

SPRING 2024

nature forward

Q U A R T E R L Y



**Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall
Shares 5 Unique Ways to
Boost Your Connection
to the Natural World**



ON THE COVER

Photo of Genevieve Wall by
Ashesh Sigdel

NATURE FORWARD QUARTERLY

Spring 2024

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ISSN 0888-6555

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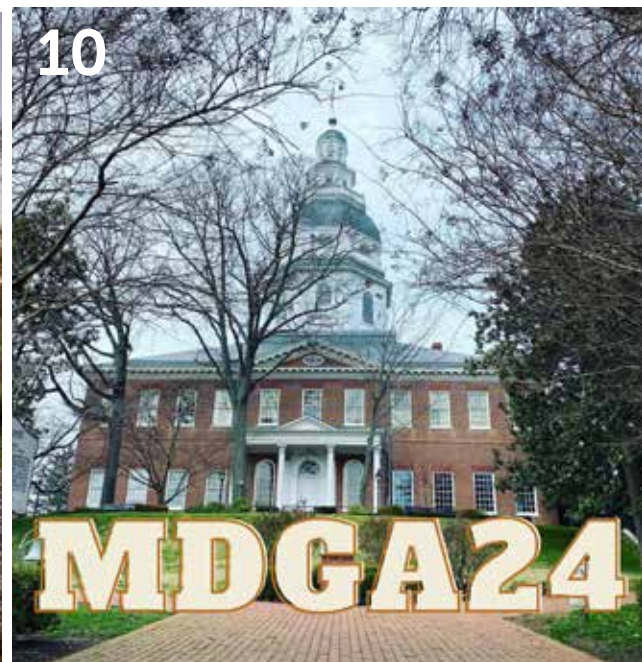


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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
L I S A A L E X A N D E R

Spring is for Optimists

Asking a nature lover to pick their favorite season is like asking a parent to pick their favorite child. While I won't admit to having a favorite season, I do believe spring is the season for optimists. In 2024, a year already fraught with conflict and signs of unrest to come, I suggest we drink in spring and the positive things it portends. A good start would be to take up Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall's invitation to embrace Spring Fever! (page 6)

I'll be relishing my first spring home garden after two years without. I look forward to seeing what will sprout from the bulbs, seeds, and transplants that populate my conservation landscape. I'm eager to watch birds visit the new feeding station I installed with advice and merchandise from the Woodend Nature Shop. And after foot surgery this winter, I look forward to being boot-free and in fine shape to take part in our 44th Annual Birdathon that kicks off on April 15. Please join me in counting to support Nature Forward's mission work (next page).



At Woodend, we'll watch the new Sensory Garden in the Nature Play Space unfold its spring wonders. I'm going to pay special attention to the willow tunnel, planted from live stakes last fall, to see how it leafs out to create a green adventure space for our youngest naturalists. Check out page 34 for news on the many community science projects we're conducting at Woodend to track the rebound of plant, animal, and insect species as habitat restoration flourishes at our headquarters.

Across the region, Nature Forward will kick off our Tree-cosystems grant work to install trees and native plant understory gardens in partnership with communities that have traditionally been excluded from greening projects. See page 35 for more about our plans to make a lasting regional impact by adding natural habitat to benefit people and wildlife in neighborhoods in Virginia, DC, and Maryland.

As our advocates wrapped up legislative sessions this spring, Nature Forward kept pressure on decision makers to pass tree-forward bills and stop climate-busting projects including data centers and gas pipelines (page 10). Of course, getting environmentally friendly legislation passed is a long game. So, every spring, our advocates rely on optimism, determination, and grassroots engagement to drive positive policy outcomes (page 12).

Community work is the springboard (pun intended!) that enables Nature Forward to grow a more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it. The wrap-up report on our Naturally Latinos Conference (page 8) highlights our broadening audience of environmental champions.

This spring, our GreenKids naturalist educators will fan out to public schools throughout the DMV to teach students to love Wonderful Worms. See page 18 for information on how you can volunteer to bring nature to students of all backgrounds and abilities and help grow the next generation of nature stewards.

In the face of discouraging headlines, you can take pride in all the good mission work Nature Forward accomplishes thanks to your membership, generous support, and volunteerism. Please take time this spring to admire swelling buds of trees, visit Woodend's blooming wildflowers, and delight in spring migration and the return of beloved bird species. Thank you for being part of Nature Forward's community of optimists. Let's savor spring and recharge our batteries for the work we have ahead to protect and steward nature for generations to come!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lisa Alexander".



CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE IN THE CAPITAL REGION

Celebrating Birds (and all of nature!) with the 44th Nature Forward Birdathon



The arrival of spring is an exhilarating time for nature lovers! The flight of migratory birds painting the sky. The vibrant symphony of birdsong. The anticipation and hope of spotting rare species.

Nature Forward's 44th Birdathon celebrates all the joys of spring with an added bonus: the opportunity to give back to nature. From experienced birders to nature newbies, our Birdathon fosters curiosity and wonder while supporting our important mission work for nature and people. Similar to a walkathon, Birdathon participants count bird species (or spring wildflower blooms or anything in nature) and ask friends and family to donate to Nature Forward based on their counts. Last year, Birdathon counters and sponsors raised more than \$75,000 to support our mission work.

"The Birdathon is our longest-running tradition, and it's also just so much fun," explains Nature Forward Executive Director Lisa Alexander. "The Birdathon motivates nature lovers of all ages and skill levels to get outside, enjoy nature and share the joys of spring."

"Witnessing the magnificent spring migration in the DMV area is an incredibly inspiring and rejuvenating experience for me," says Corinna Fisk, Nature Forward's Director of Development. "Participating is a great way to learn more about local nature and support of a great cause!"

Nature Forward's mission is to inspire residents of the greater Washington, DC region to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through outdoor experiences, education, and advocacy. And it all started with birds.

"The protection and study of birds" were the founding principles established by the volunteers who organized the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia in 1897. And they succeeded in securing important bird conservation protections still in force today. Over time, our organization's mission expanded to include broader environmental conservation and education goals, but birds will always remain a core part of Nature Forward's DNA.

Today, birding is booming almost everywhere. A recent survey by the US Fish & Wildlife Service found that as many as 45 million Americans enjoy birding, making it one of the fastest growing pastimes in the country. According to estimates, more than 35% of people of all backgrounds over age 16 participated in at least one outdoor birding activity in 2022. For anyone interested in getting into birding, the Birdathon is a great place to start.

"I'm still new to birding and going on an expert-led walk really helped me to see and learn to identify species last year," Corinna adds. "This year I plan to do the same and look forward to counting even more in support of our mission work!"

The 44th Nature Forward Birdathon runs April 15 through May 31. Learn more about it, including how you can get involved, by visiting natureforward.org/birdathon.



5 Nature Power-ups to Boost Your Connection to the Natural World

Convert Cabin Fever to Spring Fever with these Invitations to Get Outside!

by Genevieve Wall, Senior Naturalist

Looking to connect more deeply with the natural world this spring? Our new Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall shares five ideas to expand your nature knowledge and rekindle a sense of awe and wonder about the outdoors.

1. Embrace Nature Mysteries

No matter your level of experience, odds are you'll encounter parts of nature that mystify you. Where are the edges of your knowledge? Lean into them. Perhaps you have a grasp on identifying your neighborhood birds—but do you know where each one nests? Where they go when they sense danger? What time of day do they sing, forage, roost? As your curiosity drives you to solve one mystery after another, you'll be surprised at how much you learn along the way.



2. Sit Spot

Connection to place is powerful. I give thanks to the Living Earth School for introducing me to the practice of Sit Spot. Find a special outdoor spot and visit it frequently—during different seasons and times of day. As you build a relationship to that spot, you will learn more about the living beings that frequent it—and attune your awareness to changing seasons and nature as a whole.



Photo of Genevieve Wall by Ashesh Sigdel

3. Wander

When I wander, I'm struck by how much I learn, and how at peace I feel afterwards. There's a meditative quality to a wander; a presence. Getting absorbed in tracking, or the way the clouds move, or trying to detect the tiniest sound a water strider makes in motion quiets my mind and expands my awareness. Set screens aside. Slow down. Connect with your senses. What catches your attention? Follow your curiosity and investigate. Move freely when something in nature strikes your fancy.

4. Journal

After encountering a Nature Mystery, visiting my Sit Spot, or Wandering, I journal. I don't fret over recounting the entire day. Instead, I capture sensations or vignettes. For example, on January 30 in Richmond, VA, I wrote: "Sunny morning, birdsong, humid breeze stirring with signs of Spring. Upland Chorus Frogs calling from flooded ditches." From year to year, I can compare the timing of different natural events—and relive the memories that my journal evokes.

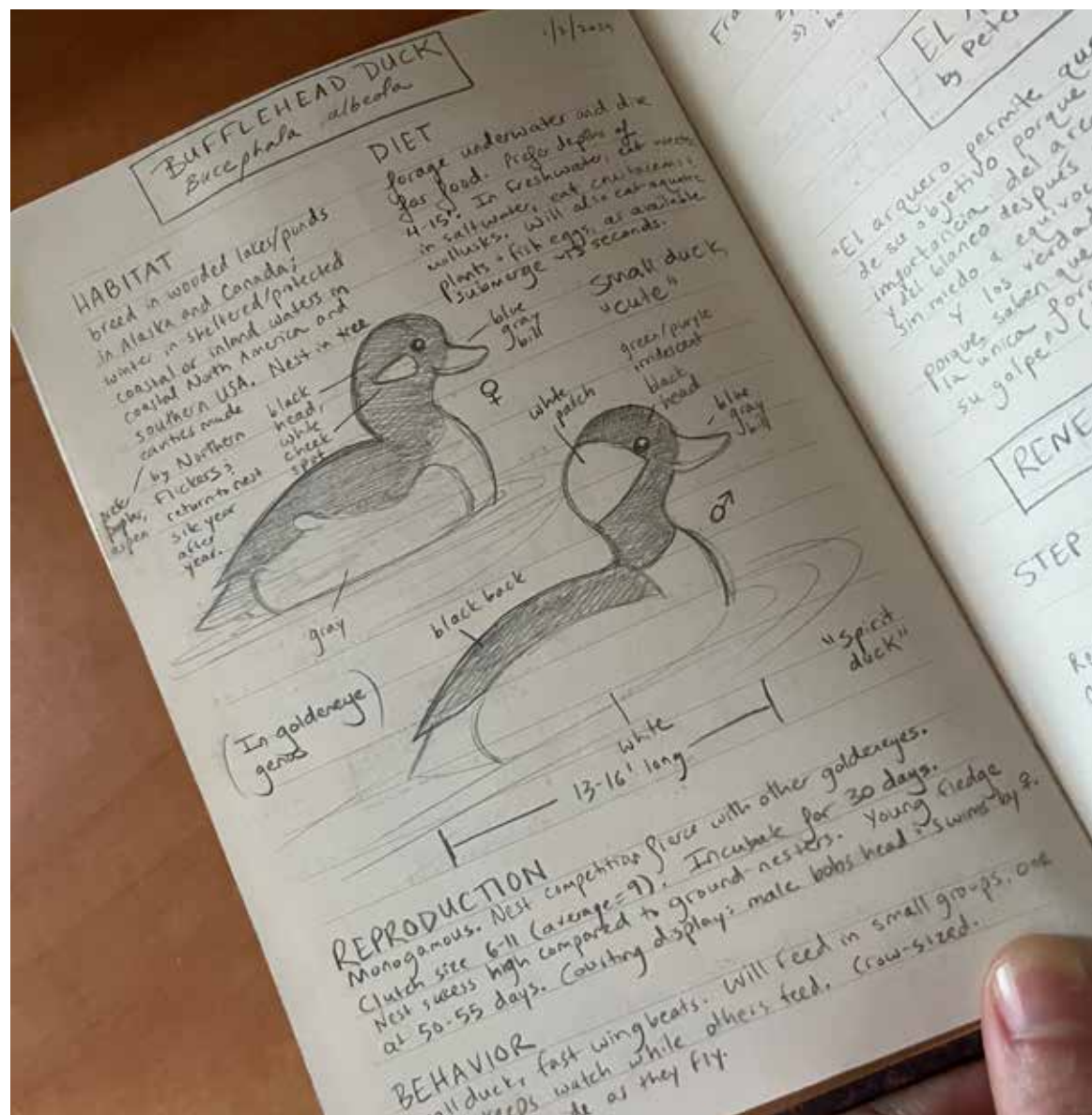
5. Create

My creative passions—art, writing, music—interweave with my love of the natural world. During my eight months in Americorps on Presquile island in the James River, I was isolated and largely without access to electricity or running water. On Presquile, I started writing songs. Different experiences in nature inspire my music – from the awe of fireflies in a vast meadow ("Fireflies from Jars"), to submerging in icy stream water ("Secret Stream"), to encountering a Loggerhead Sea Turtle on a South Carolina beach ("Caretta"). I'm excited to share I'll be performing these songs and several others this April at the Richmond Fringe Festival in an original set called Strange Winds.

I hope these invitations inspire you to rediscover joy, wonder, curiosity, understanding, and connection to nature in your own life. And if you would like to share experiences

in nature with others, I invite you to check out our program offerings! Whether you are a seasoned naturalist or a nature novice, you are warmly welcome. I can't wait to uncover nature mysteries with you here at Woodend and throughout the DMV.

Connect with the natural world and other fellow nature enthusiasts on one of our upcoming spring outings listed on pages 20-25.



2024 Naturally Latinos Conference Inspires and Connects

by Lisa Goodnight

From the rousing opening remarks of day one to the soothing wildlife sounds from weekend nature outings, Nature Forward's Naturally Latinos Conference hit all the right notes.

More than 300 people enjoyed the five-day conference held online January 24th and 25th and in-person on January 26th at the Silver Spring Civic Center. The final conference days culminated with nature outings to Woodend Nature Sanctuary, Wheaton Regional Park, and Patuxent River Park on January 27th and 28th.

The conference opened with a powerful land acknowledgement given by Jansikwe Medina-Tayac to recognize and show gratitude to our region's original stewards. Medina-Tayac is a Piscataway and Colombian woman whose name means "Beautiful River Woman" in honor of her ancestral indigenous connections to the Potomac River. The Washington, DC metro area is the homeland of the Piscataway people.

"I also want to recognize all of our brothers and sisters that have migrated here from Mexico, Central and South America," said Medina-Tayac. "Borders are a human-made colonial construct. We all came from this Earth, from this continent, from the Americas, and this is your home, too."

The Naturally Latinos conference theme, "Pertenenciendo: Nuestras Raíces, Nuestra Tierra/Belonging: Our Roots, Our Earth," delivered many special moments. This year's keynote speakers included Dr. Jessica Hernandez, author of *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science* and Vanessa García Polanco of The National Young Farmers Coalition, a 2023 Grist 50 Climate Fixer (Grist.org).

During the in-person gathering at the Silver Spring Civic Center, multidisciplinary artist Federico "MasPaz" Frum surprised everyone by creating a new mural, on-site, just before the start of the *Art and the Environment*. "I'm inspired by nature," MasPaz said from the stage. "Nature is a healer for me...You'll see this piece that I worked on—it honors la milpa, the corn, which is part of our ancestry as Latino folk, Indigenous folk. And there's the dove...honoring creatures of the air



The *Art and Environment Panel* included a display of the mural artist MasPaz created onsite at the conference.

and honoring the peace movement. And you'll also see trees there that are on fire. I'm from Bogotá, Columbia. Right now, there's been extreme heat and wildfires in Bogota."

Attendees and presenters described the entire Naturally Latinos experience as uplifting, inspiring, and thought-provoking. Participants heard relatable stories, learned valuable strategies for community outreach and resource development, and appreciated hearing the experiences shared by Latine and Indigenous community members who work in the environmental field.

"My memorable moment was during the *Perteneciendo/Belonging* photobook panel," said Naturally Latinos Co-Chair Denisse Guitarra, who is Nature Forward's Maryland Conservation Advocate. "When the Long Branch student photos were shown, I almost teared up because I could see how Nature Forward's four years of community outreach in Long Branch, Silver Spring, was being showcased. Those photos created a happy moment for me. I am proud of how Nature Forward impacts the lives of people and communities by connecting them to nature, and by how much we all learn from each other when we steward our local environment together."

Nature Forward's *Belonging* photobook project is funded by the US Forest Service. It began at the Taking Nature Black conference to showcase photos of Black Americans in the most beautiful, forested areas in our region. As part of this year's conference, the project is expanding to add photos of Latine people in nature. Photographs of people of color in nature are rarely shown in the media. *Belonging* aims to increase circulation of images of people of color by offering gorgeous photobooks online for free and reinforcing the message that all people connect with and enjoy nature. If you, or someone you know, would like to be photographed for the photobook, please contact Nature Forward's Photographer/Videographer, Ben Israel, at ben.israel@natureforward.org. *Perteneciendo/Belonging* will debut over the summer.

"We know in our bones that nature needs all of us working together to find solutions that mitigate the negative impacts on people and wildlife from a warming world," said Nature Forward Executive Director Lisa Alexander. "I enjoyed learning, networking, and joining hands to fight together for the future of people and of Mother Earth."

If you missed this year's conference, you can still enjoy it by subscribing to Nature Forward's YouTube channel at youtube.com/@gonatureforward. You'll be notified when recordings from the conference are available to the public.

Naturally Latinos began in 2017 as a one-day, in-person gathering at Woodend Nature Sanctuary. Thanks to the support of our generous sponsors and our engaged planning committee, presenters, and participants, the size and reach of the Naturally Latinos Conference has expanded exponentially!



Nature Forward Board member, Abel Olivo, greets participants in the exhibit area where generous conference sponsors, including the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, showcased their programs and recruited job candidates..



Letizia Ramos Pfeifer receives the Nature Forward Youth Environmental Champion Award with her mom. Letizia was recognized for her work in the Nature Forward Peer Outreach with Energy Resources Program (POWER) helping elementary students take action to help the planet.

More photos on page 30

Nature Needs Everyone!

by Lydia Lawrence

Nature needs all of us! I often think of this Nature Forward motto when someone tells me that they are more interested in conservation or climate policy and less interested in community outreach to historically overlooked communities. To me, advocating for better climate policy and engaging with diverse communities are inseparable. When we separate people and nature, we get inferior climate legislation and practices that discount the very humans who are most impacted by climate change's effects.

The environmental justice community has long advocated for the inclusion of socioeconomic conditions and community outreach in creating climate policy. Planting trees and advocating for land use decisions that conserve forest canopy are not enough. We must also advocate for policies and programs that help people who live in heat islands. Requiring air conditioning in public housing, advocating for subsidies to offset the cost of higher energy bills related to cooling, and requesting funding for cooling centers for people who are homeless are important for addressing both the social and environmental effects of heat islands and climate change.

When we do the work of educating and listening to community members, we make our policies and our advocacy much more powerful. Community members have lived knowledge and perspectives that enrich our advocacy, address serious human needs, and improve and increase neighborhood green spaces. By building relationships with community members based on their priorities, we gain fellow warriors in the battle against climate change. "Nature needs all of us, and all of us need nature!"

Washington, DC

Nature Forward is advocating for the Public Service Commission to reject a costly and controversial pipeline spending program by the district's gas utility Washington Gas Light Company. Nature Forward has joined this effort, led by Chesapeake Climate Action Network, that is designed to inform Councilmembers about this wrongheaded pipeline project. We are making significant progress on this issue. On February 8th, 10 out of 13 members of DC Council sent a letter to the Public Service Commission (PSC) expressing unified opposition to the continuation of Washington Gas's Project Pipes 3 plan. The DC Council calls the program unnecessarily expensive and "incompatible" with the city's carbon neutrality goals. Councilmembers called on the PSC to begin a new energy planning process that protects consumers and conforms to existing law.

Nature Forward and our fellow environment and justice advocates praised the Council letter as a major step in stopping this project as we work to decarbonize DC.

You can read the full letter at <https://bit.ly/3OHRapR>.

Maryland

Join Nature Forward in supporting and/or opposing our top Maryland General Assembly 2024 priority bills. You can visit our Conservation Blog to find fact sheets. At the end of the blog, you'll also find a form that makes it easy for you to contact your MD legislator and exhort them to vote in favor of environmental protection at <https://bit.ly/4bB2nCo>.

WARMTH Act (SUPPORT) HB397/SB570—This bill seeks to make geothermal more accessible to low-income communities in MD.

EmPOWER Reform (SUPPORT) HB864—This bill seeks to upgrade the 2008 EmPOWER legislation by setting greenhouse gas reduction goals to help low-income households become more energy efficient.

Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act of 2024

(OPPOSE) SB0474 and HB0579—This bill will provide data centers a special exception. Northern Virginia has the largest concentrations of data centers in the world, we don't want to add more environmentally harmful data centers in MD.

Virginia

VA General Assembly

Nature Forward is tracking many important bills in this year's General Assembly (Jan 9-March 10). Our Conservation Blog has the latest updates (<https://natureforward.org/2024-va-ga-priorities/>). Here's the quick rundown:

Strengthening tree canopy & stemming invasive plants

A record number of tree-related bills were introduced to preserve and expand VA's tree canopy and progress is being made this year! Several bills aimed at stemming the sale of invasive plants are also progressing.

Regulating data center development

Data centers are huge consumers of energy and water and threaten to undermine VA sustainability goals. Bills to better regulate the data center industry got wrapped up in a study due out in fall of 2024. We will pick up this issue again in 2025. Please let your legislators know that data centers need stronger regulation!

Supporting conservation landscaping in HOAs

Nature Forward proudly helped introduce and support HB528 to help residents of HOAs garden more sustainably. As is often the case with new legislation, this bill will be discussed by a workgroup before next year's legislative session. We will continue to advocate for native plantings in HOAs next year!



The view of the VA state capitol building from HB528 patron Delegate Krizek's office.

Anacostia Riverkeeper, Nature Forward & CHEER
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY CLEANUP

Saturday, March 9th from 10 AM - 12 PM
LONG BRANCH COMMUNITY CENTER
8700 Piney Branch Rd, Silver Spring, MD

Sign up on
Anacostia Riverkeeper's
Website

All supplies provided.
All ages are welcome.
Rain or shine.

Join Nature Forward, Anacostia Riverkeeper, and CHEER for a community litter clean up on Saturday, March 9 from 10 am to Noon. This cleanup continues our year long project with high school students from Long Branch as part of their "Don't Pollute" project. We will meet at the Long Branch Community Center at 9 am and provide all supplies. Students can receive service-learning hours (SSL). Sign up recommended but not required.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Work with Nature Forward
Conservation on Advocacy & Policy!



Nature Forward Conservation Volunteers helped kick off the new year with their strong support for our Naturally Latinos Conference held in downtown Silver Spring, MD. Volunteers helped set up, welcome participants, and share their experiences with attendees. If you are interested in getting involved as a Conservation Volunteer, please join us for our next bi-monthly Earth Month-themed meeting on **Wednesday, April 24 at 1 pm at Woodend Nature Sanctuary**. For more details and to RSVP, visit <https://bit.ly/3SFpDq3>.

Learn More & Take Action!

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

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.

Empowering Communities

Part of the outreach that Nature Forward focuses on throughout the year is training and mentoring advocates. This winter, our VA advocate Renee Grebe completed a series of tree advocacy workshops to train community members on how to write testimony, speak with decisionmakers, and give public testimony. But the training didn't stop there! With the January state legislative session, she was able to guide some graduates of the advocacy workshops in speaking to local and state leaders on conservation issues, turning knowledge into experience!



Speaking with decision makers

- *People* make decisions
- Constituent voices matter
- More voices can help
- **Constructive feedback can be compelling**

Renee Grebe (Nature...

Stream Science

Winter Monitoring

Each winter, many Nature Forward community scientist teams visit their streams to find, identify and count aquatic macroinvertebrates. While some volunteers forgo winter monitoring, many look forward to this time of year when stonefly larvae—which are indicators of a healthy stream—are often found.



Volunteers on the Middle Patuxent River. Photo by Gregg Petersen.

WQM Newsletter

In January, we released the first edition of the STREAM MONITOR, a newsletter highlighting the water quality monitoring program. To view the newsletter, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3l0bVcs>.



NATURE FORWARD

STREAM MONITOR

THE NEWSLETTER FOR WATER QUALITY MONITORING

JANUARY 2024, ISSUE 1

2023 SNAPSHOT!

Here are summaries of the 2023 stream monitoring findings generated by the work of Nature Forward volunteers. This chart lists the monitoring sites and IBI (Index of Biological Integrity) scores.

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2023 SNAPSHOT

INCIDENT REPORTS

OBSERVATIONS

PETE'S DESK

FOLLOW THE DATA

PUBLICATIONS

LEARN, REVIEW, RELEARN

Nature Forward Water Quality Monitoring Program

2023 Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) Scores by Stream Site

MONITORING SITE	WINTER 2023	SPRING 2023	SUMMER 2023	FALL 2023	STREAM HEALTH!
Site 46, Middle Patuxent River	4.71	4.71	4.43	4.71	Excellent
Site 6, Rock Creek/Monksford Mill Road	4.71	4.14	4.43	4.43	Good to Excellent
Site 32, Ten Mile Creek Tributary	4.43	4.43	5.00	3.57	Good to Excellent
Site 26, Dark Branch	4.43	5.00	4.14	3.86	Good to Excellent
Site 20, Wildcat Branch	4.43	4.14	3.86	3.57	Good to Excellent
Site 27, Ten Mile Creek Mainstem	4.43	4.43	3.29	3.29	Good to Excellent
Site 44, Haulings Road	3.29	4.43	3.57	3.86	Good to Excellent

Visit the [Water Quality Monitoring](https://natureforward.org/water-quality-monitoring) webpage to register for our online introductory stream science and advanced aquatic insect identification classes at natureforward.org/water-quality-monitoring



Small Winter Stonefly, Capniidae, Photo by Gregg Petersen.

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



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

nature forward
preschool

Open House

Saturday, April 20 from 10 AM - 12 Noon

You and your family are invited to discover our school's approach to nature-based education, view our indoor classrooms, meet our wonderful teachers, and prepare for this important and exciting stage in your family's early education experience!



Scan code to
register
for open house



Interested but can't attend?
Schedule an in-person tour
by calling Acting Preschool Director
Rose Brusaferro at (301) 652-8108

ENJOY THE WONDERS
OF WOODEND



Days Off & Spring Break 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

Join us for 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!

Days Off Camps (Grades K-5)

Wednesday, April 10 (MCPS)

8:45 am – 5:00 pm

Members \$135, nonmembers \$155



SCAN TO REGISTER

Questions? Email brenna.houck@natureforward.org
Register at natureforward.org/day-off-camps

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.

camp woodend

BY NATURE FORWARD



Summer Camp is almost 85% full but the following camps still have space. Register now to reserve your spot at Camp Woodend. Questions? Email pam.oves@natureforward.org.

K Camps

All Kindergarten camps have space

1st/2nd

Wild at Heart

Extreme Animals

3rd/4th

Craft Crazy

Slugs to Bugs and Animal Clues

Aquatic Odyssey and All About Birds

STEAM Team and Scavenger Scheme

5th/6th

Rock Creek Rescue and Outdoor Adventures

Farm to Table

Archeology Camp

7th/8th/9th

Wilderness Skills

Outdoor Explorers



"SNOW" MUCH FUN AT WOODEND
Children took advantage of a snow day in January to sled and have fun in the winter wonderland of Woodend. Photos by Ben Israel.





Wonderful Worms!

by Gina Ghertner, Lead GreenKids Educator

It is cold outside, and most worms are buried deep underground waiting for spring to come, except for GreenKids' wonderful worms. These worms are hard at work visiting kindergarten classrooms far and wide. GreenKids is Nature Forward's grant funded program that delivers free environmental education in Kindergarten – 12th grade public school classrooms across the region.

A typical GreenKids worm lesson is filled with mixed emotions, not only from the children but from teachers, too. Some are excited but others are a little apprehensive. I begin the lesson with a show-of-hands survey with three queries:

"Raise your hand if you have seen a worm before."

"Raise your hand if you are a little afraid of worms."

"Raise your hand if you like worms."

We explore worm adaptations and talk about the roles that worms play in our environment. Slowly but surely, students begin to understand why worms look the way they look. Fear turns into surprise and curiosity as kids learn more. Worms don't have eyes. They don't have teeth or noses. They can't hurt us or make noise.

"Worms are slimy, eww"—is a frequent observation. "Yes!" I say, "They are slimy because they breathe through their skin and if their skin dries up, they won't be able to breathe." I reply with a smile to assure the kids that it's OK to be slimy. "They need to be slimy."

Big, bright kindergartener eyes look back at me, amazed by the new worm facts they've just learned. They are now eager to observe earthworms more closely and, if they feel like it, they can touch the worms gently with our help.

Wonderful Worms is a hands-on lesson that teaches students about animal adaptations and worm composting. By bringing worms to the classrooms, children not only learn about the role of worms in the environment, but they also gain an appreciation for these small creatures that look so different from humans.

Early exposure to little crawly creatures is an important aspect of child development. Children learn to manage their fears in a controlled environment. Watching their classmates touch worms helps hesitant students feel encouraged to try it, even with just one tiny finger. By the end of the lesson, some students are so hooked that they ask if they can take the worms home! Some children name their worms. Others say that was the best day ever! All around I see are big smiles and faces of contentment.

At the end of the lesson, I say, "Raise your hand if you like worms," once again. 99% of hands go up!

Every year, GreenKids educators visit hundreds of classrooms in Maryland, DC, and Virginia, connecting thousands of students to nature and the environment. GreenKids welcomes volunteers to participate in these lessons! Please reach out to Peihan Orestes at peihan.orestes@natureforward.org if you are interested in being a GreenKids volunteer.



How Children Can Blossom in Nature

by Lisa Goodnight

The research is clear—outdoor experiences help boost children’s cognitive and behavioral development and physical and mental health. Experts agree that more time outdoors, especially in early childhood, sets the stage for a lifetime of happiness, creativity, resilience, and physical strength.

Enriching young lives through nature is the core of Nature Forward’s Nature Preschool. Launched 18 years ago in 2006, Nature Preschool, located at Woodend Nature Sanctuary, provides children ample space to explore, grow, and enjoy the natural world. Nature Preschool programs include 5-day drop off programs for children ages 3 to 5 and once a week caregiver and child programs for children ages 4 and younger.

Director Rose Brusaferro, PhD notes that too many of today’s children have limited exposure to nature. At Nature Preschool, our dedicated teachers help youngsters leave screens behind and delight in full immersion in the natural world.

“Because electronics and devices take up such a large part of our lives in general, some children will resist going outside. They sometimes think the natural world is boring compared to the online world they know so well,” Rose explains. “Once our trained educators guide children to experience and appreciate the beauty and magic of the world around them, they are hooked on nature for life.”

Nature Preschool focuses on creating deep emotional connections between children and nature and helping them understand that everything is connected. Our talented team of specialized educators eagerly looks forward to nurturing each class of young naturalists and welcoming them to the best classroom of all, the Great Outdoors.

**Preschool
Enrollment
Now Open!**

Visit natureforward.org/preschool to learn more and apply for the 2024–2025 school year.



Open House

Saturday, April 20 from 10 AM - 12 Noon

You and your family are invited to discover our school’s approach to nature-based education, view our indoor classrooms, meet our wonderful teachers, and prepare for this important and exciting stage in your family’s early education experience!



Parents interested in exploring how Nature Preschool could benefit their child can visit Woodend Nature Sanctuary’s living classroom for themselves.

The Nature Preschool Team invites interested families to a Preschool Open House at 10 am on **Saturday, April 20**. The day will feature a book fair, tree planting, and other fun activities. Families can also schedule a private tour of the preschool program by emailing rose.brusaferro@natureforward.org or calling Rose at 301-652-8108.

Spring into action this season and nourish your inner explorer!

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

Sign up at natureforward.org/nature-classes

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

Questions? Call Pam at 301-652-1851 or email pam.oves@natureforward.org

SCAN TO REGISTER



What's Green in Winter?

Thursday, March 7 (9-11:30 am)

Leader: Kit Sheffield

Location: Great Falls, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

In late winter, green is rarely the dominant color in the landscape. Yet among the muted tones of the leaf litter and rocks, spots of green peek out. From lichens and mosses to evergreen ferns and trees, join naturalist Kit Sheffield as we learn about the hardy and resilient species that stay green in winter. *Be prepared for some uphill/downhill on this hike of up to 3 miles on trails which might be muddy, uneven, or slippery.*

March Madness Along the River

Saturday, March 9 (9 am-1:30 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Riverbend Park, VA

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

With the official start of spring at hand, we'll take a hike along the Potomac River where nature lovers can observe the tug-of-war between lingering winter and imminent spring—what our naturalist leader calls March Madness! She'll lead you on a 3-4 mile hike along several trails in Riverbend Park which sits along the Potomac River near Great Falls, VA. Along the way, there will be plants and animals to catch our interest in this protected area's rocky woods, sycamore bottomlands, and flowing River waters. *The natural*

surface trails, which will include some uphill/downhill, may be muddy and/or slippery.

Want to get involved in the Birdathon?

Look for this symbol next to the program listings where you can count birds or learn about birding.



Winter Birding at Riley's Lock

Sunday, March 10 (8:30-11 am)

Location: Riley's Lock, MD

Leader: Mark England

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Our winter birding series visits natural areas throughout the relatively close-in DC metro-area where a variety of habitats—field, forest, and wetland—provide good opportunities for the observation and study of birds during the winter months. With the landscape stripped of most leaves, it's a great time to look for a wide range of birds including both resident and overwintering species. Sparrows, woodpeckers, raptors, waterfowl and more will get our attention on these teaching walks aimed at beginning to mid-level birding enthusiasts. Our explorations will be on mostly level natural surface trails which may be uneven, muddy, snowy, and/or slippery.

Early Spring Ephemerals

Wednesday, March 13 (10 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Marney Bruce

Location: Carderock Recreation Area Parking Lot 1, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

The transition from late winter to early spring is an exciting time: ephemeral wildflowers weigh the risk of late frost against the bounty of available sunlight shining through the bare branches. Join leader Marney Bruce on a walk near the Potomac. We will be investigating plant life, and keeping our fingers crossed for elusive early Spring ephemerals. *Our walk will take place along the mostly level, natural-surface towpath. However, there will be one area down unlevelled terrain. Walking poles are recommended.*

Spring Saunters Along the Canal

Wednesdays (10 am-12:30 pm)

Section A: March 20—Carderock (MD)

Section B: April 3—Widewater (MD)

Section C: April 17—Violettes Lock (MD)

Section D: May 1—Riley's Lock (MD)

Section E: May 15—Pennyfield Lock (MD)

Section F: May 29—Swain's Lock (MD)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Each walk members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Enjoy these leisurely walks on the Towpath along close-in portions of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. The focus of our walks, starting from different locations, will be the general natural history of the varied habitats along the Potomac River and Canal. We'll proceed at a slow "naturalist's saunter" as we experience the wondrous unfolding of spring. We'll stop often to observe birds, wildflowers and other plants, butterflies, snakes, turtles, and whatever else we might find.

Spring Early Birds

Section A: Saturday, March 16 (8-11 am)—Lake

Artemesia, MD (Rob Hilton & Lisa Shannon)

Section B: Tuesday, March 26 (8-11 am)—Blue Mash, MD

(Mike Bowen & Anne Cianni)

Section C: Tuesday, April 2 (8:30-11:30 am)—National

Arboretum, DC (Paul Pisano)

Section D: Tuesday, April 16 (7:30-10:30 am)—Algonquin

Regional Park, VA (Mike Bowen & Anne Cianni)

Section E: Saturday, April 27 (7:30-10 am)—Woodstock

Equestrian Center, MD (Mark England)

Section F: Friday, May 3 (7:30-10:30 am)—Kenilworth

Aquatic Gardens, DC (Rob Hilton & Lisa Shannon)

Section G: Tuesday, May 7 (7:30-10:30 am)—Occoquan

Bay NWR, VA (Paul Pisano)

Section H: Sunday, May 12 (7:30-10:30am)—Lois Green,

MD (Rob Hilton & Lisa Shannon)

Section I: Saturday, June 8 (7:00-10 am) —Pine Lake,

Wheaton Regional Park, MD (Rob Hilton & Lisa Shannon)

Each walk members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Immerse yourself in the phenomenon of spring migration with these field programs at nearby parks. Our walks are aimed at beginning and intermediate birders for whom the spring pulse of bird activity can often be overwhelming. We'll search for both resident and migrating birds by sight and sound. As we develop skills for finding birds in the field, we'll also discuss the arrival sequence of spring travelers—and the departure of overwintering species. *Our field trips are undertaken on natural surface trails and/or boardwalks which may be muddy, uneven, and/or slippery. Some mild uphill/downhill is possible. Participants provide their own binoculars.*

Nature Journaling

Sunday, March 17 (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary (Fire Circle), MD

Members: \$33; nonmembers \$46

When we go out into the world to experience Nature, a field journal can be a handy tool to bring along. In this workshop, new Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall will guide participants through several approaches to keeping a Nature Journal, with writing, sketching, phenology calendars, and more. If you're looking to stretch your creativity and deepen your connection to Nature, this class is for you! *Participants bring their own journal and writing implements. Expect to sit still for a while.*

Tours at Woodend Nature Sanctuary

Family Walks in the Woods

Saturdays: 3/2, 4/6, 5/4, 6/1, 7/6, 8/3, 9/7 (9-10 am)

Members \$12 a family; nonmembers \$20 a family

Join expert naturalists 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. Only register one adult when signing up.

Saturday Morning Bird Walk

Saturdays: 3/9, 4/13, 5/11, 6/8, 7/13, 8/10, 9/14 (9-10 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Join enthusiastic birders at Woodend to learn birding basics. You will learn binocular basics and how to identify common birds as well as explore the wonders of migration. Second person FREE.

Natural Habitats of Woodend

Fridays: 4/19, 7/19 (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. Second person FREE.

Forest Bathing with Adria

Saturday 4/20 (10 am-12 pm)

Members \$30; nonmembers \$40

Join naturalist Adria Zeldin this Earth Day for a soothing exploration and mindfulness walk through the forests at Woodend. Relax and take in the fresh air and cool shade these trees have to offer.

Notable Trees of Woodend

Fridays: 5/17, 8/16 (10-11:30 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Learn about the notable trees Woodend has to offer with Habitat Manager, Bradley Simpson. We will learn how to identify these trees and where you might find them in the wild.

Forest Bathing with Ana

Saturday, 6/1 (10 am-12 pm)

Members \$30; nonmembers \$40

Join naturalist Ana Ka'ahanui in a soothing exploration and mindfulness walk through the forests at Woodend. Relax and take in the fresh air and cool shade these trees have to offer.

Native Plant Gardens of Woodend

Fridays: 6/21, 9/20 (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.

Equinox Celebration

Tuesday, March 19 (3-7 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Location: Widewater, MD

Members: \$35; nonmembers \$49

The Spring Equinox is a moment of balance: the point at which day and night are of equal length. From here on out, we are tipping further into the light. Take a moment to pause, mark this seasonal shift, and cross the celestial threshold into Spring. On this hike, we will begin along the Towpath by Carderock and voyage up to the Great Falls overlook. After enjoying the power of the Falls, we will return back to Carderock. *Expect a 4-mile roundtrip hike along the natural surface Towpath and boardwalks of Great Falls at a pace faster than our usual naturalist's shuffle.*

Prowling for Owls

Saturday, March 23 (7:30-9:30 pm)

Leader: Mark England

Location: Black Hill Regional Park, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Have you ever ventured out after dark and wondered: hoooo's out there? Join experienced "owler" Mark England at sundown to try to hear or see our three most common local owl species: Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, and Great Horned Owl, all of which are present at the park. Mark will demonstrate the basics of owling and talk at length about each owl species. *Though the park is usually closed after dark, the leader will have a required night-use permit for our trip.*



Trees through the Season at Turkey Run

Wednesdays (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Bradley Simpson

Location: Turkey Run Park, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Section A: March 27

Section B: April 10

Section C: June 12

Join Habitat Manager Bradley Simpson to track the seasonal flow as spring warms the landscape and invites trees into bud, bloom, and full-leaf. By visiting the same location multiple times throughout the season, we'll be primed to observe the changes over time, and to cultivate a keener understanding of the dynamic forest ecosystem—and the trees within. *The natural surface trails, which will include some fairly steep uphill/downhill, may be muddy and/or slippery. Depending on the route and water levels, there may be a stream crossing.*

Early Spring Wildflower Hike

Friday, March 29 (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Carderock, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Beat the winter blues on this search for the earliest spring wildflowers in the woods and bottomlands along the Potomac near Carderock Recreation Area, just outside the Beltway near the American Legion Bridge. We'll look for the greening leaves, swelling buds, and (fingers crossed) unfolding flowers of species such as Harbinger of spring, early saxifrage, spring beauty, and bloodroot. *NOTE: Our roughly 1.5 mile hike will include some uneven, rocky, hilly, and likely muddy stretches on natural surface trails.*

Birding for Beginners

Saturday, March 30 (8:30-11 am)

Leader: Cliff Fairweather

Location: Rust Nature Sanctuary, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

If you are completely new to birdwatching or are having trouble getting started on your own, this is the walk for you! We'll cover the basics of bird watching: finding and identifying birds, choosing and using binoculars and field guides, birdwatching etiquette and ethics, useful birding apps, and much more. Don't have binoculars? No problem, we have some loaners.

Introduction to Wildflower ID

Saturday, April 6 (9 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Carderock, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

During April, spring wildflowers in the Washington area are abundant and dazzling! On this field class, based in the just-outside-the Beltway Carderock Recreation Area, we'll explore several short trails between the C&O Canal and the Potomac River. We'll work on developing the observational skills and terminology which are key to learning to recognize and ID wildflowers. As we're learning the names and niches of species such as Virginia bluebells, dutchman's breeches, toad trillium, and more, we'll take time to just enjoy their beauty. *Expect some rocky, uneven, and muddy terrain on the natural surface trails we'll use.*

Want to Get Started in Birding?

Sunday, April 7 (8-11 am)

Leader: Mark England

Location: Black Hill and/or Little Bennett, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

If you're curious about birds and bird watching but don't know how to begin, this "how to get started" outing is for you. No experience required! The goal of our field morning, which visits Black Hill and/or Little Bennett Regional Parks in upper Montgomery County, is to begin developing the ability to find, study, and identify birds in their natural environment. Birding tools such as field guides, binoculars, and other resources will also be discussed.

Warbler Warm-Up

Thursday, April 11 (7-9:30pm)

Leader: Mike Bowen

Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary, MD

Members \$26; nonmembers \$34

It's time to start brushing up on the voices and field marks of the lovely and soon-to-be-arriving warblers. Even for the most seasoned birders, finding and properly IDing them as they arrive or pass through between late March and the end of May can be a real challenge. Since we all need an annual refresher, we've enlisted the help of one of our most experienced bird trip leaders. He will use both photos and recordings to present the general arrival sequence of warbler species in our region. *Our tutorial will be presented indoors at the Woodend Nature Sanctuary.*



Bluebells and Budbreak at Boundary Bridge

Friday, April 12 (9 am-1 pm)

Leader: Melane Choukas-Bradley

Location: Boundary Bridge, Rock Creek Park, DC/MD

Members \$40; nonmembers \$49

We're delighted that the author of the award-winning book *A Year in Rock Creek Park*, and the critically acclaimed *City of Trees*, will offer her 18th year of Nature Forward walks in the country's oldest urban national park. Under her expert guidance, you will witness the annual floral miracle of Virginia bluebells in the floodplain forest, while the leaves of the tulip tree and American beech begin to spill from their buds. We'll hope to catch spring beauties, wild ginger, cut-leafed toothwort, and other blooming spring ephemerals as we explore both floodplain and upland woods at a leisurely pace. Time permitting, we'll do a bit of "forest bathing." Throughout, we'll keep our eyes and ears open for belted kingfishers, wood ducks, migrant songbirds, and tiny spring peeper frogs. *Expect some uphill/downhill on natural surface trails which may be muddy and/or slippery. Please note: There are no restrooms at our meeting place or along the route.*

Where the Wildflowers Are

Thursday, April 18 (9 am-12 pm)

Leader: Kit Sheffield

Location: Riverbend Park, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

April is a time of dynamic change along the forest floor. For the wildflowers, it's a race against time to bloom and reproduce before the tree canopy leafs out and blocks out the sunlight. Explore the trails of Riverbend Park and seek out wildflowers along the river. *This park is located along the Potomac River near Great Falls, VA. Be prepared for some uphill/downhill on this hike of up to 3 miles on trails which might be muddy, uneven, or slippery.*



Cutleaf toothwort by Jay Sturner

Bird Language Workshop



Sunday, April 21 (9 am-12 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Two cardinals chip back and forth as they forage. A boblin whistles a high-pitched "seet" and stares into the trees. A dark-eyed junco's white tail bars flash and the birds fall silent. Each of these signs reveals the complex web of interactions, relationships, and rhythms in nature—simply learn to interpret their language, and a whole world of meaning begins to unfold. Whether you are an advanced birder, or a first-timer who is curious to learn more, you are welcome. *This workshop will include about 45 minutes of sitting still in quiet listening. Some walking on natural surface trails will be required.*

Violets at Violette's Lock

Wednesday, April 24 (10 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Marney Bruce

Location: Violette's Lock, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

A stroll through the early spring woods can be magical, where colors and forms of trees' and shrubs' unfolding leaves and blooms catch the eye. In bottomland woods, there's the added delight of spring wildflowers underfoot. Our leader can't wait to share one of her favorite spots along the Potomac River: Violette's Lock. *Our walk will take place along the mostly level, natural-surface towpath.*

Natural Heritage Hike: Calvert Cliffs State Park

Saturday, April 27 (9 am-3 pm)

Members \$40; nonmembers \$49

Location: Calvert Cliffs State Park, MD

Leader: Stephanie Mason

While most visit Calvert Cliffs State Park for the marine fossils along its Chesapeake Bay beach, this park in southern Maryland offers rich natural history as well. We'll hike a circuit of 4 miles—out to the Bay and back—with stops along the way as we explore the coastal plain forests, marshland, and stream valley habitats of this protected area. We'll keep our eyes and ears open for wildlife, including birds, butterflies and other insects, and reptiles and amphibians, while admiring spring plant life both underfoot and overhead. The Park's natural surface trails will be uneven and likely muddy with a mild hill or two. *The Park charges a \$5 per car admission fee for MD tags and \$7 for out-of-state tags. Carpooling will be encouraged and facilitated with a central meeting point not far outside the Beltway.*

May in the Meadows

Thursday, May 2 (11 am-2 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Location: Huntley Meadows, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Huntley Meadows is home to a variety of habitats—from their namesake meadows, to wetlands, to forests. The park has been shaped by the meanders of the Potomac River, and by the eager engineering of beaver—which, cross our fingers, we may have the opportunity to see! We will wander the wetland boardwalk and close the 1.8 mile loop through the woods to sample a diverse array of plants, birds, mammal signs, and more. *We will be on paved trails, natural surface trails, and a boardwalk, with an optional stair climb to an observation tower over the wetland.*

Geology at Soldier's Delight

Sunday, May 5 (1-4 pm)

Leader: Joe Marx

Location: Soldier's Delight, MD

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

The same tectonic collisions that metamorphosed much of our local bedrock also moved oceanic rock from beneath an ancient sea floor and stranded it in scattered patches within the continental rock of the Piedmont. The Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area, near Owings Mill, MD, preserves one of the largest of these ophiolite patches. The soil at Soldiers Delight tends to be thin, dry and nutrient-poor, producing a landscape observably different from most in the Mid-Atlantic. *We will hike three miles or so on well-maintained trails within the preserve, studying the bedrock, soil and plant communities. A few places will be steep and several stretches of trail may be muddy.*

Spring on Wheels Along the Potomac

Thursday, May 9 (8:30 am-2 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Swains Lock, MD

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

Spring has sprung and the towpath along the Potomac River is one of the finest places in the DC-metro area to experience this season's richness. In order to cover more territory and visit more habitats, we'll use bikes to explore the stretch from Swain's Lock to Blockhouse Point, a nearly 9-mile round-trip ride. We'll dismount often to look for spring wildflowers, butterflies and other insects, and reptiles and amphibians—all the while keeping an eye and ear open for spring bird activity. *Bring your own bike.*

Appalachian Spring

Sunday, May 12 (9 am-2:30 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Gathland State Park, MD

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

Spring rains, warming temperatures, and longer hours of daylight ignite a great burst of life in the valleys and ridges of the Appalachian Mountains. One of the best ways to explore this seasonal richness is on a hike along the renowned Appalachian Trail. Join a naturalist to search for spring blooms, butterflies, and breeding bird activity amongst the rocky terrain of Maryland's South Mountain. Starting at Gathland State Park near Frederick, Md, our group will hike along the AT for around 1.5 to 2 miles before turning around and retracing our steps. *The AT here is rocky and uneven—and there will be some moderately strenuous uphill/downhill. We'll stop often to observe natural phenomena, but will then pick up the pace to try and cover the distance stated.*

**Look for details on other
spring/summer programs at
natureforward.org/adults**

How Does Her Garden Grow?

Saturday, May 18 (1-3:30 pm)

Leader: Karoline Anders

Nature Writing Workshop

Sunday, May 19 (10 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Springtime Magic in Cape May

Tuesday, May 21-Wednesday, May 22

Leader: Mark Garland

Introduction to Birdng-by-Ear

Saturday, May 25 (7-10:30 am)

Leader: Mark England

Mountain Laurel Meander

Friday, May 31 (10 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Marney Bruce

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**

Freshwater Ecosystems

NATH8207, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Tuesdays, 7-9 pm

Class meetings: April 9-June 4

Lectures online via Zoom

Field trip dates: April 20 (Rock Creek Park) in DC, May 4 (Prince George's County park TBD)

Instructor: Cathy Wiss

Members \$330; nonmembers \$380

Life abounds in all forms of freshwater, from glaciers to hot springs. This course will focus on the unique habitats and properties of freshwater streams, lakes, and vernal pools—where myriad vertebrates, invertebrates, plants, algae, fungi, and bacteria live. We will examine their adaptations to life in freshwater; feeding habits and food webs; strategies for survival and reproduction; and interactions between them and their habitat. Because human activities have had a significant impact on freshwater resources, we will look at measures being taken for mitigation and restoration.



Photo by Cathy Wiss

Biodiversity

NATH7301, 1.5 CEUs

Class night and time: Wednesdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: April 24-May 22

Lectures online via Zoom

Field Trips: May 5 (Scott's Run Nature Preserve);

May 19 (Jug Bay); June 2 (Soldier's Delight)

Members \$240, nonmembers \$290

Instructor: Clare Walker, PhD

You've heard that biodiversity is important but what does that really mean in your backyard or our local parks? Instead of identifying local plants or animals in isolation, this class explores how they are interconnected and dependent on each other. Looking at unexpected local diversity, both rare and abundant, from wasps and millipedes to sedges and orchids, we will explore the complex topic of how we 'measure' diversity. This class will open your eyes to variety of life around us and challenge your ideas on how we choose conservation priorities. The class field trips will visit some of the 'biodiversity gems' found in our local parks.



Introduction to Butterflies and Moths

NATH7268 1.5 CEUs

Class night and time: Mondays, 7-9 pm

Class meetings: May 6-June 17

No Class May 27

Lectures in person at Woodend

Field trip dates: May 11, 18, and June 1 (10 am-3

pm). Locations TBD depending on scouting trips and progression of the season, plus one evening moth night during class TBD in consultation with participants once the class starts

Members \$270, nonmembers \$320

Instructor: Rick Borchelt

Butterflies and moths are often the first insects the public thinks of when they think of insects at all, but they are much more than monarch butterflies and luna moths. In this class we will explore how to identify butterfly and moth families; their evolution, life history strategies, and unique adaptations; and the vital role they play in local ecosystems. Field trips and class projects will focus on observing immature stages of lepidoptera, rearing butterflies and moths for ID purposes, and surveying for adult lepidoptera in the field.



Spicebush Swallowtail
Caterpillar by Rick Borchelt

COMING IN APRIL

Details on Summer NHFS classes, which start in June, available in late spring at natureforward.org/nhfs

Summer Tree ID

Bradley Simpson

Intro to Fern ID

Kit Sheffield

Summer Bird Life

Gemma Radko

Nature 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!*



2025 Nature Travel Trips

Planning has begun for all three trips below. Email pam.oves@natureforward.org if you want to be included on the list to receive more information when available.

Costa Rica

February 2025

Leaders: Stephanie Mason with a local guide

Join former Senior Naturalist Stephanie Mason on her 23rd trip to this Central American wonderland.

Kenya

March 3-15, 2025

Leaders: Mark Garland with a local guide

Planning is almost finalized with our partner Classic Escapes on this bucket list destination.

Italy

May 2025

Leaders: Paul Pisano with a local guide

Good birding and great food await explorers who want to visit Italy during peak migration.

SPRING INTO WOODEND NATURE SHOP

Open daily 11am-3pm | Closed Sunday



Members receive 10% off!

**woodend
nature shop**
BY NATURE FORWARD

Dedicated Volunteers are the Heart of Nature Forward

In this installment of the Volunteer Corner, we shine the spotlight on one of our wonderful volunteers, Sally Winthrop. Sally took our Master Naturalist class in 2022 and has been volunteering in a variety of ways ever since, from step-pool monitoring and helping with school field trips to volunteering with our advocacy team. She logged over 125 volunteer hours in 2023!

Volunteer Coordinator Peihan Orestes interviewed Jamoni Overby, Nature Forward's Maryland Conservation Advocate, about the work that her team and Sally have been doing.

Q. What has the advocacy team been working on recently?

A. DC advocacy has been focused on decarbonization as an intersectional justice issue related to climate, health, housing, childhood development, and economic development. We have been advocating for Healthy Homes for All, a bill that will provide 30,000 low to moderate income homes with electrification retrofits to transition off of gas. We have also been advocating for the Public Service Commission to oppose a billion-dollar pipe expansion program also known as "Project Pipes" by Washington Gas to invest money into dirty fossil fuels. As DC looks to reach its carbon neutrality goals, we need to invest in electrification infrastructure and not throw money away into health hazardous gas infrastructure.

Q. How has Sally helped the team?

A. Over the past two years, Sally has helped the team in various ways including tracking bills, attending coalition meetings as a notetaker and meetings with Councilmembers as a representative of Nature Forward. More recently, Sally has attended weekly meetings with partner organizations that are a part of Electrify DC Council Group to help bring awareness to the dangers of Project Pipes 3, support strategizing coalition efforts, and gain the support of council members. Sally was influential in our most recent success of having 10 out of 13 councilmembers, including Chairman Mendelson, send a letter to the Public Service Commission opposing the project and encouraging a new energy planning process that protects consumers and aligns with existing law.



Q. What kinds of volunteer opportunities in advocacy are there?

A. Volunteer opportunities vary in DC, MD, and VA. Advocates share opportunities related to research, writing comments and testimony for hearings, tracking bills during MD and VA general assemblies, drafting blog posts, and tabling outreach opportunities at community events and more! If there is something you are interested in getting involved in, Nature Forward has something for you.

"The most important thing I've learned is that there are caring, dedicated people who are working tirelessly on our behalf to fight for climate justice. But they can't do everything on their own. At this critical time, they need the support, work and talent of as many of us as possible. Please consider volunteering with Nature Forward—it's a very rewarding experience."

—SALLY WINTHROP,
VOLUNTEER



Bienvenidos/ Welcome

All were welcomed at Nature Forward's Naturally Latinos Conference. On Friday, January 26, attendees gathered in downtown Silver Spring for the in-person conference day featuring four panel discussions, the presentation of the Nature Forward awards, and a performance by Alvin Bacilio - Panamanian Patria Y Saloma Folkloric Dance Group. Photos by the multi-talented Maryland Master Naturalist Liz Guertin.



THANK YOU to our 2024 Naturally Latinos Conference Sponsors!

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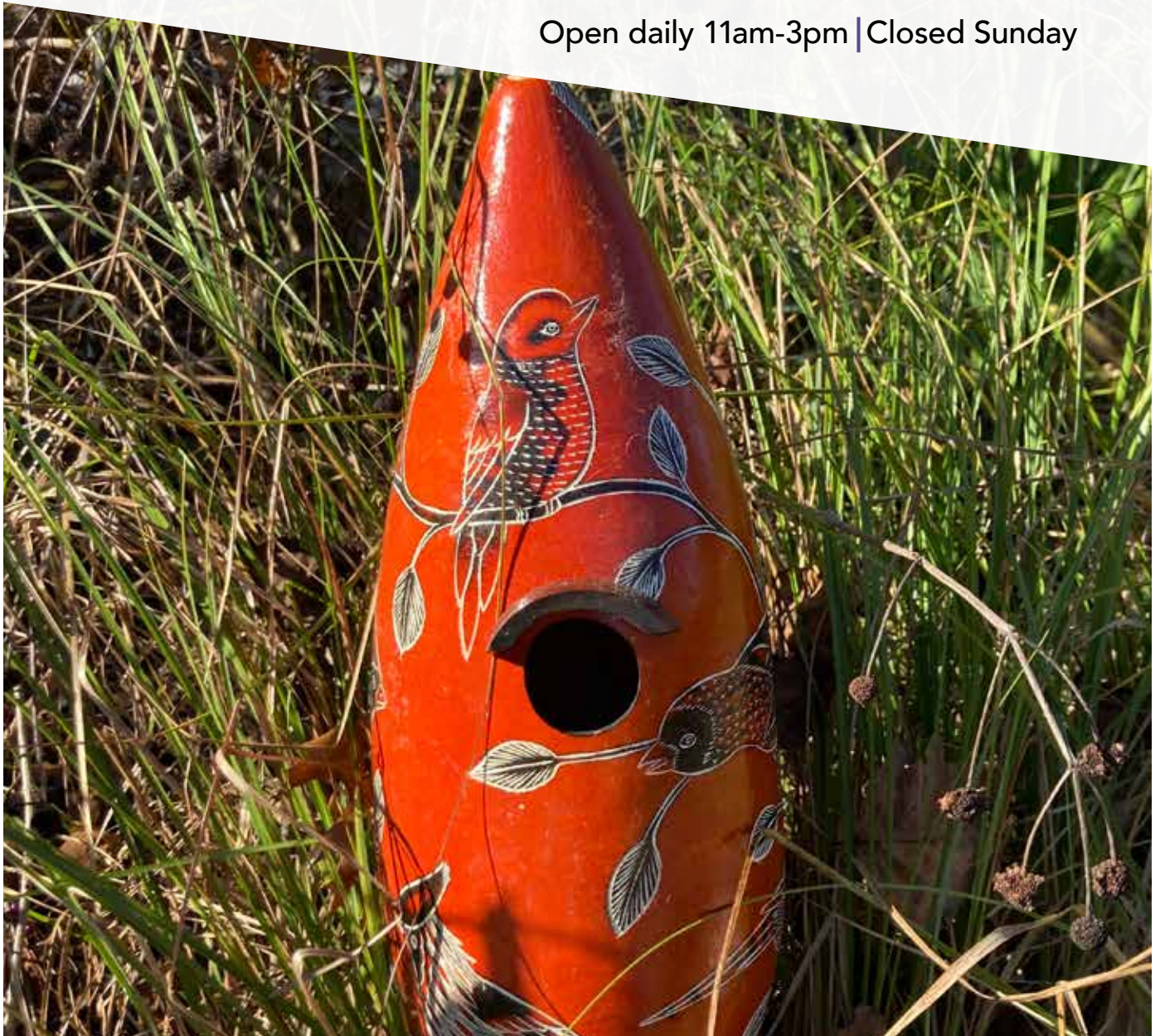
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Photos by Shelly Pate Photography

SPRING INTO WOODEND NATURE SHOP


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BY NATURE FORWARD

Woodend Stream Monitoring: A Report and Look Ahead

As we near springtime and warmer weather, one can find natural clues all around us that the seasons are changing. At Woodend, some of the first signs of spring can be found in and along our restored stream. We begin to hear the chorus of spring peepers on late February evenings, see the masses of amphibian eggs in March and April, and listen to the croaking of bull frogs throughout the day in May. Our restored stream has helped Woodend become an oasis for springtime wildlife and wildflowers. We have more frogs, more toads, more salamanders, and more macroinvertebrates living amongst the forest compared to when our stream was degraded and nearly empty.

Teams of dedicated Master Naturalist volunteers have monitored Woodend's restored stream, cataloging this change through data collection. FrogWatch monitors come to Woodend at night to listen for the different calls of various frog, and toad species. This year, our volunteers heard six unique frog species (and some barred owls). Amphibian monitors come to the stream during the day to look for signs of salamander, frog and toad egg masses and larva. In 2023 volunteers found 11 spotted salamander egg masses and 119 adult frogs. Macroinvertebrate monitors come quarterly with nets to scoop up the different insects and mollusks living amongst the amphibians in the step-pools. Overall, they found invertebrates belonging to 16 different types of families. These surveys will continue in 2024 with the hopes of finding even more signs of Woodend amphibians.

If you would like to join our team of stream monitors, please email Bradley Simpson at bradley.simpson@natureforward.org. Monitoring begins in March and continues through August.

"It is a magical experience to watch salamanders develop from eggs to adults in the pools at Woodend."

—BRADLEY SIMPSON,
HABITAT MANAGER



Spotted Salamander at Woodend. Photo by Bradley Simpson.



Spotted Salamander larva photo by Bradley Simpson taken in April 2023.

Help us Plant Tree-cosystems throughout the Capitol Region!

"Our goal is to plant an ecological community, rather than simply trees."

—ALICE STURM,
GARDEN PROGRAMS
MANAGER

Nature Forward has an exciting new project launching this spring! We've received a 1.4 million dollar grant from the US Forest Service's Urban Forestry program, and we'll be planting 1,000 trees over five years in Justice40 communities across the DMV. Justice40 is a federal initiative which has mapped and defined disadvantaged communities that are underserved, and as a result, overburdened by pollution and attendant problems. To increase our impact on not only urban heat island effect but also stormwater management, water quality, and pollinator habitat, we will plant trees together with native groundcover plants—in other words, a "Tree-cosystem"! This approach draws from the idea of "Soft Landings," which describes how many invertebrates and other organisms rely not only on native trees, but on trees that exist in ecological context with other plants. In addition to benefiting native wildlife, this also reduces maintenance—trees and turfgrass typically compete for water and nutrients, and accidental damage to trunks from mowing is a frequent problem.

Our Conservation department already has strong ties to several multi-family developments in Northern Virginia, so we are starting there. We are aware that we are planting these plants not only in community with each other, but in community with the people and wildlife who live around them. This starts by determining which lawns

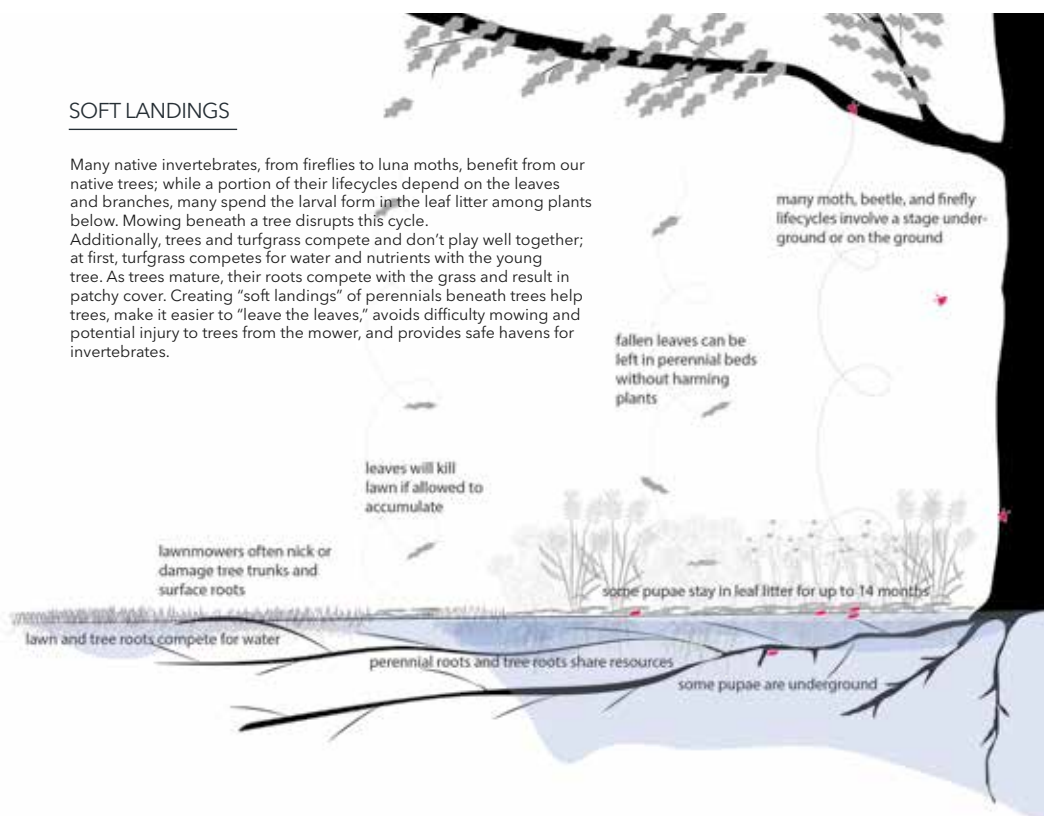
residents use recreationally, and which are simply "aesthetic" or "non-programmed" lawns. We also look at where trees have died or been removed, and where shade is lacking. While contractors will plant the (heavy!) trees, we plan to plant the understory plants together with community members, and we'll be offering folks training and a stipend to care for trees and garden plantings near their homes.

While we are starting small this spring, we dream of a day when every neighborhood in the DC region has a lush tree canopy and gardens of native plants to help people and wildlife thrive. As we

expand across the capitol region over the next five years, please dream with us by letting us know of places in the District of Columbia, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland, and Fairfax County in Virginia that would benefit from community greening. Email alice.sturm@natureforward.org with your ideas!

SOFT LANDINGS

Many native invertebrates, from fireflies to luna moths, benefit from our native trees; while a portion of their lifecycles depend on the leaves and branches, many spend the larval form in the leaf litter among plants below. Mowing beneath a tree disrupts this cycle. Additionally, trees and turfgrass compete and don't play well together; at first, turfgrass competes for water and nutrients with the young tree. As trees mature, their roots compete with the grass and result in patchy cover. Creating "soft landings" of perennials beneath trees help trees, make it easier to "leave the leaves," avoids difficulty mowing and potential injury to trees from the mower, and provides safe havens for invertebrates.



SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 6TH 2024

— 6:00 PM —



Woodend After Dark



WOODEND MANSION
WOODEND NATURE SANCTUARY
Chevy Chase, MD

natureforward.org/after-dark

Remembering Don Messersmith

The Nature Forward community fondly remembers Don Messersmith, Nature Forward's longest standing member and an outstanding birder, instructor, and nature travel leader who passed away in January shortly after his 95th birthday. Don was beloved for his knowledge, teaching acumen, and wonderful sense of humor. Don's career spanned decades and in addition to being a favorite Nature Forward instructor, he taught entomology, ornithology, and environmental science at the University of Maryland, and courses for the Smithsonian and Johns Hopkins. Together with his wife Sherry, Don founded the Crowder-Messersmith Fund to support international conservation efforts. Don's legacy will live on in the hundreds—probably thousands!—of people he inspired to learn more about birds and nature here in the DMV and around the world.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Crowder/Messersmith Conservation Fund at <https://give.natureforward.org/give/413799/#!/donation/checkout>.



Remembering William "Bill" Adams

The Nature Forward community is saddened to share the news of the passing of Bill Adams in February. Bill was a first-generation college student who received his undergraduate degree from UCLA and his PhD from Columbia University. He devoted his career to teaching and research in Mathematics at the University of Maryland. Bill was an avid birder who spent much of his free time looking to the trees in search of ever more elusive birds to add to his extensive life list that included 2,746 species! Bill's life list included many species he encountered on our Nature Travel trips, including Ecuador, Tanzania, Panama, and more. Bill shared his birding passion with his wife, his children and grandchildren, and his many friends at Nature Forward. Memorial contributions in Bill's honor can be made at natureforward.org/donate.

Nature Forward Legacy Society



Join Nature Forward's Legacy Society! By naming Nature Forward as the beneficiary of your estate, you are making an important statement about your commitment to preserving nature for future generations. Members who include Nature Forward in their estate plans at any level become members of our Legacy Society, receive a commemorative pin, and are invited to join special programs, including nature walks and events.

Contact Director of Development Corinna Fisk at corinna.fisk@natureforward.org or 301-652-1089 if you have questions, need information, or are planning to include Nature Forward in your will, trust, life insurance policy or retirement account.





Garden Consultations

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Memorial and Tribute Contributions

NOVEMBER 2023-JANUARY 2024

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John Williamson

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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

Please stay home if you are sick. Nature Forward follows CDC guidelines for isolation and masking after a positive COVID test. Policies are subject to change.



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