work needs to be completed by October 31, 2026, in accordance with the terms of the grant.

The LeSabre pool finally started to fill in March this year, but the Pin Oak pool has remained dry. The monitoring team will be checking the LeSabre and other vernal pools on the property for amphibian breeding and comparing the data to previous years. The team will also be monitoring reptile and amphibian



## Let's Count Butterflies: Aug. 1

If you're looking for some family fun in the summer sun — and would like to join a nationally recognized community science program that researchers depend on — then Loudoun Wildlife's 30th Annual Butterfly Count is the event for you! Teams of experts, enthusiasts, and beginners will scout gardens, roadside ditches, and public spaces in search of these amazing insects on Saturday, August 1, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. It's a big area, and we need your help! The butterfly count (and count-prep butterfly walks held in June and July) are open to all. Register at <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/butterfly-count/>.

A Common Buckeye butterfly alights on goldenrod. Photo by Michael Myers

movement throughout the property to determine if the removal of invasives increases herpetofauna movement resulting in greater wildlife diversity at the pools.

Despite the drought, wildlife activity at the Pin Oak pool has already increased. After the Autumn Olive was cleared last spring, the increased presence of birds in the area was immediately noticeable. The cleared area also made it possible to observe Eastern Spadefoot toads outside the pool and find some of their burrows.

This year we are hopeful that we'll continue to see an increase in wildlife at both vernal pools.

Funding for restoration of the vernal pools is provided by a grant from Microsoft, in collaboration with the Society for Ecological Restoration.

**Sheila Ferguson** is Loudoun Wildlife's Plant NOVA Natives representative. **Gerco Hoogeweg** is the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary manager.

*Conservation Advocacy continued from page 3*



the bills we opposed were defeated! The hot-button issue from last year was back in full force this session: potential data center reform legislation was central to many conversations this year. The key point of contention that prevented a successful conference on the budget by the session's end was the proposal by the Senate to remove the data center tax exemption. This exemption has amounted to almost \$2 billion handed to big tech and incentivizing already out-of-control data center development. These are funds that could be dispersed instead to critical programs that better serve Virginian taxpayers and protect the environment. It is for this reason that Loudoun Wildlife supports the tax credit's elimination. A special session to complete the budget convened on April 22. Stay tuned to the Virginia Conservation Network's bill tracker (<https://vcnva.org/bill-tracker/>) to see the results of the state budget, and to find out which bills were signed into law.



# Keeping Our Vineyards Spotted-Less

by Tom Kercheval, Executive Director



Adult Spotted Lanternfly. U.S. Department of Agriculture photo



Volunteers use a provided credit card-sized scraper to remove Spotted Lanternfly egg masses from a tree during this season's first Scrape for the Grape outing on March 21. Photo by Tom Kercheval

It won't be long before the beautiful (but highly destructive) Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) returns to Loudoun County. This year, however, its impact will be significantly reduced thanks to a record-breaking "Scrape for the Grape." With Loudoun Wildlife joining as an official partner for the first time, more than 10.3 million invasive lanternflies were eliminated before they could hatch where they cause the most harm: our wineries and vineyards.

Launched in 2024, Scrape for the Grape is both a hands-on volunteer effort and a public awareness campaign. It started through a partnership with the Loudoun Invasive Removal Alliance (LIRA), Visit Loudoun, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Loudoun County, and the Loudoun Wineries and Winegrowers Association. Amazon became a partner in 2025, and Loudoun Wildlife stepped in this year to support volunteer coordination and outreach. This ever-expanding event galvanizes volunteers to literally scrape away SLF egg masses before the nymphs emerge and begin feeding on their host plants.

SLFs have been compared to vampires, sucking life-giving sap out of vines, trees, and other crops, and damaging or killing them in the process. That's a growing concern for our local wineries, a large component of our rural economy. Scrape for the Grape helps alleviate those concerns while raising overall awareness of the negative impact that invasive species pose. In 2024, the event was held on one weekend with 400 volunteers at 10 locations. This year, it was held over three weekends, engaging more than 1,100 volunteers at 30 locations across Loudoun County!

Once on-site, volunteers of all ages were given credit card-sized scrapers and trained to recognize SLF egg masses. Each egg mass scraped represents about 30-50 adult Spotted Lanternflies destroyed. More than 9 million were vanquished in the first two years of the event, which means nearly 20 million have now been destroyed overall.

Volunteers were also taught to identify the invasive Tree of Heaven, the SLF's favorite initial food source. Once

identified, the trees are tagged for expert eradication later, resulting in even more invaders thwarted.

"One of the biggest challenges of this event is volunteer coordination," says LIRA President Mike Littman, "and Loudoun Wildlife made it doable this year. I'm not sure we could have pulled it off, honestly. We are so grateful."

Loudoun Wildlife is also grateful for the opportunity to work with other like-minded organizations toward one common goal. We are so much stronger together, and Scrape for the Grape is a powerful reminder of what collaboration can achieve.

Learn more about Scrape for the Grape at [loudouninvasives.com](http://loudouninvasives.com), and if you missed it this year, we hope to see you in 2027 for an even more "Scrape-tacular" event.



# Ready to Celebrate Birds?

Gather your flock and join Loudoun Wildlife's Birdathon!



- 1** Form a team with friends, family, or fellow birders.
- 2** Choose a 24- or 48-hour window between April 18 and May 17.
- 3** Count as many bird species as you can.
- 4** Raise funds to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat!



From beginners to seasoned birders, everyone can join the fun and make a difference! Learn more at: <https://bit.ly/LWC-Birdathon>





# Too Much of a 'Good' Thing: Don't Let Autumn Olive Overwhelm You

by Abigail Seeley



Autumn Olive. Photo by S.A. Ferguson

The dogwood I rescued from Autumn Olive several years ago is thriving. Look at all the blooms! Photo by Abigail Seeley



**I**f someone is searching for Autumn Olive berries, most likely they intend to make jam. I am told that it is delicious, and a quick internet search yields recipes for jam, fruit leather, jelly, sorbet, and dressing. To make a tasty treat even better, Autumn Olive berries are extremely nutritious. These tangy, slightly sweet berries are high in vitamins A, C, E, and lycopene, a nutrient that helps to prevent cancer, decrease LDL (bad cholesterol), and decrease the risk of heart disease. Autumn Olive berries have almost three times more lycopene than the tomato. It's quite a superberry!

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) was imported from Asia in the 1830s to be used as an ornamental landscape bush. It grows quickly, requires little maintenance, and has a pleasing, rounded shape in full sun. Its cream or light-yellow flowers fill the air with a

sweet scent in the spring, and the birds and animals love the colorful berries that come in the fall.

It grows well in just about any soil (dry, moist, or sandy) and in any light, although it grows the biggest and most rapidly in sunny areas. With its easy growing habit and rapid reproduction, it became a popular plant for erosion control, forest restoration, strip mine reclamation, highway beautification, and in windbreaks and wildlife plots.

This raises the obvious question: If Autumn Olive is so good, why is it so bad? To begin with, it reproduces prolifically and in multiple ways:

- Birds spread the seeds as they consume the berries. A mature plant can produce about 30 pounds of fruit annually, which equates to about 3 pounds, or roughly 66,000 seeds.

- New bushes can sprout from the roots of an existing plant, growing out from the original plant's root system in a circular shape.
- A plant's branch lying in contact with the ground can take root as another bush.

## A Formidable Foe

Autumn Olive also dominates its environment. It leafs out weeks before other vegetation in the woods and is the last to drop its leaves in the fall. That gives it more time, and inevitably more sunlight, to outgrow the native plants in the forest. In addition to these reproductive advantages, the plant has allelopathic properties, releasing chemicals into the soil that prevent the germination and growth of other plants. This further reduces the ability of native plants to survive under its canopy.

Autumn Olive can grow 20 feet tall and 30 feet wide, and its very dense habit makes it nearly impenetrable when leafing. At some stages of growth, the plant also has large thorns similar to



Debris piles from the day's clearing. Note the height in comparison to the shed. Photo by Abigail Seeley

those of the hawthorn tree. Tolerant of drought and poor soil, this plant's fast growth allows it to establish dense thickets quickly.

For all these reasons, Autumn Olive quickly escaped the confines of its original plantings and began to spread across the U.S. Once you have learned to recognize it, you'll find yourself noticing it everywhere. Watch for the silver undersides of the leaves that almost sparkle as they turn over in the breeze.

Autumn Olive is now ranked as a "severe threat" by numerous state agencies. In Virginia, it is labeled by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as a "highly invasive species" which "may disrupt ecosystem processes and cause major alterations in plant community composition and structure." The U.S. Forest Service for the Virginia area lists Autumn Olive as a Category 1 weed — an "exotic plant species . . . known to be invasive and persistent [that] can spread into and persist in native plant communities and displace native plant species."

My husband and I first met this beast in 2015, when we moved to our 12-acre property in Loudoun County. I had embraced the concept of a native landscape in our previous home, but this new home was so much more. More vegetation. A lot of plants I did not recognize. And woods! I had worked before with Audubon at Home, now called the Wildlife Sanctuary Program, and had gotten our last property certified. So we invited their ambassadors to the new property to help us understand what we had and where to go from there.

The amazing volunteers walked the property with us for several hours. In the end, they sent us a multi-page report of identifications, strengths, challenges, and recommendations. At the top of the list of challenges: "Autumn Olive has been planted in the past as an ornamental and is now dominating the woodland margin and continuing to spread." We were looking at over 10 acres of forested land that had become dominated by Autumn Olive, in some parts even a monoculture.

## A Lot to Learn

The first thing we learned is that Autumn Olive is very hardy and difficult to kill. Fire does not kill it, as the plant is able to regrow from its root crown. Cutting it down only causes it to regrow more densely. Just getting to the trunk to cut it is difficult because of the plant's density.

So how did we keep from becoming overwhelmed by the enormity of this challenge? Triage and baby steps. We had already taken our first baby step in learning to recognize the plant. Our second step was to research methods to kill it.

The most effective method that we've found to kill it is called the "cut stump" method. I start by cutting sections of the plant off from the top with loppers or a bow saw and work my way down. Otherwise, the canopy makes it nearly impossible to get to the trunk. Each cut piece is thrown on a nearby debris pile as I work. The debris piles act as vital habitat for small mammals, birds,

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*Autumn Olive continued from page 9*

amphibians, and insects, offering shelter, food, and protection from predators and harsh weather, while also enriching the soil with nutrients as the pile decomposes and helping to moderate soil temperature for new plant growth.

Once I get to the trunk, I cut it down close to the ground, leaving enough stump to spray. I immediately treat the stump with the herbicide glyphosate, which many will recognize as the main ingredient in the product Roundup. I also wear protective gloves and long pants to cover my legs as instructed on the product label of the glyphosate. When applying the herbicide, I ensure that I cover the exposed areas of the stump completely but take care not to let it get on anything else.

If a trunk is too large for the lopper blades (roughly 4 inches or less), then I will tackle it with the bow saw. Mostly, however, I leave the larger trunks for my husband to cut with a chainsaw. While he cuts, I haul the debris away to piles. I'm also the one who is watchful of native plants that we want to be careful not to injure. Once he cuts the Autumn Olive to ground level, I spray the stump.

### Triage Helps!

I use triaging to decide where I will work. When I'm in the woods, I look for trees that are in danger of losing their crown to invasive vine growth — and for trees surrounded by dense clusters of Autumn Olive. As the Autumn Olive bushes spread from their roots, they may end up surrounding a tree. I've dubbed this the "Ring of Fire." I imagine

the toxins from the Autumn Olive are like a fire in the soil, burning the victim tree's ability to get the nutrients it needs. Inevitably, the "Kiss of Death" will sprout — an Autumn Olive bush tucked right into the base of a tree. Such a tree

that mark off the four corners of the area that you feel you can reasonably clear. You want success, so don't overestimate! At the end of the time you've allotted, pause and reflect on how much this area has improved. Take pictures. Drag someone out to admire it. Do something to mark your success. It's crucial to avoiding burnout.

I will never forget one morning when I was looking out my back window. It was early spring and the dogwoods were in full bloom. At the edge of the woods, above the mass of Autumn Olive, was a spot of white. It was one lone branch from a dogwood with one blossom bunch, reaching out for sunlight. The rest of its branches had succumbed. That was a triage tree. I spent a week clearing the area, and I'm happy to report that now, several years later, that dogwood is thriving!

I encourage you to consider triaging if you, like us, face an unsurmountable forest to clear. Triage has helped me maintain my motivation to get out there and keep working.

We are reaching the point where all our little pockets of work are starting to connect. One area unexpectedly came together for us in 2023: As we worked through the day, three different clearings from across multiple years began to connect. I had had no idea they were so close to each other when we began working. We put in a long day and got a cleared area about half an acre in size. It was a very pleasant surprise that I am still celebrating.

### Sources for Advice and/or Funding

- **The Wildlife Sanctuary Program** (a Northern Virginia Bird Alliance/Plant NOVA Natives/Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy partnership) offers information, on-site consultation, and recommendations to help you establish and nurture sustainable natural habitat on your property — <https://loudounwildlife.org/habitat-conservation/wildlife-sanctuary/>
- **Virginia Department of Forestry Community Foresters** assist landowners in managing their forestland — <https://dof.virginia.gov/forest-management-health/landowner-assistance/find-a-forester/>
- **Invasive Plant Removal Grants** offer guidance and funding to eligible landowners to promote and implement invasive plant removal projects — <https://www.loudoun.gov/invasiveplants>
- **Loudoun County Soil and Water Tree Planting Grants** are available to non-agricultural landowners in the county to plant trees with the goal of permanently reforesting currently non-wooded land — <http://www.loudounsoilandwater.com/tree-planting/>
- **Blue Ridge PRISM** provides site visits to identify invasives and create a management program for you at no charge — <https://blueridgeprism.org/site-visits>
- **Capital Naturalist** is a Facebook community filled with experts who can share their wisdom with you — <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1428738304011660>

doesn't have much time left before it succumbs to the Autumn Olive's invasive ways. These are the trees that guide me to where I'll work.

The next step is to identify the block of time you have to devote to clearing (I typically spend about four to six hours a day for five days). Next, choose trees





## The More You Know

You're probably familiar with the term "Know your enemy." This couldn't be truer when trying to eradicate Autumn Olive. In the spring, it is literally the only thing with leaves. It's the perfect time to identify those resprouts that have returned, because Autumn Olive is so good at regenerating. For several years after cutting and treating, you'll need to watch for regrowth and quickly take care of it. Cut the growth with your loppers and give a spray to the exposed area of trunk. In the fall, when it is the last thing growing, it's a good time to take out another area or two.

Albert Einstein said, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know." This is so true when doing conservation work. Keep learning, adjusting, and growing. Seek out others with a like mentality. Plan your work in baby steps, and triage. Most important, don't forget to stop and enjoy what you have!

**Abigail Seeley** is a certified Wildlife Sanctuary property owner.

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## Learning Grows as We Grow Naturalists

by Tracey Baroody, Director of Education

Loudoun Wildlife's Peterson Young Naturalist Program (PYNP) continued its long collaboration with Loudoun County Public Schools during our recent professional development (PD) day for LCPS teachers. During the March training, we added 53 teachers to the PYNP family. There are now over 300 teachers countywide bringing the academic and social-emotional benefits of nature-based learning to over 5,600 students!

During the training, teachers learn to integrate outdoor exploration and nature journaling into all subjects through PYNP core lessons. The program includes hands-on outdoor training and learning to use fun apps as part of the lessons, including Merlin Bird ID and Seek (by iNaturalist).

Inspiring post-training comments included:

- "The barrier to teaching outdoors is lower than I thought!"
- "I loved learning new ideas to incorporate with work we are already doing with students."
- "I love the hands-on approach along with lots of opportunities for students to speak and engage with real-world content in a low-stress environment."
- "I anticipate many positive impacts for my students; being outside is so beneficial to student health, well-being, and success."

Loudoun Wildlife celebrates the work of many people who make these PD days possible every year, including Norina Treaner, Jennifer Pitzen, Marykirk Cunningham, and Dr. Miriam Westervelt, the Peterson program's innovative creator and Loudoun Wildlife program coordinator. Teacher trainers and volunteers all provide many dedicated hours of mentorship so that each year's PD offers new standards-aligned lessons

— each designed by LCPS teachers — to augment the Peterson program's core lessons. Our trainers report that, when asked how PYNP could be improved, 28 participants wrote, "Nothing!" Six teachers replied, "Please make it longer!"

Through our new Nature-Based Learning web hub, LoudounWildlifeLearning.org (live but still in development), teachers and the general public can learn about the benefits of nature-based learning for students and children. The new site offers a growing and rich body of nature-based learning statistics, lessons, ideas, and how-tos, and we are excited to foster the best antidote to screen time we know: getting outside for "less screen, more green!"

The interdisciplinary facet of the PYNP is what makes it possible for LCPS teachers to take their students outdoors, knowing that instructional goals (and more) can easily be met. No matter the subject, nature-based learning gives students real-world connections, provides inquiry-based learning, and deepens innate curiosity for the natural world. A journal makes thinking "visible," and this documentation can be submitted to our judges at the end of each year. Winning students receive cash prizes and recognition, and teachers receive "Peterson packs" full of field guides and outdoor classroom equipment.

We've typically presented these awards as part of Loudoun Wildlife's Annual Meeting. For the first time, a dedicated celebration will recognize participants and winners at an event just for them on Sunday, May 31, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, at Cardinal Ridge Elementary School. Please register on the Loudoun Wildlife website. We hope you'll join us and leave inspired as we build the next generation of naturalists and reconnect our students to the joys of our natural world.



# Programs and Field Trips

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

Dates and locations are subject to change. For up-to-date information on our programs or to register, visit [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org) or contact [info@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:info@loudounwildlife.org).

**Writing in Nature — First Thursdays:** May 7, June 4, July 2, August 6, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm, Rust Sanctuary (*location recently changed*). Join Nancy Morgan, director emeritus of the Georgetown Lombardi Arts and Humanities Program, for this monthly opportunity presented by Loudoun Wildlife 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](#).

**JK Black Oak Workday — Saturday, May 2, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.** Join Loudoun Wildlife for habitat restoration projects that include invasive plant removal, protecting trees, and planting. 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. *Limit 20 (minimum age 16).* **Registration**

**required:** [Sign Up Online](#).

**Questions:** Contact Sheila Ferguson at [sferguson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:sferguson@loudounwildlife.org). *Note: Due to the environmentally sensitive habitat and rare species, JK Black Oak is not open for general public access.*

**Run the Greenway — Sunday, May 3.** 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. One hundred percent of the funds raised on behalf of Loudoun Wildlife will come directly to us.

The cars are making way for runners, joggers, and walkers of all ages from our great community! Get ready to make a difference this year at Run the Greenway, and see the toll road as you've never seen it before. To learn more and to support Loudoun Wildlife on this day, visit the event page on our website: <https://loudounwildlife.org/event/run-the-greenway/>.

**iPhone Photography — Thursday, May 7, 7:00 – 8:00 pm, Middleburg Library.** Loudoun photographer Jeff Mauritzen will share technical and creative techniques to become a better iPhone photographer and visual storyteller. For the last 12 years, Jeff has been guiding and lecturing

## Birding Banshee

Whether you're a beginning birder or an expert, you'll be thrilled by the many bird species you'll find at 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. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Joe Coleman at [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org).

**Second Saturdays: May 9\*, June 13, July 11, August 8, 8:00 am**



## Birding Algonkian

Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a search for birds at Loudoun's top birding hotspot, Algonkian Regional Park in eastern Loudoun, for the monthly bird walk. Combining extensive frontage along the Potomac River, rich bottomland forests, wetlands, and extensive grassy areas, this can be a very productive place to bird. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Bryan Henson at [bhenson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bhenson@loudounwildlife.org).

**Third Sundays: May 17\*, June 21, July 19, 8:00 am**



## Birding Sweet Run

Sweet Run State Park has 894 acres of diverse habitat, consisting of rich oak-hickory forest, meadows, ponds, streams, and vernal pools 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 wildlife, with numerous bird species utilizing its richness. These walks are sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#). **Questions:** Contact Joe Coleman at [jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org). **Parking fee:** The fee for a standard vehicle is \$10. View fee information at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/parking-fees>.

**Fourth Saturdays: May 23, June 27, July 25, 8:00 am**



\* A Celebrate Birds! event

as a photography expert for National Geographic Expeditions. This program is co-sponsored by the Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun Wildlife. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#).

**Native Snakes of Loudoun — Monday, May 11, 7:00 pm, Ashburn Library.** Snakes play an important role in maintaining the balance and diversity of native species. They keep rodent populations in check and in turn are preyed upon by other

animals. While they go about filling basic biological needs (food, reproduction, regulating body temperature), they remain one of our most feared and misunderstood groups of animals. Join Loudoun Wildlife and the Loudoun County Public Library for this introduction to our native snakes, how to identify them, and measures we can take to better understand and coexist with them. **Registration required:** [Sign Up Online](#).



# Celebrate Birds! Events



**Celebrate Birds! and the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Birdathon – Continues through Sunday, May 17.** Join us for our annual celebration of birds and bird migration. Loudoun Wildlife offers a number of Celebrate Birds! walks visiting birding hotspots throughout the county. To see a complete list and register for walks, visit <https://loudounwildlife.org/2025/05/celebrate-birds-go-birding/>.



## The Birdathon

**(April 18–May 17)** is our largest fundraising event of the year and a fun way to get outside! We invite you to either form a team or support an existing one. For more about the Birdathon, see the ad on page 7; visit <https://loudounwildlife.org/citizen-science/bird-counts/celebratebirds-birdathon/> for full details.



## Camp Highroad

**Friday, May 1, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Christine Perdue and Linda Millington at Camp Highroad in southwestern Loudoun, which has extensive fields, rich woodlands, and deep ravines through which the North Fork Goose Creek and its many tributaries flow. In the spring it is home to a number of nesting birds as well as many migrants. *Limit 12. Registration required: Sign Up Online.*



## Big Sit at Algonkian Regional Park

**Saturday, May 9, 6:00 am – 8:00 pm.** Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is excited to be partnering with NOVA Parks for a Big Sit at Algonkian Park. What is a Big Sit? Some people have compared it to a tailgate party for birders. We will set up in one stationary location and see how many species we can count from that spot. At our last spring Big Sit we saw 69 species; this spring we hope to beat that number! Who should attend? Anyone interested in birding from beginner to advanced. If you're new to birding, you can learn more about it and meet other birders. If you're an experienced birder, bring your skills and help us ID some species. This is a stationary location, so it's great for people who aren't interested in a long bird walk. Plus, we'll be there all day, so it's great for those who prefer to sleep late. We will set up just west of the boat ramp with views of the river, a wildflower meadow, a grassy field, a wooded treeline, and wide-open sky. It is also close to the parking lot. We will be there from 6:00 am – 8:00 pm to count as many bird species as we can see or hear. You can stop by for a few minutes to say hi or bring a chair and stay as long as you like.

NOVA Parks Roving Naturalist, Matt Felperin, will join us at the Big Sit between 9:00 and 11:00 am with some of his animal ambassador friends. During previous Big Sits, Matt has brought Smoke the Screech Owl and other raptors, along with amphibians and reptiles. All are happy to interact with visitors and pose for pictures.

In case of inclement weather, cancellation information will be posted on the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Facebook page. *No registration required.*



## JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary

**Wednesday, May 6, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Gerco Hoogeweg for a bird walk on this special property near Lucketts. Over 130 species of birds have been documented in its forests, meadows, and brushy areas, and there is always the chance of discovering more during spring migration. *Limit 15. 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.*



## Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve

**Saturday, May 9, 8:00 am.** See Birding Banshee entry on page 12 for details on this walk.



## Bles Park

**Saturday, May 16, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy on a search for birds at the recently reopened Bles Park in eastern Loudoun. Bles is a birding hotspot with a mix of water habitats that appeal to a diverse mix of species. We'll meet at the parking lot near the playground. *Registration required: Sign Up Online.*



## Algonkian Regional Park

**Sunday, May 17, 8:00 am.** See Birding Algonkian entry on page 12 for details on this walk.

## Young Birders Walk at Algonkian

**Sunday, May 17, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Young Birding Program for a walk exclusively for young birders at Algonkian Regional Park in eastern Loudoun. With extensive frontage along the Potomac River, rich bottomland forests, extensive wetlands, and open grassy areas, this is one of the best places in the county to bird. During migration a walk can yield well over 60 species, including over a dozen warblers. Meet at the boat ramp; bring binoculars if you have them, or we will have some to share. *This walk is exclusively for young birders ages 10–18; a parent/guardian is welcome. Registration required: Sign Up Online. Questions: Contact Patrick Lewis at [plewis@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:plewis@loudounwildlife.org).*



## Rockland Farm

**Sunday, May 17, 8:00 am.** Join Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Mike Scott and Steve Makranczy on a special visit to this private 600-acre farm a little north of Leesburg. The farm, which has been in the same family for two centuries, borders the Potomac River and is rich in wildlife because of the many kinds of habitats there. It includes a rich floodplain, edge and meadow habitat, and on its northern border, Limestone Branch. The varied habitats should provide the group with a good variety of migrating and resident birds. Parking information will be emailed to registered participants. *Limit 12. Registration required: Sign Up Online.*



**Read! Plant! Grow! Book Club — Tuesday, May 19, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, Birch Tree Bookstore, Leesburg.** Join our partners Watermark Woods Native Plants, Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL), and Birch Tree Bookstore for this book club that focuses on native plants, co-sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife and LCPL. At this meeting, we'll discuss the book *Crossings* by Ben Goldfarb, about how road ecology is shaping the future of our planet. To obtain a copy of the book, contact Allison Forbes (Allison.Forbes@loudoun.gov), who will send one to your nearest library for pickup; or purchase it at Birch Tree. Attend in person or online by going to the LCPL website (<https://library.loudoun.gov>) and clicking Event Calendar to get the link.

**Bats of Loudoun: An Evening with Our Nocturnal Neighbors — Sunday, May 24, 7:30 pm, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.** Join us at JK Black Oak for an unforgettable outdoor evening celebrating one of nature's most misunderstood creatures. Local bat researcher and enthusiast Bruce Kimmel will take us on a journey through bat biology, history, and the fascinating world of echolocation — then we'll take a short walk to a neighboring clearing to experience echolocation firsthand. As darkness falls after the 8:24 sunset, we'll gather with handheld acoustic monitors to listen for the ultrasonic calls of bats hunting overhead in real time. The talk draws on data from Loudoun's own acoustic bat monitoring project, uploaded to the National Acoustic Bat Monitoring (NABat) database, giving us a rare window into which species are using our local landscape. JK Black Oak holds the special distinction as the only site in Loudoun known to consistently support the Northern Long-eared Bat, a federally endangered species — making this sanctuary a critical refuge and this evening a unique opportunity to learn about this bat (and many others!). Whether you are a

curious newcomer or a seasoned naturalist, come listen to the night come alive. Directions will be emailed to registered participants. **Limit 20. 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.*

**An Introduction to Loudoun's Invasive Worm Species — Wednesday, May 27, 7:00 pm, Rust Library.** Join Jessie Freeland, education and outreach specialist from the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, to discover a few of the several species of non-native and invasive worms found in Loudoun. Learn how to identify them and what the effects of these worm species could be on your garden, on agriculture, and on our forest floors. This presentation is co-sponsored by the Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun Wildlife. **Registration requested: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

**Peterson Young Naturalist Awards — Sunday, May 31, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Cardinal Ridge Elementary School.** Each year, teachers throughout Loudoun bring their students to the outdoors and the outdoors to their students. Peterson Young Naturalist lessons are designed for every subject and teach how to document observations, data, and questions. What happens? Analysis, curiosity, inquiry (the skills of a naturalist), literacy, confidence, and love for the world all flourish! Join Loudoun Wildlife as we recognize this year's participants and winners (and their teachers!) and celebrate our longstanding collaboration with Loudoun County Public Schools and the growing presence of nature-based learning. **Registration requested: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

**JK Black Oak Workday — Saturday, June 6, 8:00 – 11:00 am, JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary.** See May 2 for details on this event.

**Appalachian Trail Festival — Saturday, June 6, 11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Old Stone School and The Gap Stage in Hillsboro.** The Appalachian Trail Festival in the Gap toasts the beauty of the Trail with brews and bites, tunes, and talks. Expect a day of live music, trail talks, kids' activities, food, and vendors. Try out yoga for hikers, learn how to set up a campsite, go on a scavenger hunt, and join in other nature-themed activities. At this free, family-friendly event, the public is invited to celebrate the Appalachian Trail and other outdoor opportunities in the area. Stop by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy table to say "hi" and learn more about our organization. For more information, visit <https://www.loudounat.org>.

**Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Annual Meeting — Sunday, June 7, 3:00 – 5:00 pm, Waterford Foundation.** See Annual Meeting article on page 15. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

**A Croak in the Night: An Introduction to the Frogs and Toads of Loudoun — Tuesday, June 9, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, Rust Library.** If you've ever sat outside listening to nature and wondered what species of frog you are hearing, then this program is for you! Join Loudoun Wildlife for an introduction to our local frog and toad species. Learn how to identify them both visually and by their calls, and learn what you can do to help protect the habitats of this fragile group of amphibians. This presentation is co-sponsored by the Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun Wildlife. **Registration requested: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

**Identifying the Common Dragonflies of Loudoun — Wednesday, June 10, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Rust Library.** Join Lindsay Loyd, a nature enthusiast who started photographing dragonflies nine years ago, for a presentation on local dragonflies. She is a regular contributor of sightings to iNaturalist and is a certified observer for Odonata Central, a citizen science website for increasing understanding of the biodiversity and distribution of dragonflies and damselflies in the Western Hemisphere. Over 55 species of dragonflies can be found in Loudoun. They are abundant near most ponds and streams, where they hunt, defend their territories, and mate. If you are looking for motivation to spend more time outdoors, to appreciate the beauty and complexity of nature in our area, or even to become a citizen scientist, you will find fewer hobbies that are more satisfying than observing dragonflies. This talk will introduce you to the common (and a few rare) species in Loudoun, including where to look for them and how to identify them. This presentation is co-sponsored by the Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun Wildlife. **Registration requested: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

**Dragonfly Walk — Sunday, June 14, 10:00 am, Claude Moore Park.** Join Loudoun Wildlife's Bryan Henson on a leisurely walk in search of these beautiful and fascinating insects. This park provides great habitat for dragonflies and damselflies with its rich mix of aquatic habitats. This popular trip is always both fun and informative. Bring binoculars and water; hat and sunscreen suggested. Adults and interested children are welcome; **Limit 20. Registration required: [Sign Up Online.](#)** **Questions: Contact Bryan Henson at [bhenson@loudounwildlife.org](mailto:bhenson@loudounwildlife.org).**

**"That is one good thing about this world...there are always sure to be more springs." – LM Montgomery**



### “Handling Too Much”: How to Attack the Invasives on Your Woodland Property Without Becoming Overwhelmed — Saturday, June 20, 10:00 am.

Do you have invasives on your woodland property but don't know where to start to get rid of them? You're not alone! It can feel overwhelming to think about how to get rid of them, as much as you would like to. Join certified Wildlife Sanctuary property owner Abby Seeley on a walk through her 12-acre property near Leesburg to dive into the successes and challenges of living on and loving the property. No matter the size of your woodland or other property, we all have similar challenges in trying to be conservationists of our land. Learn how to triage your work and some practical suggestions for invasives removal. Walk away with resources for advice and possibly ideas for financial assistance. Please wear durable clothing; we will be walking through the woods. Directions will be sent to registrants. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

### Butterfly Walks 2026

Loudoun Wildlife is offering four butterfly walks at various locations this summer. We'll stroll along pathways at Sweet Run State Park, Willowsford Conservancy Wetland, and Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, scout high and low for these sometimes elusive insects, and learn a little about their natural histories. These gentle walks are family-friendly and last about two hours. See location information below. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

- **Sweet Run State Park, Sunday, June 28, 1:00 – 3:00 pm.** Meet at the Interpretive Center parking lot. We'll explore the Xerces plantings, “bugging strip,” and nearby meadows. This is a good opportunity to learn about some of the 50-plus species that visit our gardens. There is a \$10

parking fee unless you have a state park pass.

- **Willowsford Conservancy, Saturday, July 18, 9:30 – 11:30 am.** Meet at the Farm Stand. The wetland and adjacent farmland make this an ideal place to find a wide variety of butterflies. The Farm Stand is located at 23595 Founders Drive, Brambleton.
- **Sweet Run State Park, Sunday, July 26, 9:30 – 11:30 am.** Meet at the Sawmill Road entrance. Butterfly Alley is magical at this time of the year. Our hike will take us through meadows, wetlands, and woods. We may even meet horses along the way. There is a \$10 parking fee unless you have a state park pass.
- **Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Tuesday, July 28, 9:30 – 11:30 am.** This is a gem of a park for butterflies and birds. We'll follow the gravel road along the “savannah” planting and survey the vegetable garden, Springhouse Pond area, and the rain garden beside the Education Annex.

**Let's Count Butterflies — Saturday, August 1, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.** Are you looking for some family fun in the summer sun? Would you like to join a nationally recognized community science program that researchers depend on? Then Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's 30th Annual Butterfly Count is the place for you! Teams of experts, enthusiasts, and beginners will spend the day scouting gardens, roadside ditches, and public spaces in search of these amazing insects. It's a big area, and we need your help. The butterfly count\* is open to all. **Registration required: [Sign Up Online.](#)**

*\* Are you thinking about joining the count but want to try it out first? Register for one or more of our free butterfly walks in June and July (listed above).*

## Celebrate an Annual Meeting Milestone

by Tom Kercheval, Executive Director



Loudoun Wildlife's new home is located in the Waterford Foundation's historic Old School Building. Waterford Foundation photo

Each year on the first Sunday in June, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy gathers members, staff, and volunteers for our Annual Meeting, a time to celebrate what we've accomplished together and recommit to our shared mission: to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat.

It's always a special day, but this year's event will be even more meaningful, as it will be the first time Loudoun Wildlife has hosted an Annual Meeting at our new home. In January, we moved our offices to the Waterford Foundation's Old School Building. This historic location offers some wonderful amenities, including a spacious auditorium, and that's where our Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, June 7, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.



Dr. Mamie Parker

We're honored to welcome Dr. Mamie Parker, the former head of Fisheries for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as our

keynote speaker this year. A trailblazer and inspiring voice for conservation, Dr. Parker was the first African American regional director for the agency's 13 Northeastern states and has delivered powerful talks to audiences around the world. (Learn more about Dr. Parker at <https://www.mamieparker.com>)

During the meeting, we will also recognize top volunteers, local science fair winners, partners, advocates, and more. You'll hear directly from our program leaders, learn about recent accomplishments, and get a look at what's ahead. (And please note: We'll be holding a separate Peterson Young Naturalist Awards program on May 31 at Cardinal Ridge Elementary School in Centreville. See the back page of this issue for more information, and join us for that, too, as we support our next-gen naturalists.)

Attendance at our Annual Meeting is always free, but registration is required, Reserve your spot now at <https://loudounwildlife.org/event/annual-meeting/>.

We can't wait to celebrate with you at our new home in Waterford on June 7!



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Join Us for a  
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## The Peterson Young Naturalist Program Awards Celebration

Sunday, May 31, 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Cardinal Ridge Elementary School  
Centreville, VA

Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/peterson-awards> or scan the QR code.

Help us celebrate the students and  
teachers who've chosen  
"More Green, Less Screen!"

