

AUTUMN 2023

nature forward

Q U A R T E R L Y

Greener than Ever!

GreenKids Helps Students Blossom



ON THE COVER

Students at Ritchie Park Elementary participate in a stream study. Photo by Ben Israel.

NATURE FORWARD QUARTERLY

Autumn 2023

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6



11

nature forward

Q U A R T E R L Y

AUTUMN 2023

- 4** From the Director
Update from Lisa Alexander
- 5** Aligning Our Money with Our Mission
- 6** Feature: Greener than Ever!
GreenKids Helps Students Blossom
BY LISA GOODNIGHT
- 8** Feature: Powerful Play: Secrets to Nurturing Children's Love of Nature
BY ROSE BRUSAFERRO
- 10** Conservation
Regional policy and advocacy updates
- 14** Connecting Youth to Nature
Preschool, summer camp, family walks and more fun!
- 18** Connecting Adults to Nature
Check out our Adult Nature Programs, Natural History Field Studies and Nature Travel opportunities
- 28** Feature: Collaboration in Bloom in Sligo Creek
BY ALICE STURM
- 30** Staff Updates
- 32** Volunteer Corner
- 34** Bloomin' Birdathon Recap
- 36** Restoration
Coming Soon! Nature Play Space at Woodend
- 39** Tributes
May – July 2023
- 39** Registration information
Your questions about registering, answered!
- 40** Annual Meeting Notice



14



28



36

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

L I S A A L E X A N D E R

Next Generation Thinking

Over the summer, the impacts of climate change felt ever present. In June, our staff outdoor Woodend workday derailed when wildfire smoke caused a code purple alert. Poor air quality is now worse than red and we need purple and magenta warnings. The talented Nature Forward staff didn't let the workday go to waste, though. They executed an amazing pivot and hosted an indoor Climate Teach-In, with every department contributing information, PowerPoint slides, and data on how climate change affects our planet and Nature Forward's outreach, advocacy, education, and restoration work. Most impressive were the stories of climate advocacy action our staff undertakes on their own personal time.



The Restoration Team did outstanding stewardship work in June, watering tender native trees, shrubs, and plants during the prolonged drought. And when June brought joyful campers to our headquarters, ready to bask in nature, Code Red days sent them indoors for learning – not the Camp Woodend we'd planned. Our terrific camp team used every trick in the book to keep campers engaged inside through nature songs, crafts, and my favorite – a recycled materials fashion show.

In July, when I took my traditional trip to Nova Scotia, I saw devastating effects of the wildfires responsible for Code Purple. The charred remains of a verdant forest were chilling. The fact that the wildfire was finally extinguished just two blocks from my cousin's home was equally unsettling. Post-fire, we enjoyed precipitation until the day it rained 10 inches. A small stream nearby swelled into a raging river that washed out our road. The rain sank our neighbor's boat. And for the first time in its 60-year life, my grandmother's house flooded. That's quite a collection of climate change impacts for the first two months of summer.

Increasingly intense droughts, storms, poor air quality, and negative health impacts brought on by climate change affect us all. It could be tempting to throw up our hands in despair. But that's not the Nature Forward way. At Nature Forward, we're hard at work taking proactive steps to mitigate climate change. First and foremost, we teach the next generation of young people to love and steward nature. We build special bonds between children and the environment that last a lifetime. Read about future climate champions we're inspiring at Camp Woodend on page 16 and GreenKids on page 6. Get tips from our Nature Preschool pros on how you can connect the little ones in your life to nature on pages 8-9.

Youngsters aren't the only ones who join our climate change battles. Check out our advocacy and outreach work on pages 10-13 to see how Nature Forward supports climate smart policies across the region every day. That's why the Nature Forward Board voted to move all of our investments away from any contact with fossil fuels and deforestation (see next page). By working together, and practicing next generation thinking, Nature Forward will fight and win positive change for our region and our planet. Your membership and support makes that good fight possible. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Alexander". The signature is fluid and cursive.



CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE IN THE CAPITAL REGION

Aligning Our Money with Our Mission

Nature Forward commits to 100% of our investment portfolio in Environmental, Social, and Governance-screened funds by 2028



Board President Diane Wood (above) and Treasurer Hughey Newsome (below).



Nature Forward has confronted the climate crisis head-on at the local level through advocacy, education, and demonstration. Now, we're also focusing on how our financial decisions align with our policy work. That's why we are proud to announce a new policy that will see our \$12.8 million asset portfolio entirely invested in funds with excellent scores on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) rankings in five years.

"We worked hard to put our money where our mission is," said Hughey Newsome, Nature Forward Board Treasurer. "It was an exciting challenge to balance our role as responsible stewards of a 130-year old organization with the urgency of extracting our money from the fossil fuel industry, deforestation, and patriarchal decision-making in corporations."

Prior to 2017, Nature Forward had an actively managed portfolio of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, which avoided investment in companies in the electrical sector due to likely conflicts with wildlife and habitat issues in the mid-Atlantic. In 2017, our Board of Directors, acting as fiduciary stewards of the organization's assets, shifted to a lower-cost strategy of investing in a portfolio of index funds and began exploring how to maintain returns, keep fees low, and ensure that assets were not invested in activities opposed to our values. While committing to environmental objectives, we wanted to go further, and continued working with advisors to pursue investment options that would best meet all of our goals. In June 2023, the Board of Directors voted on a new policy that will see 100% of Nature Forward's investments move to ESG funds by 2028.

Investment advisor Northern Trust will review our portfolio performance and ESG investments regularly to ensure the portfolio aligns with our mission and ESG directive.

"Northern Trust will provide in-depth analysis on ESG metrics including alternative energy scores, carbon emissions, water usage, pollution prevention, and green building, among many others," said Jonathan W. Gossens, CFA, Northern Trust Vice President and Senior Portfolio Manager. "These reports will be shared with the Nature Forward's Finance Committee and Board annually to meet Nature Forward's goal of investing in highly-rated ESG companies while matching or exceeding targeted returns."

"I'm proud that with our new name, we are also announcing this forward-looking new investment policy," said Diane Wood, President of Nature Forward. "We have an obligation to our donors, past, present, and future, to steward their money to do good work for nature here in the Washington, DC region, while doing our best to steer clear of funding fossil fuel development around the world and making sure our investments align with our core values."



January 24 – 27, 2024 · Virtual & In Person

Updates and sponsorship information at natureforward.org/conferences

Greener than Ever: GreenKids Helps Students Blossom

by Lisa Goodnight

The average 7-year-old in the United States can identify hundreds of corporate logos according to a study by the US Department of the Interior. Sadly, however, that same child can't identify 10 trees or plants growing in their neighborhood. While too many children spend countless hours indoors on computer or TV screens, by some estimates, their time in nature is less than ten minutes a day.



GreenKids Lead Educator Gina Ghertner helps students from Ritchie Park Elementary School analyze water quality measures.

Nature Forward is working hard to connect school children to nature through our award-winning GreenKids educational outreach program. GreenKids proudly serves schools in DC, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland, and Loudoun County in Virginia. Generously supported by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, among other funding sources, GreenKids provides participating public schools with free resources, lessons, hands-on nature experiences, and teacher training. The goal is to help educators boost environmental literacy while also helping them meet established curriculum goals.

"Since its inception in 2005, GreenKids has helped local educators provide high-quality environmental learning and outdoor experiences to tens of thousands of local children," says GreenKids Director Jeff Chandler. "Our hope is to inspire the next generation of nature stewards to appreciate and help protect our shared environment."

GreenKids has been a key collaborator on systemic curriculum initiatives for science in Grades PreK-12. During the 2022-2023 school year, the program reached 11,677 students through 399 classes and 60 schools across the districts it serves. Over that same period, GreenKids reached 715 teachers through professional development and lesson instruction, and teachers and administrators from 16 schools were coached in preparation for their applications for Maryland Green School certification or recertifications. Since 2007, GreenKids has helped 69 schools achieve Green School certification, which signifies best practice standards for teacher training, student lessons, and whole-of-institution greening.

And GreenKids continues to blossom! One example Jeff points to is the Peer Outreach with Energy Resources (POWER) initiative. POWER trains MCPS high school students to be climate ambassadors leading energy conservation presentations at county libraries. The program is larger than ever with the number of students enrolled doubling from 16 to 32 in the 2022-2023 school year. POWER participants have been delivering "Energy Express" presentations at Montgomery County libraries to elementary students and others throughout the summer.

This year, GreenKids launched a Green Careers Livestream Series. This series of half-hour, online interviews connects students of all ages to environmental professionals across a diverse range of careers. During each livestream session, students can ask questions and interact with the various presenters live. The recorded presentations are archived for future viewing, and downloadable activity packets add to the experience and learning.

“By discovering how these scientists, educators, naturalists and so many others got their start, we hope students begin to appreciate the wide range of opportunities for environmental careers that are out there and start to build their own path,” Jeff explains.

As part of its core educational offerings for partnering schools, GreenKids supports classes in using schoolyard gardens as teaching tools through lessons like our six-week Salad Science program. Through this lesson, students plant, water, and eventually harvest lettuce to enjoy in an end-of-year Salad Party, all while learning about the growing cycle and needs of plants.

“Growing our own food and experiencing firsthand the amount of time and care involved in growing veggies, can really help connect people with nature, and builds a lasting appreciation for many of the foods we eat,” adds Gina Ghertner, GreenKids Lead Educator. “I’ve taught students who tell me they don’t eat salad and who end up coming back for more!”

Nature Forward’s GreenKids also supports the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) within MCPS’s

high school biology and chemistry curricula. MWEE is a learner-centered program designed to teach students about important environmental issues through hands-on investigation and experiences.

“We want more schools and young people to connect with their local stream sites and take part in water quality monitoring efforts,” Jeff says. “Stream studies can be such a powerful tool for engaging students in hands-on environmental science!”

Students clearly enjoy the stream time versus screen time. “It’s better to actually do this stuff instead of just sitting down and being told about it because you actually gain experience out here,” said Magruder High School student Maximilian Fotovat during a stream science lesson at the North Branch of Rock Creek.

On the way back from a stream study at Wheaton High School, biology and forensic science teacher Karen M. Kraus overheard a student saying, “This is what a biology class should be; get outside and do stuff.” Also overheard, “I think I’m going to do my action plan about cleaning up all that trash.”

For program volunteer and retired high school science teacher Paula Wang, GreenKids’ success incorporating nature into meaningful learning and student success all comes down to one thing: connection.

“It’s really about connection—in one word, connection—to the place where they live so you’ve got a little thread and that thread, over time, grows their connection to nature.”



“Our hope is to inspire the next generation of nature stewards to appreciate and help protect our shared environment.”

— JEFF CHANDLER,
GREENKIDS
DIRECTOR

Highschoolers in the POWER internship program helped young children solve energy mysteries this summer at area public libraries.

“For both kids and adults, experts recommend experiencing 120 minutes of weekly nature exposure, nicknamed ‘Vitamin N,’ to support a wide range of mental and emotional benefits.”

Powerful Play: Secrets to Nurturing Children’s Love of Nature

by Rose Brusafferro, PhD, Acting Nature
Preschool Director

Chasing butterflies through meadows and watching birds soar. Spotting salamander eggs and spying on fascinating pond life. Digging in the dirt, peeking under logs, and scoping out fox dens. With beautiful Woodend Nature Sanctuary as their living classroom, young children enjoy these adventures and more every day of learning at our Nature Preschool in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

But kids don’t have to attend Nature Forward Preschool to thrive with nature. The powerful benefit of playing in mud puddles is no longer a dirty little secret. Over the last three decades, a growing body of research has established that outdoor experiences help boost every child’s cognitive and behavioral development and physical and mental

health. More time outdoors, especially in early childhood, helps set the stage for a lifetime of happiness, creativity, resilience, physical strength...and environmental responsibility. Let me share with you three great reasons to play outside with the little ones in your life. I can also offer you some tips to make it easy!

Build a Healthy Body

Angela Hanscom’s 2016 book, *Balanced and Barefoot*, explains the science behind why children who enjoy frequent, prolonged periods of free play outdoors develop stronger gross and fine motor skills, core strength, stability, flexibility, endurance, vision, and attention spans than their peers who do not play outside. For nature play kids,

exposure to sunlight and vitamin D strengthens their immune systems, bones, muscles, and nerve functions. You can jump start nature play by accompanying little ones on 15-minute walks through the neighborhood. Over time, kids (and their grown ups!) will build stamina for weekly hikes to a favorite park. Sprinkle nature walks with invitations. “Can you balance on this fallen log? How about climbing onto this tree branch? Do you want to build a mini-fort out of sticks?” Working with nature helps nurture every child’s physical and emotional well-being.



An annual Autumn tradition at Nature Preschool is playing in leaf piles! Last October, children in the Saplings class grabbed handfuls of yellow, orange, red, and brown fallen leaves to cover their teachers and classmates—a fun way to camouflage.



The perfect size for close-to-the-ground exploration, young children in the Acorns program discover what kind of life lives in a square foot of grass. For children under four years-old, this program is a special way for parents to enjoy nature alongside their little ones.

SCAN BELOW TO APPLY TO NATURE PRESCHOOL



Inspire Happiness

We adults might know that time spent in nature helps support mental health. That's true for youngsters too! Research shows that time spent near running water can lower blood pressure and cortisol levels. Listening to birdsong has been found to reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Scientists have observed that exposure to greenspaces increases creativity and the capacity for problem-solving. It also promotes better quality sleep.

For both kids and adults, experts recommend experiencing 120 minutes of weekly nature exposure, nicknamed "Vitamin N," to support a wide range of mental and emotional benefits. Invite your little one to dig in the garden, spend some time cloud-watching, or wade in a creek. Check out Richard Louv's *The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life: 500 Ways to Enrich the Health & Happiness of Your Family & Community* for more great ideas.

Nurture a Nature Champion

Deep engagement with the natural world at a young age is a great recipe for inspiring passionate environmentalists. Children use direct sensory experiences to develop the way they perceive the world. Using those senses during nature play cultivates a sense of wonder and connection to natural places. So, in those moments when you provide a child with the opportunity to make mud pies or throw rocks into a creek, you can be sure that you are sowing the seeds of a person who will work for a healthier planet for all of us. Collaborative nature activities such as setting up a campsite together or going birding with a group teach teamwork, cooperation, negotiation, and conflict resolution—all of which are essential skills that our future generations will need to tackle complex, modern ecological problems. Find more ideas for nurturing your young environmentalist in the book *Learning with Nature: A how-to guide to inspiring children through outdoor games and activities* by Marina Robb, Victoria Mew, and Anna Richardson.

Nature Forward is committed to the idea that we all need nature and nature needs all of us. We know that it is never too early to engage with the natural world. As a parent, neighbor, relative or friend, you can help us encourage young naturalists by helping them spend time in nature to gain social, emotional, and early literacy skills that equip them for success in school and give them the lifetime gift of love of nature.

If you have a little one in your life, please connect them with Nature Forward. We look forward to welcoming young children to our soon-to-be-opened Nature Play Space and to our nature-based programs for caregivers and kids, families, and preschoolers. You can learn more at natureforward.org/preschool. Whether you visit us at Woodend for a few hours or join us for a full school year of outdoor adventure, we can't wait to see you outside!

Was this the Coolest Summer for the Rest of Our Lives?

by Eliza Cava, outgoing Conservation Director

This past summer broke the kinds of records we don't like to break – searing heat, terrible air quality from wildfire smoke, damaging storms with nearly no warning, coral reefs bleaching fast and furious. And that is just in North America. Scientists report that climate impacts are here sooner, and stronger, than predicted. This is not “the new normal.” We won't know what the new normal is until we stop pumping fossil fuels into the atmosphere.

At Camp Woodend, Camp Director Berry had to develop new indoor camp policies for code red air days and provide more water carnivals and mist sprayers to help kids beat the heat. We will all keep adapting, but beyond adapting, we need to reimagine. What will make our world beautiful even when it's hotter than we ever thought it would get? What will bring us joy even as we consume less and use fewer material goods? How will our bodies strengthen as we move under our own power more and rely less on vehicles powered by gasoline?

I am leaving Nature Forward with immense pride for what we have accomplished together, with our staff, Board, talented volunteers, amazing partners, and dedicated members. There is much more to do, and to me, it all boils down to reimagining. As children, imagination helped us face our fears by dreaming up ways to overcome them. We all need to spend some time imagining what's next for ourselves, our communities, and our country, and then put those ideas into practice in beautiful, brave new ways. I am honored to place the creative work of imagining how Nature Forward will deliver its Conservation impact and outreach in the future into the capable hands of our incoming Conservation Director, Lydia Lawrence, who is a true champion for people and nature (see page 30).



Eliza rafts down the Yampa River in extreme high water this spring, feeling the joy in nature!

Photo by Tina Schneider

Washington, DC

Do you have a gas stove? Learn about dangerous emissions and how to electrify your cooking. Nature Forward is pushing the DC City Council to pass Healthy Homes for All legislation that will help remove gas appliances from homes. Nature Forward offers educational demonstrations to test your gas stove at home. Want your gas stove tested? Want to testify in favor of Healthy Homes for All? Please reach out to DC Advocate, Jamoni Overby (jamoni.overby@natureforward.org).

Ward 8 Watchers: Nature Forward is proud to have trained another Ward 8 Water Watchers Ambassador Cohort. These new Ward 8 leaders are ready to share their knowledge with their communities and speak up for nature in their neighborhood. Thanks to our partners, The Green Scheme, DC Greens, and Friends of Oxon Run Park, we wrapped up this year's program with a guided nature walk led by Luis Fermin (Instagram: @louthenatureplug). We trekked from Oxon Hill Farm to Oxon Cove with happy, curious residents who ranged in age from 4 to 82 years old.

Get involved & learn more!

Sign up for our Action Alert Network and read all our latest posts at natureforward.org/conservation-blog.



Participants and partner organizations at the July 2023 Latino Conservation Week Litter Pick Up at Long Branch. Photo by Ilisa Tawney.

Maryland

Nature Forward leads Latino Conservation Week Celebrations across Maryland: On July 15 at Tanglewood Park (Prince George’s County, MD), more than 50 community members joined Nature Forward for a bilingual forest bathing program. On July 22, at Long Branch Local Park, we hosted a cleanup with Montgomery Parks. Neighborhood high school students, trained by Nature Forward, conducted their Don’t Pollute project by interviewing residents and picking up litter in parks and streams. They collected 15 bags of trash and 7 bags of recyclables in under 2 hours! Thank you to the US Forest Service and the Chesapeake Bay Trust for their generous support of this programming.

Virginia

Water Protectors of Little Hunting Creek – Connecting Residents to their Streams: Nature Forward celebrated Latino Conservation week by hosting three events with our Water Protectors Program. Dozens of community members from Sequoyah Condominium and Audubon Estates labeled more than 150 storm drains and learned that when it rains, rainwater and the pollution and trash it carries, goes directly into Little Hunting Creek. Families pledged to spread the word to neighbors about picking up trash in order to keep the local streets and creek clean. We also hosted 50 people on a nature walk at Huntley Meadows Park where everyone learned about the value of trees and wetlands for keeping our drinking water clean while enjoying the sight of turtles, snakes, butterflies, birds, grasshoppers, and frogs! Thank you to the US Forest Service for their generous support of this programming.

Conservation Cafes

Join us for inspiring conversations on nature conservation topics. Complimentary registrations available, contact lydia.lawrence@natureforward.org. See detailed descriptions and register at natureforward.org/conservation-café.

**Understanding Flood Risk and Meaningful Engagement
Wednesday, September 20 at 7 pm
In person at Woodend & Livestreamed**

Victor Ukpolo from DC’s Department of Energy and Environment shares his work on floodplains in the District and reducing flooding risks in the region.

**A Night with Councilmember Fani-González
Tuesday, October 3 at 7 pm
In person at Woodend & Livestreamed**

Councilmember Natali Fani-González will review the new County forest conservation law, working towards a more climate resilient community, and securing safer roads for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Yes, in My HOA Back (And Front) Yard!
Thursday, November 16 at 7 pm
via Zoom**

Join nature writer and Humane Gardener founder Nancy Lawson as she hosts a panel discussion among advocates for allowing low-impact, native habitat landscaping in HOAs and common interest communities.



Families explore the nature of Huntley Meadows in August while learning about how wetlands clean our drinking water. Photo by Renee Grebe.

Connecting people to nature in their communities

Nature Forward works to reach families in their communities—near where they live, work, and go to school—and connect them to nearby nature through engaging, hands-on activities and trainings. Check out photos of the experiences and projects we are working on with community leaders, partner organizations, and of course, empowered residents. Learn more about these programs at natureforward.org/community-outreach.



Join us for the following events around the DMV region!

DC Citizen Science Event: Saturday, September 9 from 3:30-5:30 pm at Rock Creek Picnic Grove #10 (Rain date: Saturday, October 23, 10 am-12 pm). Learn about DC Citizen Science Water Quality Monitoring. Discover what lives in the water, find out how you can help protect Rock Creek, and engage in family fun activities! For more info, contact jamoni.overby@natureforward.org.

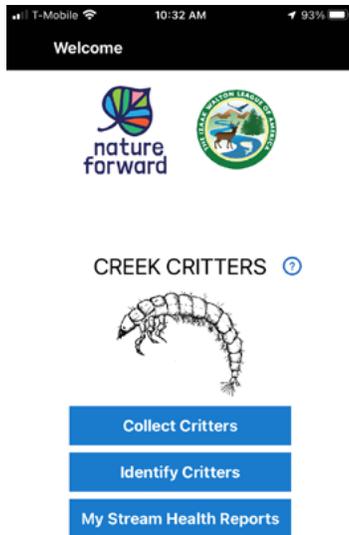
Festival del Rio Anacostia: Saturday, September 30 from 10 am-4 pm at (Rain date: Saturday, October 7). Join us to celebrate the Hispanic Heritage Month at Prince George's County's Bladensburg Waterfront Park. For more information visit: <https://www.facebook.com/AnacostiaRioFest>.

Nature Forward at the 2022 Festival del Rio showing kids how to create their own nature art projects.

Stream Science

Data, Data, and More Data

Through July of this year, more than 7,300 people were engaged through our CREEK CRITTERS water quality smartphone app (natureforward.org/creek-critters). Since the app's launch in 2015, CREEK CRITTERS has been used to engage more than 58,000 people who have learned about or surveyed aquatic organisms to assess water quality in their local streams. That's amazing reach! Combine CREEK CRITTERS data with high quality data collected by our volunteer Water Quality Monitoring teams (a community science project that has been running for more than 30 years!), and you can imagine the mountain of stream science data Nature Forward can share.



So where does all the data go? One of the most exciting ways we use our data is to report on stream health conditions in the DC metro region. What started as our Story of Streams Project (natureforward.org/the-story-of-streams) is currently being upgraded to a State of the Streams Report that uses data from multiple watersheds across the region to highlight stresses our precious streams face and calls people to action to protect and restore them. Stay tuned for the report launch.

Another important destination for our data is the Clean Water Hub (<https://www.cleanwaterhub.org>), a national compendium of stream data used by universities, government agencies, and nonprofits across the country for stream conservation. Water Quality Monitoring data is also shared with the Chesapeake

Monitoring Cooperative for inclusion in the Chesapeake Data Explorer (<https://cmc.vims.edu/#/home>) and with environmental protection agencies in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and Washington, DC.

Our dedicated volunteers collect water quality data that Nature Forward shares and amplifies in order to preserve some of the most important habitat in our region, our streams and stream valleys.

Water Quality Monitoring Community Engagement Update

In the summer issue of the Nature Forward Quarterly, we described a pilot program—funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust—that Nature Forward would launch over the summer. We are off and running! Staff and volunteers engaged the public by hosting learning stations alongside our community science monitoring stations at Northwest Branch and Cabin John Creek. Nearly 50 visitors dropped in to peer through microscopes at aquatic macroinvertebrates, learn about stream health, and meet our volunteers. We hosted these stations with our partners the Langley Park Civic Association, Neighbors of Northwest Branch, and Friends of Cabin John Creek. Our partners helped us share many ways for curious visitors to get involved in protecting local streams. See photos at the right from the July 22 Northwest Branch event.

Want to help? Contact Volunteer Coordinator peihan.orestes@natureforward.org.

Our introductory and advanced WQM classes are available online at natureforward.org/water-quality-monitoring



Kids unplug and play at Woodend Sanctuary

Unplug and Explore at Woodend Nature Sanctuary

Did you know playing in nature helps children with:

- cognitive development (creativity and problem solving)
- emotional growth (stress reduction and self-confidence)
- socialization (cooperation and self-awareness)

To find programs and events that connect your family to nature, visit natureforward.org.

SCAN TO FIND FAMILY PROGRAMS



Nature Preschool

Nature Preschool enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year is now open!

Chasing butterflies through meadows, watching birds soar, spotting salamander eggs, digging in soil, peeking under logs, and scoping out fox dens. With the beautiful Woodend Nature Sanctuary as their living classroom, young children enjoy these adventures and more during a normal day of learning at our Nature Preschool in Chevy Chase, MD. Have you ever wanted your child to learn in the great outdoors? Is your family interested in supporting a 'green' lifestyle? Check us out! We have lots of program options if you're looking for a special place for your little one to learn and play outside. Visit us at <https://natureforward.org/program/nature-preschool>. #NatureForward

Additional inquiries can be sent to Rose Brusaferrero at rose.brusaferrero@natureforward.org.



Birthday Parties at Woodend

Explore Woodend Nature Sanctuary with a naturalist for nature-themed activities and games all outdoors!

Learn more at natureforward.org/birthday-parties

ENJOY THE WONDERS OF WOODEND



Days Off & Spring Break Camps

Days Off Camps (Grades K-5)

Monday, September 25 (MCPS)
Monday, October 9 (MCPS & DCPS)
Wednesday, November 1 (MCPS)
Wednesday, April 10 (MCPS)
8:45 am – 5:00 pm
Members \$135, nonmembers \$155

Join us for a day off full of outdoor adventures and nature exploration. Activities may include catching frogs in the pond, learning about pollinators in the meadow, games, and building forts. Come prepared to get dirty and have fun!



SCAN TO REGISTER

Questions? denis.perez@natureforward.org
Register at natureforward.org/day-off-camps

MCPS Spring Break Camp Grades K-5

Monday, March 25-Thursday, March 28, 2024
8:45 am – 3:00 pm
Members \$370; nonmembers \$400
Extended camp available until 5:00 pm for \$100



Family Walks at Woodend

First Saturday of each month (9-10 am)
Members \$12 per family, nonmembers \$20

Join Nature Forward naturalists and educators on a leisurely walk through the habitats at Woodend. Explore the wonders of trees, meadows, streams, insects, birds, and everything Woodend has to offer! Limited to 10 families. Register at natureforward.org.

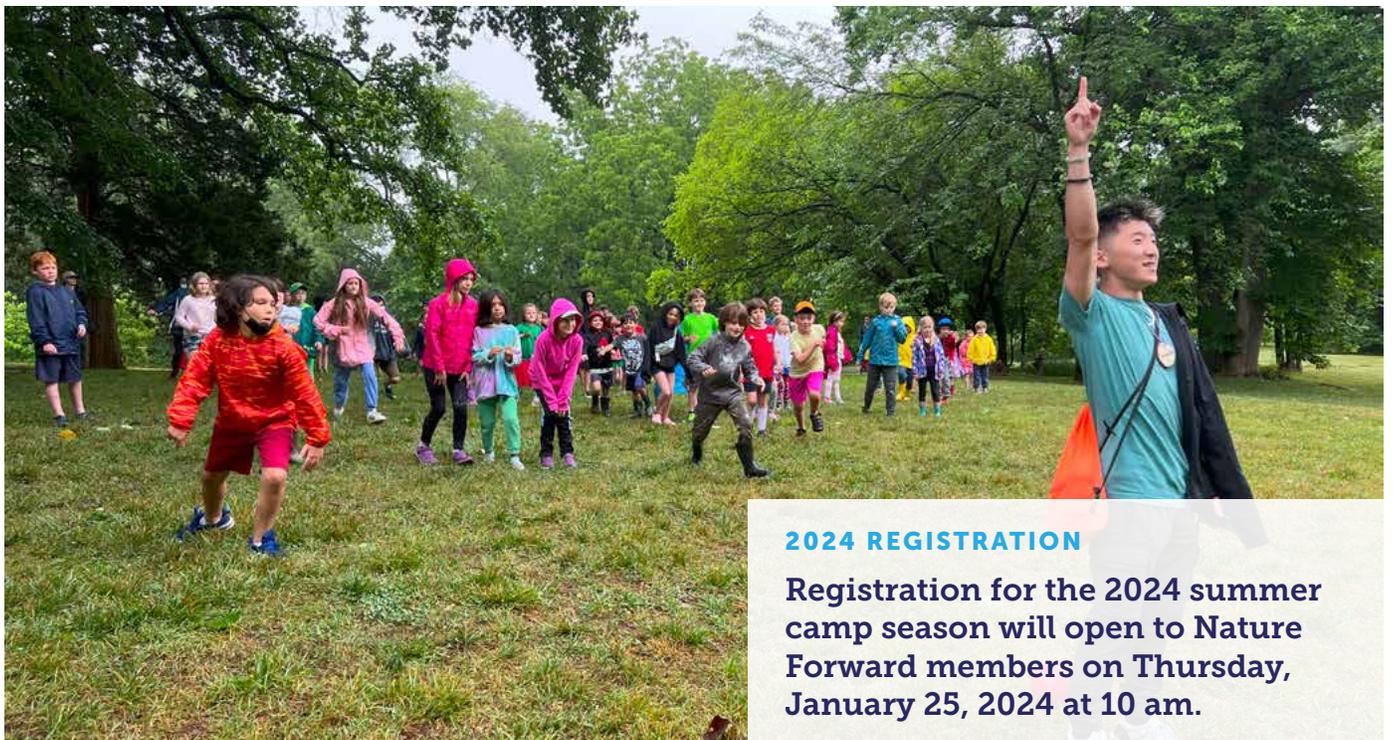
Bring your class to Woodend Nature Sanctuary for a field trip!

- Designed for Pre-K to 5th grade students
- Free programs available for public schools in MD, DC, and VA
- For more information, visit natureforward.org/woodend-field-trips or email brenna.houck@natureforward.org.



THANK YOU

Camp Woodend thanks all campers, parents, teachers, interns, TNTs and JRCs who helped make this summer great.



2024 REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2024 summer camp season will open to Nature Forward members on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 10 am.

Fall in love with nature on one of these Autumn outings

Wild places are closer than you think®

From field trips to Natural History Field Studies and Nature Travel, adults can find a wide variety of opportunities to learn about and experience nature led by regional naturalists.

Adult Nature Programs

Online Registration for Adult Programs

SCAN TO REGISTER



Sign up at natureforward.org/nature-classes

All changes/cancellations/transfers must be handled through the EE office.

Questions? Call Pam at 301-652-9188 x16 or email pam.oves@natureforward.org

Delighting in the Butterflies of Soldiers Delight

Saturday, September 9 (10 am-2 pm)

Rain date Sunday, September 10

Leader: Rick Borchelt

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

Soldiers Delight just northwest of Baltimore is the largest and most diverse of the disappearing serpentine barrens on the East Coast. It's also home to some 40 rare, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, including several butterflies. On this visit we hope to see one of the most iconic of these, Leonard's Skipper, whose flight is timed to flowering of *Liatris* in the barrens. In addition, we should be able to see and distinguish a variety of the more confusing fall skippers and other summer butterflies. We'll also visit the site of a major wildfire on the barrens from April, and see how this sensitive natural area—which evolved as a fire ecosystem—is recovering. Close-focusing binoculars and a good field guide to butterflies are recommended for optimal butterfly watching in the open and sunny habitats we'll explore, and sturdy shoes will be needed for the often rocky terrain.

Botanical Gems: Monocacy Aqueduct and Dickerson Conservation Park

Sunday, September 10 (9 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Carole Bergmann

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

As summer winds down and the growing season comes to an end, join a retired forest ecologist/naturalist for an exploration of the floodplain plant communities along the Potomac River at Monocacy Aqueduct (southern Frederick County) and the close-by Dickerson Conservation Park (Montgomery County). You'll walk amongst towering Cottonwoods, Sycamores, Black Walnuts and more as the ripening and spreading of fruits and seeds signal that fall is on the way. Explorations will be conducted on the flat towpath, as well as on natural surface trails in the possibly muddy and slippery bottomlands.

Fall Birding Series

(8-10:30 am)

- A. Sunday, September 10: Patuxent Research Refuge/ Main Tract, MD (Len Bisson)
- B. Saturday, September 23: Governor's Bridge Natural Area, MD (Liz Guertin)
- C. Wednesday, September 27: RedGate Park, MD (Mike Bowen and Anne Cianni)
- D. Sunday, October 1: Dyke Marsh, VA (Lisa Shannon and Rob Hilton)
- E. Sunday, October 8: Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC (Mike Bowen and Anne Cianni)
- F. Wednesday, October 18: National Arboretum, DC (Lisa Shannon and Rob Hilton)
- G. Saturday, October 28: Woodstock Equestrian Park, MD (Mark England)
- H. Wednesday, November 1: Huntley Meadows Park, VA (Mike Bowen and Anne Cianni)
- I. Sunday, November 5: Hughes Hollow, MD (Len Bisson)

Each walk: members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Our fall birding series visits natural areas under an hour's drive from DC where a variety of habitats—including field, forest, and wetland—provide good opportunities for the observation and ID of birds in autumn. On the earliest walks, we'll hope to encounter some southbound migrants—including those "confusing fall warblers." As the season progresses, we'll watch for sparrows, raptors, waterfowl, and other birds, both resident and overwintering in the region. These teaching walks are aimed at beginning to mid-level birders, but all are welcome. Our explorations will be on mostly level, natural surface trails that may be uneven, muddy, and/or somewhat slippery. Expect a few hilly stretches on walks C and G.

Midweek Meanders Along the Canal

Wednesdays (10 am-12:30 pm)

- A. September 13 – Riley's Lock
- B. September 27 – Carderock
- C. October 11 – Widewater
- D. October 25 – Pennyfield Lock
- E. November 8 – Violettes' Lock

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Each walk: members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Enjoy one or more of these leisurely autumn walks on relatively close-in portions of the C&O Canal which see less foot and bicycle traffic during the week than on weekends. The focus of our walks will be the general natural history of the varied habitats along the Potomac River and the Canal. We'll proceed at a "naturalist's shuffle" pace, stopping often to observe birds, fall wildflowers and foliage, butterflies, snakes, turtles—whatever we might find.

Nature Photography Basics: Wildlife Photography

Friday, September 15 (8:30-11:30 am)

Leader: Liz Guertin

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Join Master Naturalist & award-winning nature photographer Liz Guertin for a journey into wildlife photography. Use any camera to compose and achieve the best shots possible in the outdoors. All cameras welcome—including your phone! Liz will help you explore a world of texture, color, and (we hope!) showy green tree frogs which can often be found in the wetlands of Huntley Meadows Park in Alexandria, VA. Liz will walk you through everything from exposure and composition to the craft and ethics of nature photography. This time of year, our field trip location will also offer opportunities to see and photograph late summer insects, birds, frogs, turtles, and more.

Woodend Tours

Native Plant Gardens of Woodend

Friday, September 15 (10-11:30 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Join Garden Manager Alice Sturm in the exploration of the many native plant gardens Woodend has to offer. Learn what native herbs do well in certain conditions and gather ideas for your own home garden.

Notable Trees of Woodend

Friday, October 13 (10-11:30 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Learn about the notable trees Woodend has to offer with Restoration Manager Bradley Simpson. We will learn how to identify these trees and where you might find them in the wild. We will explore what wildlife uses these trees and how they benefit our native ecosystems.

Natural Habitats of Woodend

Friday, November 17 (10-11:30 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Join Nature Forward naturalists to explore the meadows, forests and stream at Woodend. Learn about the work we do to improve our native habitats for our local wildlife.

Late Summer Wings and Wildflowers

Saturday, September 16 (9 am–2 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

In Prince George's County, the Jug Bay Natural Area on the western shore of the Patuxent River protects old field, forest, and freshwater tidal habitats that are ideal for broad-based nature exploration. Each September, our Senior Naturalist looks forward to this broad-based search for still-active butterflies and other insects, migrant and resident birds, and other local wildlife against the backdrop of late summer blooms and fruiting trees and shrubs. Expect a leisurely hike of around 2–3 miles with a small amount of uphill and downhill—and some of it under open and sunny conditions.

Sleuthing for Spiders

Sunday, September 17 (9:30 am–Noon)

Leader: Cliff Fairweather

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Spiders are ubiquitous creatures in our basements, meadows, and woodlots. While they inspire feelings of fear among many, they are a source of wonderment and mystery to the nature enthusiast. Join a naturalist for an introduction to the natural history and identification of spiders. On our field trip to McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area, near Poolesville, MD, we'll search for spiders in a variety of habitats and discuss their life histories, feeding strategies, and adaptations.

Fall Flora Fridays

Fridays (10 am–1 pm)

A: September 22—Rock Creek Park, DC

B: October 6—Bucklodge Community Park, MD

C: October 20—Riverbend Park, VA

D. November 3—Blockhouse Point Conservation Park, MD

Leaders: Stephanie Mason A & C; Bradley Simpson B; Carole Bergmann D

Each walk: members \$33; nonmembers \$46

These walks of up to two miles will celebrate the transition from lingering summer blooms to ripening fall seeds and fruits to the grand show of dramatic foliage color and leaf fall. Although aimed at beginning to mid-level plant enthusiasts, all are welcome. Expect a stop-and-go pace on trails in four local parks, with natural surface trails on all but walk B where the walkway is paved. Expect some uphill and downhill stretches on walks A, C, and D, with the rockiest and most uneven terrain on walk D.



Common Buckeye by Jane Gamble

Late Summer Butterflies at the Howard County Conservancy

Saturday, September 23 (10 am–2 pm)

Rain Date: Sunday, September 24

Leader: Rick Borchelt

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

The Howard County Conservancy, a 325-year-old farm now operated as a nature reserve and educational facility in Woodbine, MD, offers one of the region's best areas to observe the diversity of late summer butterflies. In addition to the normal flush of late season resident skippers and sulphurs, for example, we can expect to see a number of migrant species like Ocola Skipper, Cloudless Sulphur, Clouded Skipper, and Common Buckeye. We'll explore the community gardens, the native plants garden, and surrounding grass and wooded trails, with an optional foray afterwards to the nearby Original Woodstock Snowball Stand.

Getting to Know the Ancients

Saturday, September 30 (9 am–Noon)

Leader: Kit Sheffield

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Here's your chance to learn more about an ancient part of our flora which preceded flowering plants and has existed since the time of the dinosaurs. Our living classroom will be the rich woodlands of Rachel Carson Conservation Park, near Olney, MD. Under the guidance of our Natural History Field Studies ferns instructor, you will learn how to begin IDing ferns in their natural habitats and find out more about their life histories. Expect a little over a 2-mile hike, with some mild uphill/downhill on uneven natural surface trails.

Introduction to Tree Identification

Wednesday, October 4 (10 am-2 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

October is a great month to begin learning to ID our local trees and shrubs. With colorful leaves and this season's seedpods still hanging on, there are visible and fairly easy-to-find distinguishing characteristics to help sort out various species. Based at our Woodend Sanctuary, this learning session will begin under an outdoor awning where we'll talk about techniques for tree ID, coupled with the introduction to and practice with an ID key. For the rest of our time, we'll stay outside and practice our new ID skills on the many trees growing on-site. Both beginners and those who want to brush up on their tree ID skills are welcome.

Fall in the Parks

(9 am-1 pm)

A. Saturday, October 7—Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, VA

B. Sunday, October 22—Patuxent Research Refuge/North Tract, MD

C. Saturday, November 11—Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Each walk: members \$35; nonmembers \$49

Join our Senior Naturalist for these seasonal, broad-based nature explorations of nearby parks rich in natural history. We'll walk between 2-4 miles, on natural surface and possibly muddy trails, as we enjoy the development of fall color, late season blooms and insects, resident and migrating birds--and all manner of animal and plant life. Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge near Woodbridge, VA protects open grasslands as well as bottomlands along Belmont and Occoquan Bays. At the Patuxent Research Refuge/North Tract near Laurel, MD we'll explore Coastal Plain woodlands and wetlands. Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, on the banks of the Anacostia River inside the Beltway, features protected swamp, marsh, and woodland habitats within sight of DC's urban sprawl.

Visit natureforward.org/nature-classes for more info on these fall programs

Botany in the Bottomland

Sunday, October 8 (9 am-Noon)

Leader: Bradley Simpson

Geology of Holmes Run Gorge

Saturday, October 14 (Noon-4 pm)

Leader: Joe Marx

Natural Heritage Hike: Calvert Cliffs State Park

Sunday, October 15 (9:30 am-4 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Forest Bathing Walk at Woodend

A: Sunday, October 22 (10 am-12 pm) Ana Ka'ahanui

B: Friday, November 10 (10 am-12 pm) Adria Zeldin

On the Move at Cape May

Tuesday, October 17 (8 am) to Wednesday, October 18 (4 pm)

Leader: Mark Garland

Fall on Wheels Along the Canal

Thursday, October 26 (9 am-2 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Introduction to Botanical Drawing

Tuesday, October 31 (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Jen Brown

Autumn Tree Walk at Theodore Roosevelt Island

Thursday, November 9 (9:30 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Melanie Choukas-Bradley

Geology at Riley's Lock

Tuesday, November 14 (1-4 pm)

Leader: Joe Marx

Sparrows and Finches:

An Introduction to the Season's LBJs

A: Thursday, November 16 (7:30-9:30 pm lecture)

B: Monday, November 20: Blue Mash Nature Trail, MD (Mike Bowen & Anne Cianni) 8-11 am

C: Saturday, November 25: Occoquan Bay NWR, VA (Lisa Shannon & Rob Hilton) 8:30-11:30 am

Walk Among the Giants

Friday, November 17 (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Natural Travel

Nature Forward's Travel program offers our members and friends opportunities to search for wildlife and explore the wonders of nature outside the mid-Atlantic region. Group size is typically limited to 12-14 people, and many trips fill early. Email pam.oves@natureforward.org for complete itineraries and registration information or visit natureforward.org/nature-travel.

Arctic Canada Expedition: Icebergs, Polar Bears, Whales and More

August 3-15, 2024

Leader: Mark Garland

Cost: \$12,295-\$16,295 per person depending on cabin.

Charter and international flights extra.

Embark on a once-in-a-lifetime Arctic cruise in Canada with Adventure Canada. Cross the Arctic Circle and witness stunning glaciers, islands, and fjords. Take a Zodiac Cruise around towering icebergs, look for polar bears, birds and whales, hike the tundra, and experience Inuit culture. Take in all that the Arctic has to offer in this 12 day expedition. Visit natureforward.org/arctic-adventure for more information or email pam.oves@natureforward.org. *One space left! 15% discount off berth price until September 15.*



Dear friends:

The polar regions are among the least accessible places on the surface of our planet. In recent years there has been a big increase in travel to the Antarctic regions, but the true Arctic of the north remains visited by relatively few.

It's an area that's always intrigued me—the three main ecological divisions of earth are the tropic, temperate, and arctic regions. For a full sense of the earth's ecology, it's helpful to visit all three.

I've had a few chances to see arctic environments in northern Alaska, but those visits have left me craving to see more. When I met the leaders of Adventure Canada at a travel conference a few years ago and learned of their expedition cruises into the far north, I knew I wanted to travel with them some day. That opportunity is now coming, as Nature Forward plans a trip with them in the summer of 2024. The trip begins in northern Greenland and travels west into Arctic Canada, an itinerary that I can't wait to experience.

While our travelers will not be the only ones on the ship, Adventure Canada has planned some special meetings and activities solely for our group, and our meals will all be taken together. And for those of us with an aversion to classical cruising, it's comforting to know that our ship carries a maximum of 198 passengers plus crew. There are no casinos, no stage shows, no hoopla, just a concerted focus on natural history.

I hope you'll decide to join me on one of the first big trips of the renewed travel program for Nature Forward.

*With my best wishes,
Mark S. Garland*

One space left!

Mexico: Birding the Ruins of the Yucatán

November 28–December 8, 2023

Leader: Mark Garland

Cost: \$3,895 for Nature Forward members; nonmembers should join Nature Forward before registering

Offered in partnership with Holbrook Travel, we will pack our binoculars and embark on an intense birding adventure to the environmentally diverse Yucatán Peninsula. Witness native birds soar above the stunning ruins of Oxtankah, Chicanná, Calakmul, Hochob, Uxmal, and other archaeological sites on this journey through the Maya world. Heads will turn at every point of this expedition as we look for a rainbow array of birds including hummingbirds, parrots, tanagers, toucans, raptors, and many more. From trail hikes to boat rides, birders will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of outdoor activities while exploring the history of the Maya and the birds that inhabit the ruins of this ancient civilization. Visit natureforward.org/yucatan-adventure for more info. This trip is full but contact pam.oves@natureforward.org or 301-652-9188 x16 to be put on the waitlist.

Costa Rica: A Trove of Tropical Birds—and More

February 3–14, 2024

Optional Extension to February 17

Leaders: Stephanie Mason and Carlos “Charlie” Gomez

Our Senior Naturalist is looking forward to her 22nd year of co-leading our popular Nature Forward trip with Costa Rican birder and naturalist extraordinaire Charlie Gomez. The small, tropical wonderland of Costa Rica is notable for harboring an amazing diversity of plants and animals. This country’s colorful birds—from the tiny Magenta-throated Woodstar Hummingbird to the rainbow-hued Keel-billed Toucan—will turn any nature enthusiast into a bird lover. Our basic trip explores Caribbean lowland rain forest, southern Pacific foothills and coastline, and other protected wildlands. An optional extension to the cooler mountain highlands features a different view of the tropics with towering oak trees and wild avocados providing habitat for birds such as Resplendent Quetzal and Fiery-throated Hummingbird. This trip is full but contact pam.oves@natureforward.org or 301-652-9188 x16 to be put on the waitlist.

Where in the World is Nature Forward Off to Next?

Destinations under consideration in late 2024 and beyond include Cuba, Costa Rica, Sicily, Kenya, and Iceland.

Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund 2023 Grantees

The Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund is Nature Forward’s international outreach program, providing microgrants for local conservation and education projects in developing countries. Dedicated conservationists continue their work to benefit local communities and biodiversity while navigating a variety of global challenges to achieve their goals. The Crowder-Messersmith Committee will award their 2023 grants to the following seven groups, with an average award of \$3,000. Three countries are first-time recipients of the grant: Gambia, Bangladesh, and El Salvador.

- In **Zambia**, providing counseling and wildlife education to inmates who have been sentenced for poaching in the nearby national park;
- Increasing awareness of invasive plant species that threaten biodiversity and destroy prime habitat of endangered rhinos, elephants, and tigers in **Nepal**;
- Safeguarding the last stronghold of the critically endangered West African Slender-Snouted Crocodile in **Gambia**;
- Conserving threatened riverine migratory birds in western **Bangladesh** through education and training for local residents;
- In **El Salvador**, building local community capacities in Humpback Whale research;
- Providing community-based restoration and alternative livelihoods development in the Mount Muanenguba forest area, one of the most fragile mountainous landscapes in **Cameroon**.
- Developing eco-guardianships in eastern **Nepal** to reduce the threats to the highly endangered Chinese and Indian Pangolins.

For more information on the Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund please see our web page at <https://natureforward.org/crowder-messersmith-fund>.



Natural History Field Studies

This unique continuing education program for adults offers a comprehensive and stimulating view of our region's natural history and conservation issues. Taught at the college freshman level, these evening courses are open to anyone 18 years of age or older—nature professionals and beginning enthusiasts alike. A Certificate of Accomplishment in Natural History is awarded to those choosing to complete a required curriculum of 39 Continuing Education Units (CEUs), but anyone can enroll in any class for the sheer pleasure of learning.

Classes are currently being offered via online Zoom sessions with in-person field trips. For a complete list of the classes in the NHFS program, plus instructor bios, visit natureforward.org/nhfs.

Online Registration for Natural History Field Studies

Sign up at natureforward.org/nhfs

Registration is handled completely online. Register at natureforward.org/nhfs. Questions? Contact pam.oves@natureforward.org.



Required reading lists and instructor bios at natureforward.org/nhfs.

SCAN FOR REGISTRATION,
REQUIRED READING LISTS
AND INSTRUCTOR BIOS



Mammals of the Mid-Atlantic

NATH8290, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Mondays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: September 11-November 20; No class on September 25, October 9, October 16

Lectures online via Zoom

Field trip dates: September 23 (Woodend); October 15 (Rachel Carson Conservation Area); November 4 (Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary) all 9:30 am-2 pm

Instructor: Kerry Wixted

Members \$330; nonmembers \$380

Mammals are a diverse and fascinating group of organisms. This course will examine the characteristics, physiology, adaptations, ecology, and behavior of mammals. Much of the focus will be on species of the mid-Atlantic region. Studies will include identification through analysis of skulls, study skins, tracks, and other signs commonly found in natural areas.

Introduction to Ecology

NATH7170, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Wednesdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: September 13-November 22

Lectures online via Zoom

Field trip dates: Patuxent Research Refuge, September 23; Huntley Meadows, October 7; Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge, November 4. Morning to early afternoon field trips, exact times to be determined.

Instructor: Sally Valdes

Members \$390; nonmembers \$440

Ecology is the study of how organisms interact with each other and their environments, at the individual, population, community and ecosystem levels. This course will explore basic ecological concepts and theory; the kinds of questions that ecologists pose; the methods they use; and current topics in ecology.



Night Sky for Naturalists

NATH8100, 1.5 CEUs

Class night and time: Thursdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: September 14-October 19

Lectures online via Zoom

Field trip date: Montgomery College Astronomical Observatory, September 21 (7:30-9:30 pm)

Instructor: Carrie Fitzgerald

Members \$210; nonmembers \$260

This course provides a basic introduction to astronomy that emphasizes an appreciation of Earth's relationship to the universe. Topics covered include the celestial sphere, celestial navigation, motions of the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars, telescopes, timekeeping, phases, and motions of the Moon, tides, and eclipses. The connection between astronomical phenomena and living things will be explored.

"NHFS classes deepen my knowledge of the natural world, and offer me an excuse to make time in my schedule to spend time in green spaces to complete my "homework." In turn, this provides an opportunity to practice mindfulness in nature. Thanks to what I have learned taking classes at Nature Forward, I am committed to sharing the benefits of time spent in nature with others. I am currently working on a certification in Nature Informed Therapy, learning how to incorporate the knowledge and activities learned during NHFS classes into my clinical social work with clients."

—NHFS STUDENT

COMING IN JANUARY

Details on Winter NHFS classes, which start in January, available in the fall at natureforward.org/nhfs

Winter Woody Plant ID

Human Ecology

The Living Soil





"It's really nice to be outside this early in the morning with everyone. I know my experience with nature is different than some scientists, but I think we can all say we feel a lot more peace when we are out here."

—CONGRESS
HEIGHTS
RESIDENT

Nature Forward: Oxon Hill Farm Hike

Ward 8 Water Watchers ended this year's program with a guided nature walk led by Luis Fermin (Instagram: @louthenatureplug). After spending this year learning about the Chesapeake Bay watershed, their local stream, and the Oxon Run Stream Restoration Project, the walk from Oxon Hill Farm to Oxon Cove offered a new perspective of their impact on the watershed. Photo credits by Jibraun NeturBeing.





Collaboration in Bloom in Sligo Creek

by Alice Sturm, Garden Programs Manager

Our Restoration Department is gearing up for the second season of our Sligo Creek Garden Program! Supported by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund, this program aims to deliver 150 pollinator garden kits throughout the Sligo Creek subwatershed that covers much of Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and parts of Rockville, MD.

The grant also funds Nature Forward to deliver conservation landscape training for landscapers who work in the area and the creation of 50 conservation landscape designs for residents. To date, we've completed 30 of 50 designs, delivered 30 of the 150 pollinator garden kits, and held our Spanish-language landscaper training at Woodend in August! This fall we'll deliver 50 more kits to help people convert lawns to pollinator gardens. Our good partners at Friends of Sligo Creek, a local non-profit that supports restoration and conservation of the subwatershed, have helped support all of our outreach activities.

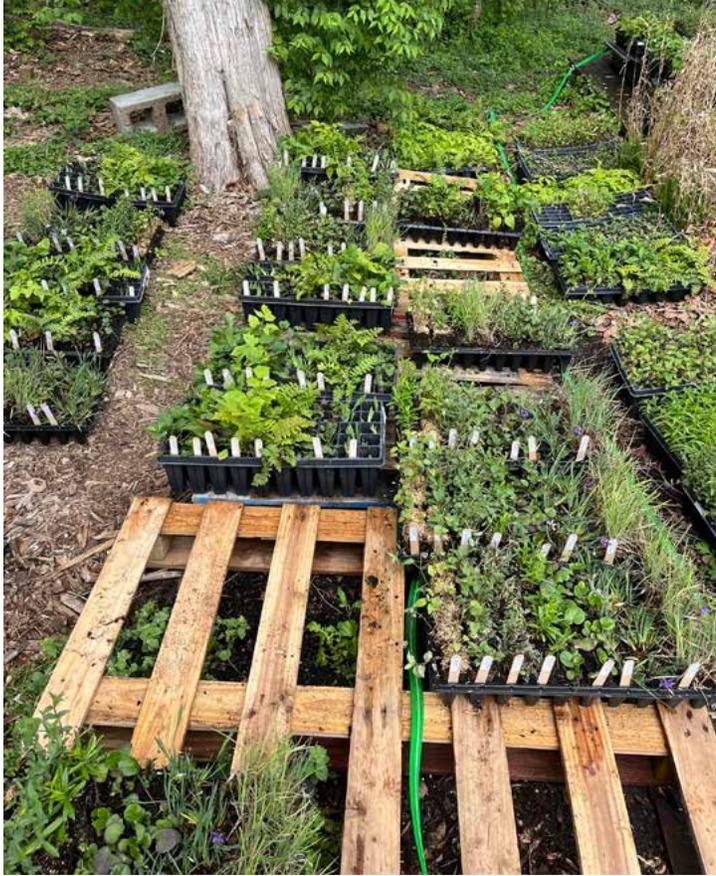


A kit recipient who chose the semi-circle design is ready to plant into the dead turf!

Nature Forward volunteers have been essential to the program's success. They've advertised and helped host our landscaper training, assembled and delivered pollinator kits, and helped us at events! We're looking forward to getting more native plants in the ground in the fall. We're also enjoying reports from the field on how gardens planted this past spring are doing. Historic heat and a drought made it a tough summer for gardens, but pollinators and birds needed these new native plantings more than ever to weather adverse conditions. And while many perennials don't bloom the first year, we included some quick bloomers, like Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), to provide a bit of instant gratification for new gardeners. And of course, leaf-eaters like caterpillars don't need blooms. Those juicy, garden-fed caterpillars are among the most important food sources for birds.

In addition to pollinator habitat, this project supports the health of the Chesapeake Bay by improving water quality. The perennials in our gardens are already growing deep roots that help stormwater soak into the soil much faster than it soaks into lawns. In shady areas, where lawns are typically thin and patchy, stormwater creates mud and sediment pollution that flows into storm drains and from there into Sligo Creek and ultimately the Bay. Unlike lawns, native shade perennials can thrive under dense tree canopy. Both shade and

Conditions for kits range from full-sun, curb side locations to shady backyards. All plants chosen are deer and rabbit resistant.



sun perennials provide the added benefit of soaking in hot summer rainwater runoff and keeping overheated water from harming fish and invertebrates living in our streams.

We will measure the impact of this project in number of plants planted and total area of lawn and non-native planting replaced. But more than just the numbers, we are striving to share the value of native plants beyond participants and throughout Sligo Creek neighborhoods. Each garden kit comes with a yard sign about the benefits of native plants and a QR code that links to Nature Forward's resources on ecological gardening. Since the project launched in May,

"In a difficult summer for wildlife, I'm glad we had plants deployed to support them, and I'm looking forward to seeing more kits blooming across the subwatershed."

—ALISON PEARCE,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FOR PROGRAMS

it's been fun to see that more than 60 people scanned QR codes to access these resources!

If you live in the Sligo Creek subwatershed and would like to participate next year, make sure to sign up for the email list of our partners, Friends of Sligo Creek by contacting info@fosc.org! If you'd like to volunteer with kit assembly or delivery, email Nature Forward's Garden Programs Manager at alice.sturm@natureforward.org.



Garden Consultations

On-site Garden Coaching and garden design

Learn more at natureforward.org/native-plant-gardening



Farewell Eliza

After seven impactful years at Nature Forward, Conservation Director **Eliza Cava** is leaving her role to spend more time with her young family and pursue next steps for her personal climate activism. Eliza will continue to support Nature Forward as co-chair of Naturally Latinos Conference and as a consultant. According to Eliza, working for Nature Forward has been the best job she's ever had, with the best team she's ever had the pleasure to know. Eliza reports that she is immensely proud of all that Nature Forward has achieved during her tenure and she's excited to watch what comes next!



Welcome Lydia

We are delighted to welcome our new Director of Conservation, **Lydia Lawrence**. Lydia is a long-time environmental activist in Fairfax County who recently received the Sally Ormsby Environmental Stewardship Award from the Fairfax County Park Authority Board. She is a Gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice and has a professional background in healthcare. Lydia is an accomplished leader in environmental equity and was profiled in Nature Forward's e-book, *Belonging: Black Americans in Nature*.



Good luck Rebecca

Many of you who know **Rebecca Henson's** friendly face from the Woodend Nature Shop may also know that she is the founding Executive Director of the soon-to-be Springsong Museum. For the past four years Rebecca has worked part-time in our shop while building this community museum dedicated to Rachel Carson, regional ecology, and the deep human connections to this land. With fundraising for this endeavor in full swing, Rebecca is stepping back from her regular work at the shop to focus more fully on Springsong. Thank you, Rebecca, for all of the knowledge and creativity you've brought to the shop!



Welcome Katrina

Katrina Weinig, our new Grant Writer, is a third-generation birder with a passion for introducing young people and traditionally underserved communities to the beauty and wonder of the natural world. A lawyer by training, Katrina's professional background also includes nonprofit leadership, fundraising, project management and sustainable landscape design and restoration. Katrina is a Certified VA Horticulturalist, Master Forest Owner and Master Gardener, as well as a US Equestrian Federation licensed judge. She's married with three adult children and two grandchildren, all of whom love hiking, camping and other outdoor adventures!



Congratulations Sherrice and Katrina

Sherrice Ajebon, our laser-focused Comptroller, has been promoted to Deputy Director for Finance at Nature Forward. **Katrina Busk**, our cheerful Woodend Receptionist, has been promoted to Staff Accountant. At Nature Forward, we love to promote from within!



Thank you Joy and Ana Maria

This spring and summer, we have been very grateful to have the support of Conservation Outreach Specialists **Joy Overton** and **Ana Maria Garcia Zapata**. Ana Maria will move on this fall and will still volunteer with Nature Forward. Joy will continue to support conservation outreach projects around the region. Look for Joy at our Community Outreach events!



Welcome Grace and Farewell Laura

Grace Dho is an upcoming Chesapeake Conservation Corps member at Nature Forward. She just graduated from William & Mary this past May with a double major in Biology and Integrative Conservation. She loves working in restoration, biological monitoring, and community engagement. **Laura Dennison** has completed her year of service at Nature Forward with the Chesapeake Conservation Corps. Laura was an integral part of the restoration team working with Bradley Simpson to manage the natural lands and with Alice Sturm to manage and interpret our beautiful gardens. Check out her self-guided tour around Woodend or the new restoration area by the Brierly trailhead. We wish her the best of luck in her future adventures!



Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony

See page 35 for information on this ceremony honoring Senior Naturalist Stephanie Mason on Saturday, October 14.





Marie (Meadowlark) Jones: Teacher and Versatile Volunteer

Marie Jones is a native Marylander who has always enjoyed getting outdoors to hike, dabble in creeks, paddle, garden, and explore nature. She began her career as an elementary school teacher at MCPS, where one of her favorite units to teach was an interdisciplinary Chesapeake Bay watershed study. Marie has been volunteering with Montgomery Parks as a Stream Strider, and through contacts there, heard about the Master Naturalist program offered at Nature Forward in 2022.

“One of my favorite moments was watching a Pileated Woodpecker digging at a rotted log. Even the wiggly preschoolers were entranced by the up-close view of this big, beautiful woodpecker.”

— MARIE JONES

Along with several other Master Naturalist trainees, Marie extended a class project to develop an amphibian study of Woodend’s step pool restoration. She collaborated with the teammates to observe what amphibians are making the restored area their home. Marie has also volunteered with GreenKids programs and Water Quality Monitoring, but spends most of her volunteering with Nature Forward as a Field Trip guide, taking groups of students to find decomposers under logs, to follow a scavenger hunt through different habitats, or to discover natural surprises using all five of their senses. She finds it incredibly rewarding to share the sense of wonder and excitement when our young visitors spot plump tadpoles wriggling in the pond, feel the tickle of a pillbug or millipede on their palm, or smell the citrusy scent of a Spicebush leaf.

For Marie, volunteering at Nature Forward has been a rewarding way to connect with our diverse community and share different facets of nature. The projects and roles have helped her to solidify her commitment to environmental education and to get to know other amazing volunteers along the way.

For questions about volunteering with Nature Forward, please contact peihan.orestes@natureforward.org.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Work with Nature Forward Conservation on Advocacy & Policy!



**Next meeting: Wednesday, October 25 at 2:00 pm
via Zoom**

RSVP to jamoni.overby@natureforward.org

Our Conservation Advocacy Volunteer Corps meets bimonthly for training, idea sharing, and new assignments. Join our next meeting to discuss current policy priorities, successes, challenges and the many ways you can get involved and have a positive impact in DC, Maryland and Virginia.

Woodend Nature Shop



Members receive 10% off!



Open daily 11am-3pm
Closed Sunday



Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion

woodendsanctuary.org

Social and Corporate Events



Photos by Shelly Pate Photography

  @woodendsanctuary.org

Thank You for Participating in Nature Forward's 43rd Bloomin' Birdathon

You did it! You counted birds, flowers, or other species for a good cause. You helped raise funds and awareness for Nature Forward's environmental education, conservation, and restoration programs. You also had fun and enjoyed the beauty of nature. We are so grateful for your support and enthusiasm. You are part of a community of nature lovers who care about the future of our planet.

We are thrilled to announce that we raised over \$75,000 thanks to your generous donations and pledges. Our special thanks go to this year's top 5 Bloomin' Birdathon team fundraisers:

- Stephanie Mason & Pam Oves: \$15,903
- Team Cottingham: \$9,191
- David Blockstein & Debra Prybyla: \$5,511
- Marcia & Kent Minichiello: \$5,490
- Nature Forward Board: \$4,392

See our 43rd Annual Bloomin' Birdathon report for more details and highlights at natureforward.org/birdathon.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all other Bloomin' Birdathon participants and everyone who supported our valiant counters. And thank you to our generous Birdathon Sponsors! Your support also makes a massive difference to our work. We could not do it without you!



THANK YOU, ^{43rd} Bloomin' Birdathon SPONSORS!

Premier Sponsors

Dr. Linda Lear & Mr. John Nickum

Leading Sponsor

LINK STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Contributing Sponsors

MOM's Organic Market **Scarlett** **ZEISS**

To learn about sponsorship opportunities for 2024's Bloomin' Birdathon, please visit natureforward.org/birdathon-sponsor

 nature forward presents its first
Lifetime Achievement Award

in Honor of

Stephanie Mason

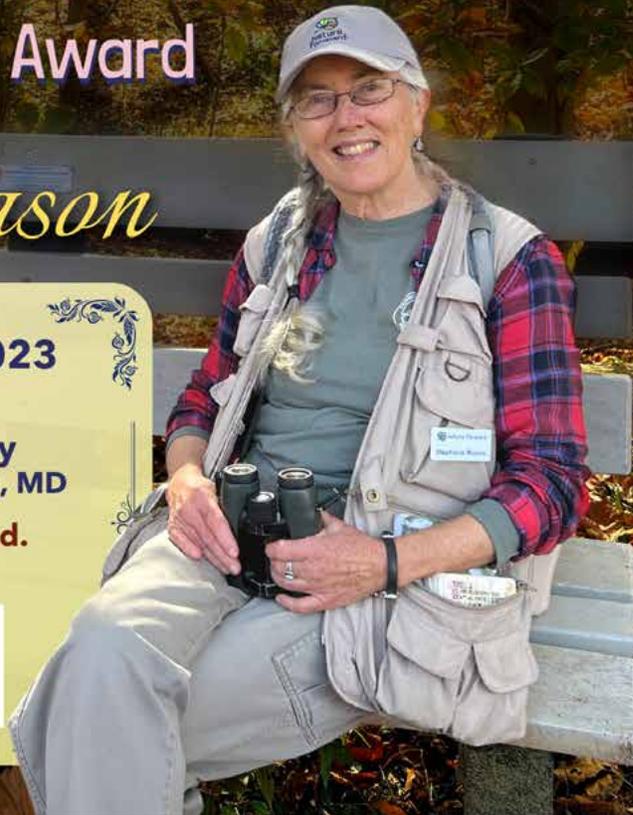
Saturday, October 14, 2023

9:30 - 11:30 am

**Woodend Nature Sanctuary
8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase, MD**

**Free event. Reservation required.
Space is limited.**

For details, visit
bit.ly/smhonor
or scan the QR code



Holiday Lights

AT WOODEND NATURE SANCTUARY

Saturday, December 2

5:30 - 8:30 pm

Join us to celebrate a joyous holiday season with friends, music, drinks, a delicious buffet dinner, and an exciting silent auction.

This event supports Nature Forward conservation, restoration, and education programs.

Tickets at bit.ly/holidaylights2023



Coming Soon! Nature Play Space at Woodend

Exciting things are afoot at Woodend! J&G Landscape Design has begun construction of our long-awaited accessible Nature Play Space. Under the supervision of Nature Forward's Deputy Director for Programs, Alison Pearce, and our Garden Program Manager, Alice Sturm, J&G are busy installing wheelchair accessible trails, excavating the sand play area, preparing for the delivery of our nature play structures, constructing a changing area next to the restroom, and readying the site for a sensory garden. Stay tuned for more news about the Nature Play Space opening later this fall.

"I am thrilled to see years of careful planning coming to fruition with the start of Nature Play Space construction," said Alison Pearce, Deputy Director for Programs. "Children of diverse abilities will have access to the magic of nature play at Woodend. This special place will provide precious time in nature for kids across the region and will help Nature Forward inspire new generations of environmental champions."

"Children of diverse abilities will have access to the magic of nature play at Woodend."

— ALISON PEARCE,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FOR PROGRAMS



Our Wood Thrush accessible climbing feature taking shape in the workshop of fabricator Earthscape Play.



Contractors preparing the site for the water pump and sand tables in the sand and water play section of the Nature Play Space.

Woodend Nature Sanctuary's Self-Guided Tour

**New at
Woodend-
Take a Self-
Guided Tour
Today!**



Start

Come see Woodend's newly installed Self-Guided Tour today. This tour takes you through the sanctuary highlighting our restoration efforts, natural wonders, historical landmarks, and more! The majority of the interpretive signs are along the accessible trail so that everyone can learn more about our diverse habitats. Just scan the signs' QR code on your device to discover the wonders of Woodend!



Garden Consultations

On-site Garden Coaching and garden design

Learn more at natureforward.org/native-plant-gardening

Nature needs you.
Nature needs me.
Nature needs all of us.

BECOME A MEMBER OF
NATURE FORWARD TODAY!

<https://natureforward.org/membership/>



- Senior/Young Professional \$15
- Individual \$50
- Family \$65
- Nature Steward \$100
- Advocate \$200
- Sanctuary Guardian \$500
- Naturalists Council \$1,000
- Preservationist \$1,000+

Experience Nature with Nature Forward

From Adult Field Trips to Classes to Nature Travel,
find a wide variety of opportunities to learn about and
experience nature led by regional naturalists.

visit natureforward.org/adult-programs



nature forward

Connecting people and nature in the Capital Region

Memorial and Tribute Contributions

MAY-JULY 2023

IN HONOR OF:

Kristen Savoy & Adeel Khan

Stephanie Crews; Aimee Doucet; Zach & Natasha Hall & Najmi; Olga Gorodetsky; Maureen Reed

Monte Tarbox

Payden & Rygel

Bill Yeaman

Gerard Donahue

IN MEMORY OF:

Susan Hurst Calderone

Leslie Calderone

Cris Fleming

Tina Brown

Pearl Marks

Bob Mecklenburg



We are sad to report that Kathryn Mitchell, Development Director for Audubon Naturalist Society from 2006 to 2014, passed away this spring. Kathryn will be fondly remembered for her joyful laugh, passion for the history of the organization, nature treks with her adored German Shepherds, genuine affection for our members, and love of the environment. Our community will miss her warmth and good humor.

Registration Information

Education programs are held at Woodend, Nature Forward's 40-acre Headquarters, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, unless otherwise noted. All education programs except Nature Travel have online registration. You will be notified immediately if the program is full; otherwise, confirmation letters, with directions, will be emailed 1-2 weeks before the scheduled program.

Lectures are held at our Woodend Sanctuary, and field trip transportation is by private vehicle or carpool unless otherwise noted. Most programs are limited to 12 participants and also have a minimum enrollment, so early registration is important to ensure that programs run. Unless noted, weekend adult foray program fees do not include meals or lodging.

Because our programs rely on registration fees for funding, we have adopted this policy:

- Cancellations must be made at least six working days before the beginning of the program to be eligible for a credit to your account, less a \$5 administrative fee.
- If an adult foray is canceled by Nature Forward due to low enrollment, you will receive a full refund. If a weather-related concern or another issue outside of our control forces a cancellation, you will receive a full credit to your account.

- Nature travel programs have different cancellation policies, explained on the information sheet sent on request.

Nature Forward is committed to addressing problems when they occur. Program participants are encouraged to bring problems or concerns of any kind directly to the staff member in charge of the program. Staff members will try to resolve the problem immediately or as soon as reasonably possible. If staff is unable to do so, they are expected to bring the problem to the attention of their immediate supervisor or member of the Senior Management Team, who will take responsibility for seeking a resolution. Program participants are welcome to bring unresolved problems or concerns to the attention of the Executive Director. The Executive Director's decision on resolution of the problem is final.

COVID Policy for Adult Programs

Masking is optional for participants in Nature Forward programs. If you test positive for COVID, you may participate in Nature Forward activities after you have a negative antigen/home test no sooner than 5 days after the first positive test. Twelve will be our usual group size maximum, unless an outing's focus and/or field conditions call for a smaller group or allow for a bit larger group. All of the policies above are subject to change.

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Nature Forward Annual Meeting

Thursday, October 19, 6-9 pm

Woodend Sanctuary

Guest Speaker: Dr. Riva Riley, Zoologist and Stand-up Comedian

"The science and humor of zoology: why fish are funny, how fish are funny, and what I learned along the way."



Calling all Nature Forward members and supporters! Be sure to join us for the 2023 Annual Meeting to celebrate completion of all four promises of the Nature for All campaign and look ahead to the bright future for our organization.

The evening event will include recognition of Natural History Field Studies graduates and election of members to the Nature Forward Board of Directors. Coffee and dessert will be served.

Our speaker, Riva Riley, will explore the fascination and humor of animal behavior and the scientists who study it. She will also reflect on the institutions and conventions that have shaped how science works and who has the chance to become scientists.

Please RSVP to this free event by registering online at give.natureforward.org/am2023 by Friday, October 15.

BOARD ELECTIONS:

Nature Forward members will vote on candidates for the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting. An official notice including profiles of the Board candidates nominated by the Nominating Committee will be posted at natureforward.org/board after October 1.