



Oak Leaf



MARCH/APRIL 2016 · VOLUME 40, ISSUE 1

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE VOTES AGAINST CONSERVATION

As a new member of the U.S. House of Representatives taking office this January, Barbara Comstock recently voted in favor of two bills to remove protections from our nation's waters. She voted for H.R. 1644 to shelve a federal rule protecting streams from being filled with mountaintop removal mining debris. She also voted to remove Clean Water Act protection from wetlands, headwaters and small waters above navigable (major) waterways. She could have abstained, but instead chose to oppose environmental protection.

Please contact her regarding your concern for conservation and our environment at:

Shenandoah Valley Office
117 E. Piccadilly Street
Winchester, VA 22601
Phone: (540) 773-3600

Washington, DC Office
226 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP - TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

EVER WONDER,



“WHAT’S THAT PLANT?”



“WHAT’S THAT BIRD?”

The weather is finally warming up and spring is just around the corner- it's time again for Jim Smith's guided walks at Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve in Winchester. If you haven't been on one of these walks yet, now is the time to seize the opportunity! You never know how many species will be spotted, or what migrants will make an appearance. Start your morning with fresh air, singing birds and fellow conservationists, and get your ID questions answered!

Dates for spring walks are March 26th, April 9th, April 23rd, and May 7th.

These leisurely walks begin at 8:30 AM and last approximately 2 hours. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Meet Jim in the Children of America parking lot off of W. Jubal Early Drive, approximately 1/2 mile west of Valley Avenue. Park at the far side of the lot by the woods. If the group has already departed, walk the path- you'll catch up to us soon!

Shenandoah Audubon, your local Chapter of the National Audubon Society, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. Financial statements are available upon request. Our Audubon Chapter Code is X-54.

Visit us on the web at
AUDUBON-NSVAS.ORG

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

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Conservation: Kaycee Lichliter
Education: OPEN
Field Trips: OPEN
Finance: Kaycee Lichliter
Membership: Tracey Ramsey
Programs: Mark Bruns
Public Relations: Mark Bruns

WEBMASTER

Jeannie Senter

NEWSLETTER

Tracey Ramsey

All photos by Tracey Ramsey unless noted otherwise.



THANK YOU!

Below is a list of members who made recent contributions over the last few months:

Sally Anderson & Richard Cooper
David & Suzanne Boltz
Warren Golightly
Ginney Lakey

Kate Ramsey
Lowell & Elyse Smith
Romy Walker
Margaret Wester
Paul Zeisset

Our membership calendar year starts in April. If you would like to renew your membership or make a contribution, you can do so online securely through PayPal at our website, audubon-nsvas.org. Or, send a check payable to Shenandoah Audubon to PO Box 2693, Winchester, VA, 22604. Membership is only \$15 per person.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE EVENTS ON SATURDAY, APRIL 2ND!

“ALONG THE RIVER’S EDGE” MORNING RIVER WALK AND PRESENTATION

WHEN: Saturday, April 2nd

WHERE: Shenandoah University's
Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Spring Battlefield
(just off Rt. 7 - 1400 Parker Lane, Bluemont, VA 20135)

Join us at **9:00 AM** as we walk the gentle paved path along the Shenandoah River to observe a Great Blue Heron colony and active Bald Eagle nest. Along the way we will also look for spring migrants.

At **10:30 AM**, we will move to the Cool Spring Lodge for a stunning presentation by nature photographer Bob Schamerhorn, who will discuss the amazing diversity of wildlife that lives along the banks of the commonwealth's watershed system. This multimedia program is based on Bob's extensive observation and riverside encounters with riverine birds and other creatures that inhabit Virginia's river valleys from Eagle Rock to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

The presentation contains a lengthy segment on a Great Blue Heron rookery (nesting colony), resident riverbank species, plus other avian delights that migrate along our riverine tributaries. Presented in colorful award-winning photography, this presentation will be supplemented with bird calls and HD video. This is a great program for all birding skill levels, interests and ages, and will last approximately 1 hour.

▼ An Osprey carrying its meal. Photo © Bob Schamerhorn.



▲ A magnificent Great Blue Heron pair working on their nest. Photo © Bob Schamerhorn.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Bob Schamerhorn, a Virginia native, has had an innate passion for nature and art since childhood. He was mentored throughout his youth by generous members of the Lynchburg Bird Club, and regularly participated in Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) outings. He is a three time alumni of the Virginia Garden Club's Nature Camp.

Bob studied Art and Design at Virginia Tech and has worked in art-related fields ever since. He is the Owner/Operator of Infinity Graphics, a business which was started in Bedford County in 1996 and moved to Richmond in 2006. The emergence of digital photography inspired a reconnection with nature photography in 2003.

Since then, his images of nature have won several awards and appeared in numerous publications. His photography is regularly displayed at art festivals and is published as notecards, fine art prints and calendars.

In 2006, he began a weekly photo blog at iPhotoBirds.com which reaches over a thousand viewers each week. He is a member of the National Audubon Society, the Colonial Nature Photography Club and VSO. His hope is to educate and inspire the conservation of nature by capturing and sharing its beauty.

ABOUT THE VENUE

On April 23, 2013, Shenandoah University became the steward of 195 acres of land along the Shenandoah River integral to the July 1864 Battle of Cool Spring. Now known as the Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Spring Battlefield, this land was acquired by the Civil War Trust in 2012.



Through the University's efforts to preserve and protect the land, the area is transitioning from a former golf course into an outdoor classroom for students and the general public.

THOUGHTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

BY CHARLIE HAGAN

For 15 years our planet has experienced record breaking temperatures, with 2015 confirmed as the hottest year in human history. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise with carbon dioxide emissions now triple the levels from our youth and atmospheric levels the highest in 650,000 years.

The climate crisis can be characterized with 5 words. It is **predictable**; with excellent science and overwhelming evidence. It is **insidious**; more like a wet basement than a tsunami, but every year is just a little worse. Climate change is **delayed**; the worst of the changes won't occur at moderate latitudes for perhaps another 50 years. But climate change is also **persistent**; once it arrives we can't just 'hold back' for a year or two and let it subside—it is here to stay. And finally climate change is **catastrophic**: billions of humans and perhaps a quarter to half of all species on Earth are in jeopardy.

In the face of this, climate activists are confronted by a committed band of deniers, with well-funded opponents from the extractive industries allied with political radicals and head-in-sand obstructionists psychologically incapable of reacting to the crisis. These opponents have crafted a pernicious spirit of resistance, with the editor of our own newspaper describing the crisis as one "that, at best, is speculative or, at worst, a colossal hoax."

I invite all of you to come to the Third Biennial Conservation Dinner (details at right) to discuss the climate crisis. We are in desperate need to give climate activists a voice in our community, and you are that voice.

Come out and join us- I am hopeful that this dinner will be the catalyst for a major climate organizing phenomenon for the Shenandoah.

**THIS IS A CHANCE TO MAKE CLIMATE HISTORY
FOR OUR COMMUNITY!**



Think Globally,
Act Locally

SHENANDOAH NATURALISTS CONSERVATION & ECOLOGY DINNER

WHEN: Saturday, April 2nd

WHERE: Winchester Travelodge
160 Front Royal Pike, Winchester, VA 26602

Mark your calendars for an evening of fun and education with door prizes and poster exhibits.

The dinner will feature speakers Charlie Hagan and Nick Snow speaking on "Climate Action at the Local Level," inviting audience input and participation.

The cash bar will open at **5:45 PM**, with a dinner buffet starting at **6:00 PM**.

The cost is \$18 per plate and only \$6 per plate for students with a valid ID.

Make checks payable to **Shenandoah Naturalists** and send to:

Conservation Dinner
c/o Judy Hagan
199 Canter Ct
Winchester, VA 22602

For more information, or if you would like to have a display at the dinner, contact Judy and Charlie Hagan at NatureLover@ShenandoahNaturalists.org or (540) 667-6778.

▼ Photo of a previous Shenandoah Naturalists Conservation Dinner. Photo courtesy of Judy Hagan.



SECRETS OF THE HIVE: A SMITHSONIAN FILM SHOT AT BLANDY

WHEN: Thursday, May 12, 7:00 - 9:00 PM

WHERE: State Arboretum/Blandy Library,
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Boyce, VA 22620

Honey bees and other bees are threatened by parasites, pesticides, habitat loss, and other pressures. This 2015 Smithsonian film, which includes work by Blandy curator T'ai Roulston and his students, highlights efforts around the world aimed at understanding and protecting our most important pollinators. The program includes an introduction by T'ai, viewing of the film, and Q&A. Popcorn provided!

Cost is \$10 for Foundation of the State Arboretum members and \$12 for non-members.

Register by calling (540) 837-1758 x 224.
Visit blandy.virginia.edu for more information.

SHENANDOAH AUDUBON
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WINCHESTER, VA 22604

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GARDEN FAIR 2016

May 7 & 8, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

State Arboretum of Virginia/Blandy Experimental Farm

Stop by our tent and say hello!

CORRECTION!

In the December issue, we reported that a Grey Ratsnake was seen crossing the path at Abrams Creek on one of Jim's fall walks. That was actually a quiz to see how many of you were paying attention. 😊

This snake was not a Grey Ratsnake, but a young Eastern Ratsnake, commonly called a Black Ratsnake.

Black Ratsnakes are powerful constrictors and excellent climbers, reaching sexual maturity in their fourth year. The snakes start to breed in May and June. About five weeks after mating, the female lays a clutch of 5 to 30 eggs in hollow trees, compost/mulch heaps, sawdust piles, or decomposing logs. Incubation is about two months, and eggs hatch from July through September. Hatchlings are usually just over a foot long at birth (like the one seen on the fall walk in the photo to the right) and sport a grey and black pattern.



Jim Smith holds a juvenile Black Ratsnake found crossing the path at Abrams Creek September 19, 2015. ►

◀ An adult Black Ratsnake found in a bluebird box at Shenandoah River State Park.

