



OAK LEAF

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Remembering a Friend



GREGORY J. BARUFFI

August 18, 1953 — December 18, 2007

On Sunday, April 15, friends and family gathered at Blandy Experimental Farm to honor and celebrate the life of Greg Baruffi. Many shared entertaining stories and memories of Greg's life. After, three American Holly trees were planted in Greg's memory. Those in attendance helped with the planting process.

The trees are located behind Lake Arnold in close proximity to bluebird trail boxes.

In addition to the Holly trees, two Purple Martin houses have been purchased in remembrance of Greg and will be installed at Lake Arnold, adding valuable real estate to the existing Purple Martin colony.



"Although Greg claimed to live a simple life, I struggle to recall anything simplistic about him or his life, but rather, a life wherein he wove intricate threads throughout our community and into many relationships, creating a colorful tapestry with his love and generosity."

-Kaycee Lichliter



In addition to being a teacher at Timber Ridge School, Greg was involved in a wide array of projects and organizations. These include Abrams Creek Wetland Preserve, Friends of the Shenandoah River, The Opequon Watershed, Audubon Christmas Bird Counts and numerous banding projects and programs. An innovative and enthusiastic carpenter, Greg built houses for songbirds, bats, woodpeckers and owls. He was also co-coordinator of the Blandy bluebird trail and Shenandoah Audubon's President at the time of his passing.



Greg's memory lives on in the hearts of many as well as in the glorious wonders of nature at Blandy and beyond.

PROGRAM MEETINGS - WHAT ARE THEY?

Program meetings are member meetings which feature an educational lecture or presentation. They are excellent opportunities to meet with the Shenandoah Audubon Board and fellow members. All meetings are FREE and open to the public.



▲ Our March program meeting in progress.



OUR MARCH MEETING

Our 2012 meetings kicked off in March with Heather Sparks from the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center presenting "Human Impact on Wildlife and How We Can Help." The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a nonprofit wildlife hospital and rehabilitation center that specializes in caring for injured, orphaned, and ill wildlife with the goal of giving them a second chance at life in the wild.

Sometimes wildlife cannot be returned to the wild because their injuries are too serious. These animals can serve as wildlife ambassadors to tell their powerful stories of how humans can help them.

Accompanying Heather were three wildlife ambassadors: An Eastern Screech Owl, a Red-Shouldered Hawk and an Opossum. All three were treated at the Center and now provide service by attending educational visits.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Think tossing a banana peel or apple core out the window is fine because it is biodegradable? Think again. Roadsides are frequently littered with food debris. Animals are attracted to the food and come close to roads where they are struck by cars. The cycle continues when carnivorous animals are attracted to the carrion on the road. Many injured animals that the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center treats are found on roadsides.

Sometimes humans will find baby animals and attempt to feed and care for them. These animals become stressed and are usually not able to eat or drink and die as a result of good intentioned human intervention. Baby birds may often appear abandoned, but in most cases a watchful parent is close by.

Birds are particularly susceptible to toxins in our environment. If a bird consumes a mouse or rat that has eaten poison, the bird will suffer from the ingestion of the poison as well. Birds that feed upon insects and worms that have consumed pesticides can become sick too. In addition, the runoff goes into our streams, rivers and watersheds and affects our water quality.

The Center took in a large number of raptors this past season with lead poisoning from consuming lead-shot deer carcasses. The Center's veterinarian, Dr. Belinda Burwell, has persuaded some Clarke County landowners to only allow hunting on their property with copper casings.

Lawn maintenance causes many problems for wildlife including loss of habitat. Old, dead trees can be beneficial havens for woodpeckers, owls and other creatures.



DID YOU KNOW? Some Opossum Facts Learned At Our March Meeting:

- Opossums are usually solitary and completely nomadic, staying in one area only as long as food and water are easily available. Though they may temporarily occupy abandoned burrows, they do not make nests or quarters of their own. The female's pouch eliminates the need for a nest.
- "Playing possum" is an automatic fear response. A threatening situation triggers a release of chemicals that cause the reaction, which creates the appearance and smell of a sick or dead animal.
- When "playing possum," the animal's stiff body can be prodded, turned over, and carried away without reaction. They will typically regain consciousness after a period of between 40 minutes and 4 hours. Opossums cannot "go in" or "come out" of this state voluntarily.
- The young leave the pouch when they are between 70 and 125 days old.
- The lifespan of the Opossum is usually only two to four years.



Check out the Center's website, blueridgewildlife.org, or their Facebook page to learn more cool stuff about local wildlife.

If you find an injured wild animal, call them immediately at (540) 837-9000.

OUR APRIL MEETING



In April Bruce Ingram, noted author and expert in birding and conservation, presented "Birds of the Shenandoah Valley: Their Status and Future." Don Loock of the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) was also on hand to help discuss conservation easements.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Bruce explained that there is much good news for the Wild Turkey as populations appear to be stable in Virginia. One reason for this is because the Wild Turkey is a habitat generalist. Once thought to only survive in heavy woods, the turkey can thrive even in a clear cut area.

However, the numbers for Ruffed Grouse are decreasing. A bird of the deep woods, it requires early successional growth of trees.

The news is similar for the Northern Bobwhite (left). This bird prefers hedgerows, pastures, and tall, overgrown native grasses. Bobwhites build their nests on the ground and require cover to hide. They must have this cover during every season to survive.

Additionally, there are about 3 dozen songbird species including the Golden-Winged Warbler that are significantly endangered in Virginia.

Bruce is an advocate for forest management such as prescribed burns, controlled logging and clear cutting. He contends that songbirds and other wildlife require a mixture of old and new growth trees. Using these management practices on his own property has yielded many benefits of environmental diversity and has drawn many new species to the area.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Bruce started to write professionally in 1983 for numerous wildlife and outdoor magazines. Through his travels and research, he learned about habitat destruction in Virginia and its devastating impact on birds and wildlife. Concerned, Bruce decided to start purchasing land to put into conservation easement. He discovered that there were several tax advantages in doing this, including a 20% reduction in property taxes and eligibility for additional Federal and State benefits. He now has about 423 acres in easement.

Currently, about 83% of land in Virginia is in the hands of private owners. There are many organizations such as PEC that will work with farmers and landowners to place land into easement using private and public funds. These organizations can assist with things such as property assessment for land with unique or historical attributes, watershed protection, fencing, planting buffer zones and other methods of preservation.

Thinking about preserving your land for the future? Contact PEC land conservation officer Don Loock with any questions at dloock@pecva.org or (540) 522-4222.

You can learn more about Bruce Ingram and his writing at bruceingramoutdoors.com and the Piedmont Environmental Council at pecva.org.

Our program meetings are held in Room 102 of Shenandoah University's Bowman Building.

The Bowman Building is located in downtown Winchester at 20 S. Cameron Street, between Cork and Boscawen. There is ample free parking in the lot behind the building which is accessible from either Cameron or Kent Streets.

Each of our program meetings is a unique experience. Thanks to all who attend!

Special thanks to our hardworking Programs Chair Rosemary Rogers for organizing these programs and spreading the word to the media about them. In addition to this work, Rosemary has spent countless hours coordinating other events and researching the technical requirements and proceedings necessary for our Chapter to flow smoothly. We are most grateful for her dedication!

We need YOU!

We are rebuilding our leadership base and would LOVE for you to join us! A very small amount of your time could make all the difference in our Chapter's success. Help us strengthen our voice!

CONTACT US AT
SHENANDOAHAUDUBON@YAHOO.COM



▲ John Spahr (right) takes his birding seriously.

Don't miss our next program meeting on **Monday, May 21** at 7:00 PM entitled "Owls: Birds of Mystery and Majesty." Learn about the unique adaptations, behaviors and lifestyles of owls from long-time birder and conservationist John Spahr.

John has traveled the world to study and learn about birds and is a member of several Virginia birding organizations. He completed an American Birding Association "Big Year" in 2010 and saw **704** species, which earned him recognition in the Wikipedia entry for "Big Year."

Come see and hear him share his experiences with these mystical creatures!

SUPPORT US

Help Shenandoah Audubon be the voice for environmental awareness in the valley. Together we can promote conservation and appreciation of this beautiful place we call home.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

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MEMBERSHIP (1 YEAR): \$15

Members receive a 1-year subscription (4 issues) of our *Oak Leaf* Newsletter.

ADDITIONAL DONATION: \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$

Kindly use the enclosed envelope or remit payment to **Shenandoah Audubon, PO Box 2693, Winchester, VA 22604.**

Your membership dues and additional donations help defer costs such as website fees, liability insurance, materials for bluebird trail maintenance and Shenandoah Audubon Arboretum maintenance, educational programs and more.

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PAUL O'TOOLE

QUACK FOR THOUGHT

This breath is the start of a new beginning, unbound by past history, and full of refreshing possibilities. Imagine wildly.

–Denise Dolan

DID YOU KNOW?

Hooded Mergansers (left) can be spotted in Winchester? This magnificent bird was just one of 32 species seen the morning of March 17 at Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve during a guided nature walk with Jim Smith.



Please recycle.

