

AUTUMN 2024

nature forward

Q U A R T E R L Y

**Class Act: Nature Forward
Bids Farewell to Outstanding
Leader Lisa Alexander**



NATURE FORWARD QUARTERLY

Autumn 2024

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

The Magic of Autumn

If a year was tucked inside a clock, then autumn would be the magic hour—Victoria Erickson

After a record hot summer, I long for the magic of autumn. With climate change facing us at every turn, I welcome sweater weather and colorful leaves. Nature will be our balm and solace as we enter a tumultuous election season. Please vote in the upcoming election to support people and policies that protect our natural world. And for respite from breaking news, sign up to enjoy the magic of the season with Nature Forward and savor autumn beauty in good company (page 20).

Take a look at all the joy Camp Woodend and our Youth Education team brought to campers this summer. Nature play sure does beat the heat! Every day at camp, our educators help kids fall in love with nature. It's wonderful to see future environmentalists in the making (page 16).



Our happy campers may not have known it, but they were enjoying more habitat restoration at Woodend than ever before. So far in 2024, we've planted 200 trees and 250 native shrubs at Woodend with help from highschoolers in the Planting Shade program. This fall, we'll add 300 more native trees and shrubs plus 500 oak trees to Woodend's understory. Our Restoration team grew those oaks right in Woodend's own greenhouse—a smorgasbord for wildlife!

Grant-supported restoration outreach programs expand our habitat impact across the Capital region. This year, we've planted 172 trees and 5,000 square feet of understory native plants in traditionally underserved communities and delivered 3,750 square feet worth of native plant kits in the Sligo Creek subwatershed. I'm thrilled with our expanding restoration impact! We can be proud of our habitat work at Woodend and throughout the DC region that supports wildlife, controls stormwater runoff, sequesters carbon, and provides the cooling and air quality benefits that people and wildlife need in a warming world.

Be sure to read about how negative climate impacts worsen where data centers are (page 6). We must look beyond temporary construction jobs that data centers provide and focus on the long-term damage to water quality and air quality and ferocious energy consumption they cause. Nature Forward's Conservation team is taking the lead spotlighting unwanted environmental impacts from data centers. We are hard at work with governments and the companies that build and use data centers to find green solutions to address our nation's growing appetite for data usage.

You'll see that this issue contains a retrospective of my time at Nature Forward (page 8), I'll try not to be embarrassed—because leading this organization has been the job of a lifetime! Twenty years flew by in the blink of an eye. I am proud and honored to have worked with so many dedicated and talented people on the Nature Forward Board and staff, our generous members, donors, and volunteers, and supportive colleagues, business partners, and sponsors. When the rest of the world is shrouded in darkness, our Nature Forward community restores my faith in the future because together we strive to make the world a better place. I give heartfelt thanks to each of you, our members and supporters, who help make all of our great mission work for people and nature possible.

Please join me for a magical evening at our Autumn Lights fundraiser (page 37) that will take place on November 16 this year. And please remember to join or renew your membership, sign up for Action Alerts, bring a friend to a Nature Forward program, and give generously at year end. Nature Forward is counting on 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



reclamation & RESILIENCE

A Nature Forward  Conference



Online/Virtual on Wednesday, March 5 & Thursday, March 6, 2025
In-Person in downtown Silver Spring, MD on Friday, March 7, 2025
DC Region Nature Experiences on Saturday, March 8, 2025

Nature Forward's flagship Taking Nature Black Conference is among the nation's premier forums showcasing diversity, inclusion, and equity in nature.



Use the QR code or natureforward.org/keep-in-touch to sign up for conference updates by selecting "Taking Nature Black Conference"



Dark Clouds: The Risks of Unchecked Data Centers

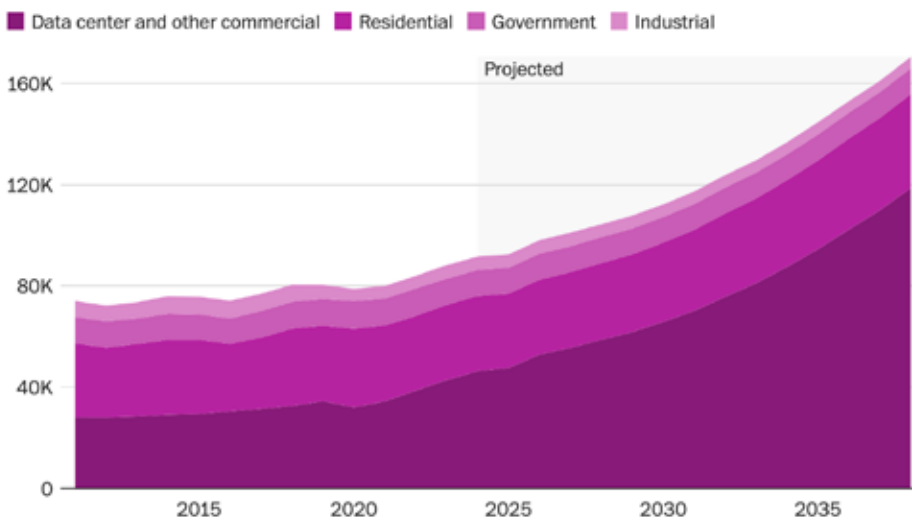
by Renee Grebe and Denisse Guitarra

Have you been on a Zoom call, saved photos, or purchased event tickets online? Much of what we do every day uses computing power “in the cloud.” But don’t picture a beautiful fluffy shape in the sky, the reality is far different. The “cloud” is actually a series of vast, noisy, windowless, computer-filled buildings called data centers. Data centers negatively impact nature and people by devouring tons of energy, heating millions of gallons of water, and polluting our air, waterways, and communities.

Northern Virginia’s “Data Center Alley,” located between Loudoun and Fairfax counties, houses 118 data centers and occupies 10 million square feet. Data Center Alley already handles 70% of the world’s internet traffic with more data center construction slated for Northern Virginia and Maryland. What’s most alarming is that little or nothing is being done to mitigate negative environmental impacts of data centers by our local, state, and federal governments. At Nature Forward, we’re advocating for transparent information about data center energy and water usage and for environmental policies and regulations that will curb data center harms.

Data centers expected to drive stratospheric energy demand in Va.

Dominion Energy customer demand in Virginia, in gigawatt hours



Source: Dominion Energy’s Virginia Electric and Power Company Integrated Resource Plan

Energy Impacts & Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Data centers need enormous amounts of energy. The energy demands of a single data center could power 50,000 homes. Data centers typically draw electricity produced by coal because renewable sources, like solar and wind, cannot keep up with their massive 24/7 energy needs. Data centers’ insatiable demand is keeping coal-powered plants that had been scheduled to go offline in business. They are driving new construction of habitat-disrupting transmission power lines and pushing Virginia and Maryland farther away from achieving their climate goals.

According to the US Department of Energy, data centers currently account for roughly 2% of the nation’s total electricity use. *The Washington Post* estimates that by 2035, the data center industry in Virginia will need four times as much energy, enough to power 8.8 million homes!

Data centers increase greenhouse gas emissions. The 2022 Metropolitan Council of Governments reported that Prince William County, VA, saw a 19% rise in greenhouse gas emissions between 2005 to 2018, a time-period that matches the rapid rate of data center growth in the county.

Data centers also increase air pollution because they depend on diesel generators during power outages, regular maintenance, and times of peak usage. Environmental advocates point out that prolonged use of diesel generators during massive power outages would have drastic and outsized effects on air pollution in communities located near data centers.

To prevent this type of pollution, localities must require data centers to use the newest, cleanest generators available. But our state governments are headed in the opposite direction. In Maryland, the 2024 General Assembly passed legislation (HB574/SB474) that grants data centers unfettered use of diesel generators.

Health Impacts

Data centers' diesel-fuel air pollution presents significant dangers to the health and wellbeing of people. Diesel pollution increases the risk of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and worsening respiratory illnesses like asthma. Data centers' increased greenhouse gas emissions exacerbate the negative impacts of climate change including heat island effects, increased flooding, and more.

In July 2024, Fairfax County, VA approved a data center site next to a mobile home community, with polluting diesel generators located just 50 feet from the community property line. This kind of inequitable siting of data centers further endangers communities least able to protect themselves, Data centers frequently clear trees and forests to make way for their massive, noisy buildings, shrinking our already limited wildlife habitat and eliminating the natural noise barrier that can shield communities from the disruptive noise data centers produce around the clock.

Water Impacts

Data centers generate extreme amounts of heat. Evaporative cooling, using water, has been used as a cooling solution by data centers. But that technique drains and depletes local water resources. Numerous studies have documented vast consumption of water that puts ground water and drinking water supplies at risk. For example, an Amazon campus in Louisa County, VA, plans to withdraw 620,000 gallons per day at full build-out. Texas Tech University reports that "the typical data center uses about 3-5 million gallons of water per day. That's the same amount of water consumption as a city of 30,000-50,000 people." You can see why Nature Forward is fighting hard for better environmental regulations on data centers. Join us in that fight!



Solutions

Data centers' impacts on our climate are big, and that is why our push to make them sustainable must be bigger. Help Nature Forward push for more sustainable data centers by:

- Educate your friends, family and local elected leaders on data centers' environmental impact. Watch Nature Forward's Conservation Cafe's on data centers and share them with two family members.
- Sign up for Nature Forward's [Action Alerts](#) to stay informed on Nature Forward's advocacy work to make data centers more sustainable in VA and MD.
- Volunteer with Nature Forward to work with our Conservation Advocates on making data centers more sustainable.



Scan the QR Code to sign up for data center updates.

Class Act: Nature Forward Bids Farewell to Outstanding Leader

by Lisa Goodnight

“What makes me proud is that this organization is always evolving, looking for ways to improve and reach new people around the area,” says Nature Forward Educator Gina Ghertner. Her comments aptly describe the legacy of Executive Director Lisa Alexander, who has helped Nature Forward evolve.

As Lisa’s retirement approaches, the Nature Forward community is expressing gratitude for a consequential and visionary leader.

“Lisa Alexander sparked rebirth at Nature Forward—by listening, learning, and imagining what could be. She invited us to blaze new trails with her,” says Nature Forward Board President Nancy Voit. “Remember the phrase ‘We all need nature and nature needs all of us.’ Lisa used that to welcome everyone to join our movement to save nature right here where we live.”



Lisa’s career highlights include launching GreenKids, an award-winning program that has been delivering free environmental education to thousands of public school students for 20 years. Lisa jumped into the fight to Save Ten Mile Creek, working with Nature Forward’s dedicated water quality monitors and allies to protect our region’s last best creek and the emergency drinking water supply for four million area residents. She co-created the Creek Critters smartphone water quality app that has helped more than 72,000 people check on the health of local streams.

Lisa led the Nature for All campaign to transform Woodend Sanctuary. Her close relationship with Nature Forward members

“I just read that Lisa Alexander is retiring soon. Huge thanks to her for her service. Nature Forward is a source of light, inspiration, and education for kids and adults. I’m grateful to her for everything Nature Forward does to strengthen my bond with nature!”

—CHRISTOPHER LANCETTE,
NATURE FORWARD MEMBER

convinced Lisa that restoring Woodend would unite and excite our community. Today, the sanctuary's biodiverse habitats flourish, with abundant plant, bird, insect, reptile and amphibian populations soaring. And our restoration team now uses its expertise to launch habitat restoration projects across the region.

Cutting the ribbons on the wheelchair accessible Nature Trail and the Nature Play Space at Woodend stand out as cherished highlights for Lisa. And it warms her heart to see people of all ages and abilities immersing themselves in Woodend's habitats. "Everyone deserves to spend time in nature," she says.

Lisa takes pride in Nature Forward's commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA). "What started as a focus on diversifying our staff blossomed into a defining strategy for the organization. We have successfully increased staff and Board diversity and launched two signature conferences for environmental professionals of color, Taking Nature Black and Naturally Latinos." These accomplishments advance Nature Forward's vision of creating a larger, more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it.

Under Lisa's guidance, Nature Forward became the first, original Audubon organization to change its name. "Our name change is an extension of our commitment to Nature for All. We are leading the way to ensure everyone feels welcome in and has access to nature," she explains. Since our name change, more than 20 Audubon organizations have changed their names as well. And Lisa regularly receives calls for advice from organizations considering a name change.

Before assuming the top post, Lisa served as both Deputy Director and Director of Environmental Education. "When the University of Maryland Extension launched Master Naturalists, I knew we had to get on board! I'm delighted that Nature Forward was the first organization in Montgomery County to host the Master Naturalist Program," Lisa reflects. Our Master Naturalist program trains wonderfully dedicated Nature Forward volunteers.

When asked to narrow down her impressive career into three big days, Lisa says there are too many to count! But she shares these memories: "1) The March for Science, that galvanized the Nature Forward community and thousands more to head to Capitol Hill and proudly demonstrate our firm belief in science, the reality of climate change, and our commitment to an environmentally sustainable future." 2) Woodend Nature Sanctuary's first deer drive when we gently moved more than 30 deer outside the deer fence and launched the restoration of our headquarters. 3) Shedding tears while closing the office and sending everyone home in the wake of the pandemic...but then marveling as our staff, Board, and members rallied in supportive and creative ways to ensure Nature Forward weathered the pandemic and emerged stronger than ever before."

"It has been a tonic to work at Nature Forward with so many people dedicated to making the world a better place for people and the natural world. Everything we accomplish is a collective effort. I admire the brains, commitment, and generosity the Nature Forward community brings to advancing our mission work for nature," Lisa says.

Now, she looks forward to spending more time in nature and with her family upon her planned departure in January 2025.

"My husband and I have daytrips, camping trips and international travel on our horizon. My mom and I will visit the Brandywine Valley to see Longwood Gardens' meadow that inspired Woodend's meadow restoration and check out native plants at Mt. Cuba Center," Lisa explains. "But wherever I go, Woodend and Nature Forward will always be close to my heart."

We'll recognize Lisa's many achievements at the Annual Meeting in October. See page 40 for details.



Maryland

Data Centers

Together with state and local advocates and legislators, Nature Forward is working hard to make the current status of data centers in Maryland more transparent. At the state level, Governor Moore assembled data center workgroup behind closed doors. No public information has been released about the workgroup, despite the fact that Nature Forward has been requesting that information for months. Nothing has been revealed about the membership of the workgroup, its meeting schedule, meeting minutes of the formal process for being appointed to the workgroup. This mysterious workgroup is directly tied to the MD General Assembly legislation SB474/HB579, the law that approved air polluting diesel generators for use in data centers. Nature Forward continues to push for transparency about this workgroup and for a seat at the table. Our advocates are fighting to be heard as we advocate for policies that balance the health of communities and the local environment against our growing data needs.

The data center industry is rapidly expanding into Maryland. Data Center Dynamics reports that two data centers are in the works for Prince George's County, including approval for a new data center to be built by the Lenner Company on the former 87-acre Landover mall site. In addition, TPC Data Centers has been approved to build a 20 megawatt data center in Laurel near the Burtonsville substation. And on the horizon, the Baltimore Banner reports that there is a proposal to build a 70-mile transmission line that would run through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties and would directly, negatively impact wildlife and farmers in these regions. We can't take our eyes off data centers, a new and growing threat to the environmental health of our region.



Youth protest against upcoming MD transition lines in farmlands for data centers.

FAMILY ECOWALK

SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

9 am - 12 pm

Meet us at Quebec Street/North Branch Trail next to Langley Park McCormick Elementary School. Learn about the plants and animals that live in the park and creek along the Northwest Branch trail!

REGISTER by scanning the code

FREE

8201 15TH AVENUE, ADELPHI, MD 20783

www.langleyparkcivic.org



9th Annual Festival del Rio Anacostia
Prince George's County

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2024
11 AM-4 PM

FREE ADMISSION & PARKING

Bring your family to celebrate the outdoors and the Anacostia River at the 9th Annual Festival del Rio Anacostia! Enjoy hands-on activities, crafts, entertainment, delicious food, fishing demos, live animals, and free boat rides and giveaways.

For more information, scan the QR code, call 301-779-0371, or send an email to anacostiariverfest@gmail.com

BLADENSBURG WATERFRONT PARK
4601 ANNAPOLIS ROAD, BLADENSBURG 20710

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS NOT SPONSORING, ENDORSING, OR RECOMMENDING THE ACTIVITIES ANNOUNCED IN THIS FLYER/MATERIAL.



Virginia

Data Centers have been front and center in Nature Forward’s advocacy work in Virginia’s Fairfax County. Our Northern Virginia Conservation Advocate, Renee Grebe, has been speaking up in favor of strengthened regulations. Renee responded to a 2024 Fairfax County staff report that outlined impacts of data centers on land and energy use, water consumption, air and water quality, and noise pollution. The County staff report recommended addressing negative environmental impacts caused by data centers by changing zoning ordinances, updating the county’s comprehensive plan, and amending permitting processes.

When the Data Center Zoning Ordinance Amendment went out for public comment, Renee Grebe testified in support of stronger regulations on data centers before the Fairfax County Planning Commission on June 5, and again before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisor on July 16. The Board of Supervisors deferred its final decision until July 30. But because the County failed to provide proper public notice of the July 16 and July 30 hearings, those hearings must be held again.

On September 10, the date of the new public hearing, you can count on Renee and Nature Forward testify in favor of stronger environmental regulations on data centers. And we’ll continue our hard work in the community, educating and empowering residents to speak up for data center policies that will protect the health and welfare of people and wildlife. You can follow updates on our blog: <https://natureforward.org/fxco-stronger-data-center-zoa/>.



A data center in Loudoun County.



Zoning Ordinance Amendment hearing on improving regulations on data center zoning in Fairfax County



**Public Hearing on a Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Re: Data Centers**

Renee Grebe, VA Conservation Advocate, testifying for improved data center zoning before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

DC

DC Council Passes and Funds the Healthy Homes Act!

There’s an old advocate adage that says, “Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint.” This is the case when it came to Nature Forward’s work in getting the Healthy Homes for All Act passed. Our journey to pass the Health Homes for All Act started back in 2020 when our former DC Conservation Advocate Ari Eisenstadt and other community partners worked together to identify nearly 400 outdoor methane gas leaks in DC. Together, they formed the Beyond Gas Coalition to raise awareness with DC communities and leaders on the dangers of methane gas.

After years of giving testimony at agency hearings, talking to elected officials, and galvanizing volunteers and residents, Nature Forward’s new DC Conservation Advocate Jamoni Overby and the Coalition hit a breakthrough in its advocacy through two key developments in 2022. First, the DC Council passed the Climate Commitment Amendment Act and the Clean Energy DC Building Code Amendment, which worked together to set net-zero greenhouse gas emissions goals with specific goals set to decarbonize the city’s homes and buildings. Secondly, Stanford University published a study that found that gas stoves leak significant amounts of methane even when turned off, creating a climate impact equivalent to 500,000 gas-powered cars.

These breakthroughs helped us to work with DC Councilmember Charles Allen to craft a bill that would provide 30,000 low-to-moderate income families with electrification retrofits, improving indoor air quality, health outcomes, and housing conditions—the Healthy Homes for All Act. We were in the final stretches of our advocacy marathon, but there was still work to do. Continued outreach resulted in the bill being funded in the 2023



DC Budget and Oversight Hearings and then passed in the 2024 Budget and Oversight Hearings. Four years, 300 home visits and countless advocacy hours equal one priceless bill.

Sally Winthrop, Nature Forward volunteer (right) and Jamoni Overby, DC Conservation Advocate (left) at Beyond Gas Advocacy Day to speak with council members about passing and preserving funding for Healthy Homes Act.

YOGA, BIRDS AND BOCADITOS

Featuring Naturally Latinos speaker *María Elena Montero*

CONSERVATION CAFÉ

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9 • 5:00-6:30 PM • WOODEND SANCTUARY

Stream Science

Water Quality Monitoring Update Summer 2024

In July and early August, Nature Forward volunteers monitored 27 stream sites in Washington DC, and Montgomery, Prince George's, and Howard Counties. One hundred nineteen volunteers participated in the Water Quality Monitoring program by conducting aquatic macroinvertebrate surveys to check on the health of our local streams. Nineteen volunteers monitored multiple sites.

Volunteers often tell us that Water Pennies are among their favorite finds while monitoring. Although not commonly spotted, these have been reported at 10 monitoring sites over the past two years including four of our Northwest Branch sites, Goshen Branch, Muddy Branch, a Ten Mile Creek tributary, Dark Branch, Hawlings River and the Middle Patuxent. We also found Water Pennies in June in Little Paint Branch during a field class with the Anacostia Watershed Society's "Watershed Stewards Academy"—a first after surveying the site with this group for eight years.

These macroinvertebrates are the aquatic larvae of a type of beetle that emerges from the water to pupate and become a terrestrial adult. They are well camouflaged, clinging tightly to submerged rocks and creeping slowly as they scrape and feed on algae from the rocks' surfaces. Water Pennies are indicators of good stream health.



Top view of a water penny. Photo by Gregg Trilling



Bottom view of a water penny. Note the white gills, six legs, and head. Photo by Charlie Dorian



Visit our Water Quality Monitoring page to learn more:
<https://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



Join our Nature Preschool Acorns Program



Acorns is a 75-minute, all outdoor program for children from birth up to 4 years of age. The classes are led by a Nature Preschool teacher and meet at Woodend Nature Sanctuary on Wednesdays or Thursdays every week from September through May. In Acorns, you will experience what it's like to be in Nature Preschool by participating in a welcome circle with songs and storybooks, learning about nature while you hike, and socializing and crafting with an intimate group of families!

Please inquire with our Preschool Director, Rose Brusafferro, to learn more about the benefits of learning alongside your toddler as you connect with and investigate the natural world through Fall, Winter, and Spring. Email rose.brusafferro@natureforward.org or call 301-652-8108 or register at www.natureforward.org/preschool/.



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)

Thursday, October 3, 2024

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Monday, March 31, 2025

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, classic camp games, and building forts. Come prepared to get dirty and have fun.

Fall Mini Camp (Grades K-5)

Monday and Tuesday, November 4 and 5, 2024

8:45 am – 5:00 pm

Members \$265; nonmembers \$305

Breathe in the crisp autumn air and join us for a two-day camp full of fall outdoor fun at Woodend Sanctuary! Hike through crunching leaves, get creatively crafty, play games, and build friendships. You must sign up for both days.

Spring Break Camp Grades K-5

Monday, April 14–Thursday, April 17, 2025

8:45 am – 3:00 pm

Members \$395; nonmembers \$455

Extended camp available until 5:15 pm for \$130

Get a taste of what Camp Woodend has to offer and experience the wonders of Spring with a four-day camp at our Woodend Sanctuary! Catch frogs in the pond, hike to Rock Creek, explore the arrival of spring flowers in the meadow and take a trip to the learning garden.

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

Bilingual walks offered on September 14 and October 26
from 9:30-10:30 am for free

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



2025 Camp Woodend Season



Tell your friends! Registration for the 2025 camp season will open to members on Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 10 am. Look for your catalog in the mail in late December.

Camp Woodend: It's a Wrap!

Our wonderful campers, parents, teachers, interns, TNTs, and JRCs made this summer camp season another great one! Thank you all! We welcomed nearly 500 youth from around the DMV to Camp Woodend and awarded a record number of scholarships. We collaborated with a community partner in the Long Branch neighborhood of Silver Spring to provide 14 of our scholarship campers with transportation to Camp Woodend on Nature Forward's Butterfly Bus. This camp season was also historic for its first use of the Nature Play Space. Campers, especially our younger participants, played, learned, and explored this accessible feature. Special thanks to camp parent Songbae Lee for generously donating a visit by Clayboy's Shaved Ice during the week of July 22 allowing all campers to enjoy a cold treat. Look for your 2025 Camp Woodend Catalog in the mail in mid/late December. Registration will open to members on Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 10 am.





2025 Camp Season

Tell your friends! Registration for the 2025 camp season will open to members on Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 10 am.

The Crowder-Messersmith Fund 2024 Grantees

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

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 awarded their 2024 grants to the following eight groups, with an average award of \$3,000. Two countries are first-time recipients of the grant: Albania and Kazakhstan.

- **Nepal:** Establishing community seedling nurseries to promote ex-situ restoration of the endangered East Himalayan Yew tree in community forests of Parbat;
- **Albania:** Protecting the "Costal Marvels", the data deficient Bull and endangered Spiny Butterfly Rays, in the Southern Adriatic;
- **Peru:** Educating the Awajun indigenous people in the Tropical Andes of Peru regarding the critically endangered Yellow-Tailed Woolly Monkey that lives in their forests;
- **Kenya:** Establishing Bird Clubs in schools within the Important Bird Areas and Ramsar site of Lake of Nakuru and Lake Elementeita to develop awareness of the need to protect the areas birds;
- **Cameroon:** Developing community awareness for endangered species conservation in Mount Muanenguba Herpeto-Ornithological Sanctuary, in the South West and littoral regions of Cameroon;
- **Mexico:** Spreading local awareness of the most endangered turtle in Mexico, the Vallarta Mud Turtle;
- **Kazakhstan:** Promoting sustainable conservation of the vulnerable Central Asian Tortoise through educational outreach and field trips with schoolchildren; and
- **Kenya:** Working through conflict to coexistence in saving Kenya's most dreaded reptiles, many of which are endangered, and their predators in Baringo County.

Reports of last year's successfully completed projects are coming in. A few are highlighted below.

2023 Grantees



Cameroon: Mount Muaneguba community members were trained in sustainable beekeeping, organic farming, and apiforestry to reduce deforestation pressures affecting species of conservation concern.



Nepal: Students in eastern Nepal learned why and how to protect endangered pangolins and a group of community forest users were trained to patrol against illegal activities.

Volunteer Spotlight: Water Quality Monitoring Team Leader, Wendy Duke

I started volunteering with Nature Forward (then known as the Audubon Naturalist Society) in 2009. As a mom with young-ish children, I thought it would be a nice thing to do as a family. Well, after taking the introductory classes and field class, I was ready to jump in with two feet, but, my family didn't share my enthusiasm. Not to be deterred, I leaned into volunteering anyway. Since I live in Frederick County, I wanted to monitor a stream that wasn't too far from me. I worked with Cathy Wiss to find a new site to open. We decided on Dark Branch in Little Bennett Regional Park. I'll never forget the first time in April 2010 when our new team first monitored our reach. Because the benthic macroinvertebrate diversity is quite healthy, there were SO many different benthic macs to identify! Our little team of three felt a bit overwhelmed, but we loved the challenge.

Since that first official monitoring day 14 years ago, the team has evolved but many members have continued to monitor. It always feels like a little team reunion when we get together.



Doing the deep dive (pun intended) of assessing stream health also gives me a true appreciation of how streams fit into the overall health of an ecosystem. Because of this holistic view, I'm also a volunteer for Montgomery Park's Weed Warrior program with a little team that focuses a lot of our energy on removing non-native invasive plants from around Dark Branch. This helps protect the stream and the surrounding floodplain.

My husband and I live in Ijamsville along with our cat, Basil. Our two kids are now "grown and flown." In addition to my volunteer work, I work for Visit Frederick. I love to read, hike (especially in Little Bennett Regional Park), do genealogy research, and travel.

"I love volunteering with all of the like-minded people who not only enjoy being outdoors but also want to really get to know how to assess a stream's health and appreciate the adorable critters that call Dark Branch home."

—WENDY DUKE

Fall in Love with Nature this Autumn!

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

SCAN TO REGISTER



Natural Heritage Series: Fall in Love with the River City

Tuesday, September 3 (11 am) to Wednesday, September 4 (6 pm)

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Location: Richmond, Virginia

Members \$180; nonmembers \$228

Join Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall on a rare opportunity to encounter an ancient, endangered giant fish. In the first two weeks of September each year, Atlantic Sturgeon migrate upriver to spawn. As they travel, they breach out of the water and land back with an enormous splash. Experience what the locals playfully call “James River Whale Watching” with a pontoon boat ride, canoe paddle, and series of guided walks along the river. We won’t just admire fish from afar—on our pontoon boat ride, we’ll conduct a scientific collection trawl to learn about the fauna of tidal freshwater ecosystems. Bald Eagles and lingering Osprey will fish alongside us as we identify Hogchokers, White Perch, Bryozoa, and more. We’ll get a tour of Presquile National Wildlife Refuge, a hidden gem and Important Bird Area that few members of the public get to visit. The following day, we’ll follow along the fall zone in a series of walks and explorations through the James River Parks System—a thriving greenway along the river with rich plant life, bird life, and history. They don’t call Richmond the “River City” for nothing!



Program cost covers field activities only; we'll share information about lodging and food options to all registrants. This trip requires a level of physical fitness to be able to walk up to two miles at a time at a relaxed pace; to sit, stand, and climb short stairs; to enter and exit a canoe (with assistance); and to gently paddle a canoe on flat water. Genevieve may adjust the order of activities if needed to best serve the needs of the trip. Please also note that while we can put ourselves in the best possible position to witness sturgeon breaches, we cannot guarantee everyone will see one.

Fall Birding Series

- A: Thursday, September 5 (Paul Pisano) – Rock Creek Park Nature Center, 7-9:30 am**
B: Friday, September 20 (Liz Guertin) – Huntley Meadows, 8-10:30 am
C: Saturday, September 28 (Len Bisson) – Blue Mash, 8-10:30 am
D: Sunday, October 6 (Rob Hilton/Lisa Shannon) – Dyke Marsh, 8-10:30 am
E: Saturday, October 19 (Mark England) – Blue Mash, 8-10:30 am
F: Friday, November 1 (Rob Hilton/Lisa Shannon) – Lake Artemesia, 8-10:30 am
G: Sunday, November 17 (Len Bisson) – Hughes Hollow, 8-10:30 am
H: Monday, November 25 (Paul Pisano) – Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, 8:30-11 am
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 catch 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.*

Getting to Know the Ancients

- Monday, September 9 (9:30 am-12:30 pm)**
Leader: Kit Sheffield
Location: Rachel Carson Conservation Park
Members \$35, nonmembers \$49

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 identifying ferns in their natural habits and find out more about their life histories. *We will cover 3-4 miles on well maintained, fairly flat trails. The walk will be mostly shaded but the first and last section will be through a sunny meadow.*

Midweek Meanders Along the Canal

- Wednesdays (10-12:30 pm)**
A: September 11 (Riley's Lock)
B: September 25 (Pennyfield Lock)
C: October 9 (Carderock)
D: October 23 (Violette's Lock)
E: November 6 (Swain's Lock)
F: November 20 (Widewater)
Leader: Stephanie Mason
Each walk members \$33, nonmembers \$46

Enjoy one or more of these leisurely late-summer through late-fall strolls on relatively close-in portions of the C&O Canal's historic towpath which see less foot and bicycle traffic on weekdays than weekends. The focus of these naturalist-led walks will be the rich natural history of the varied habitats long the Potomac River and the Canal. We'll proceed at a "naturalist's shuffle" pace, stopping often to observe and enjoy seasonal plant and animal life, including birds, fall wildflowers and foliage, butterflies, snakes, turtles – and whatever else we might find. *The towpath is flat, but could be muddy and/or uneven. Access to the towpath at Riley's Lock includes a steep incline or stairs.*

Beneficial Bats in Your Belfry

- Thursday, September 12 (7-8:30 pm)**
Leader: Kerry Wixted
Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary
Members \$20, nonmembers \$28

Join naturalist Kerry Wixted to learn about the wonderful world of bats around the world and here in Maryland. Kerry will discuss bat facts, will bust bat myths, and will talk about declining bat populations and what can be done on local and regional scales to help them. After the lecture, we'll head outside to view some of the bat activity at Woodend.

Late Summer Wings and Wildflowers

- Sunday, September 15 (8:30-11:30 am)**
Leader: Stephanie Mason
Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

DC's inside-the-Beltway Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens sits on the east bank of the Anacostia River where it protects freshwater tidal wetlands and the wildlife that depends on them. It's an ideal spot to spend a September morning looking for still-active butterflies and other insects, migrant and resident birds, and other wildlife against the backdrop of late-summer blooms and fruiting trees and shrubs. *Expect up to a couple miles of walking under open and sunny conditions on natural surface trails and a boardwalk that could be muddy and/or slippery.*

Tours at Woodend Nature Sanctuary

Family Walks in the Woods

Saturdays: 9/7, 10/5, 11/2, 12/7 (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.

Bilingual Walks: 9/14, 10/26 (9:30-10:30 am) FREE

Saturday Morning Bird Walk

Saturdays: 9/14, 10/12, 11/9, 12/14 (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.

Bilingual Walks: 10/12, 11/2 (9:30-10:30 am) FREE

Natural Habitats of Woodend

Friday, 10/18 (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.

Notable Trees of Woodend

Fridays: 11/8 (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.

Native Plant Gardens of Woodend

Fridays: 9/20 (10-11:30 am)

Members \$12; nonmembers \$16

Join Restoration Director Alice Sturm in the exploration of the many native plant gardens Woodend has to offer.

Fridays Along the River

A: September 20 (9:30 am-2:30 pm)

B: October 11 (9:30 am-2:30 pm)

C: November 8 (10 am-2:30 pm)

D: December 6 (10 am-2:30 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Widewater on the C&O Canal

Each walk members \$35; nonmembers \$49

An elder of a Native American tribe from the Pacific Northwest advised: *There is more to be learned by climbing the same mountain a hundred times than by climbing a hundred different mountains.* Following this admonition, we're offering this series of broad-based nature explorations along the Potomac River's C&O Canal and its varied habitats—from upland rocky woods to rich floodplain forests. Our monthly hikes will return each month to a stretch of towpath moving from the Widewater access upriver to Great Falls. Here we'll traverse the bridges out to the Falls overlook—and after enjoying the drama and din of the tumbling water, we'll retrace our steps back to our starting point for a total of around 4 miles. We'll experience lingering summer in September, autumn's colorful transformations in October and November, and then the arrival of winter's open landscapes in December. On each walk, we'll keep our eyes and ears open for the changing seasonal activity of wildlife and plant life. *These hikes will move faster and farther than our usual naturalists' shuffle.*

Autumn Marvels by Metro

Saturdays (10 am-12:30 pm)

A: September 21 – Rosslyn Metro Station, near Theodore Roosevelt Island

B: October 12 – Cleveland Park Metro Station, near Klingle Valley Trail in Rock Creek Park

C: November 23 – College Park Metro Station, near Lake Artemesia

Leader: Genevieve Wall

Each walk members \$33, nonmembers \$46

You don't need to go far by car to enjoy the great outdoors! In this series, we'll explore the progression of autumn one metro stop at a time. As we venture through serene river views, lush stream valleys, and lakeside trails of these metro-accessible parks, we'll learn about the wildlife and natural history that we encounter along the way. *The leader will meet you at the metro right outside the exit turnstile. Expect a 5-10 minute walk from metro station to the trail entrance. We will wander the trails, traveling at the pace of curiosity and stopping often to learn about whatever we encounter along the way.*



Photo by Mark Ruf

Forest Bathing at Woodend Sanctuary

A: Saturday, September 21 (10 am-12 pm)

Leader: Adria Zeldin

B: Saturday, October 19 (10 am-12 pm)

Leader: Raquel Pinto

C: Saturday, November 23 (10 am-12 pm)

Leader: Ana Ka’ahanui

Members \$30; nonmembers \$40

Join our Forest Bathing guides for a soothing mindfulness walk through the forests of Woodend. Forest Bathing originated in Japan and is meant to help de-stress and boost health and wellbeing by immersing oneself in nature and reconnecting with their senses.

A Little Bit of Everything at Violette’s Lock

Fridays (10 am-12:30 pm)

A: September 27

B: October 25

Leaders: Marney Bruce and Lisa Shannon

Location: Violette’s Lock

Each walk members \$33, nonmembers \$46

Come join Marney Bruce and Lisa Shannon on one or both of these fun, easygoing fall walks along the C&O Canal. With Marney focusing on plants and Lisa, birds and insects, we’ll be looking at and talking about just about everything there is to see there. We’ll be going to Violette’s both times in order to see the changes as fall progresses.

Fantastic Fungi and Where to Find Them

A: Tuesday, October 1 (10 am-12 pm): Woodend Nature Sanctuary

B: Saturday, October 5 (10 am-12 pm): Cabin John Regional Park, MD

Leader: Serenella Linares

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Join Mycologist Serenella Linares in a visit to two of her favorite mushroom hunting spots: Woodend Nature Sanctuary and Cabin John Regional Park. These fantastic spaces are home to some of the most attractive species of fungi found during the fall months: eyelash cup fungi, indigo milk-cap, and bleeding bonnets at Woodend, and red chanterelles, witches butter, walnut mycenae, eyelash cup fungi, smoky spindles at Cabin John – and so much more! Learn about the fungal relationships and natural phenomena associated with the fungi species at each site (loupes provided for the duration of the program). We will move at a very slow pace to observe and enjoy all the mushrooms popping up in the fungi-extravaganza season: fall.

Natural Heritage Series: Play for Days in the Pine Barrens

Thursday, October 3 (10 am)-Friday, October 4 (5 pm)

Leader: Liz Guertin

Location: Pine Barrens, New Jersey

Members \$120; nonmembers \$168

Covering a quarter of the state of New Jersey, the sandy, coastal Pine Barrens are a world set apart from the endless city corridor between New York and Philadelphia. When established in 1978, the Pinelands National Reserve encompassed 1.1 million acres and remains the “largest tract of wild land along the Middle Atlantic Seaboard.” (quote by President Jimmy Carter). In this two-day whirlwind, we’ll go deep into an Atlantic white cedar swamp, see some stumpy pines and blackjack oak in one of the world’s few pygmy forests, wander along its breathtaking bogs, witness the fall cranberry harvest, and enjoy the fall bird migration along the Atlantic Flyway. Woven into our exploration, we’ll step back in time to think about the significance of the Pines on the Revolutionary War, its role as an industrial hub in early America, and as a culture set apart from the mainstream. We’ll take in a local favorite eatery or two (and PIE).

Program cost covers field activities only; we’ll share information about lodging and food options to all registrants. Note: This trip requires a level of physical fitness to be able to walk up to two (very flat) miles at a relaxed pace. We’ll walk a couple miles at least a couple times over two days. The Pinelands are quite spread out, so while our agenda attempts to keep driving times reasonable, there will be about 75 minutes of driving per day.

Prowling for Owls

Saturday, October 5 (7-9:30 pm)

Leader: Mark England

Location: Black Hill Regional Park

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.*

Rock Creek Rendezvous

Tuesday, October 8 (10:30 am-1 pm)

Leader: Marney Bruce

Location: Rock Creek Nature Center

Members \$33, nonmembers \$46

Join Marney Bruce on a 2-mile loop through Rock Creek Park! We'll set off downhill through rich forest to Rock Creek, where we will follow the creek along a scenic section with boulders and rapids. After the Rapids Bridge we will head back uphill through forest to the parking area. We will walk through a number of natural habitats in a short distance. Marney has lists of more than twenty species of trees and shrubs along this route, so get set for some tree ID! Restrooms available at the Rock Creek Nature Center.

Hawk Watching at Waggoner's Gap

Thursday, October 10 (10:30 am-4 pm)

Rain date: Friday, October 11

Leaders: Gemma Radko and Genevieve Wall

Location: Waggoner's Gap, PA

Members \$35, nonmembers \$49

Fall brings thousands of migrating raptors – hawks, falcons, eagles, and their allies – to the Appalachian Ridges and Atlantic coast. Our field trip goes to one of the premier hawk-watching sites in the area: Pennsylvania's Waggoner's Gap, about a 2.5-hour drive from DC. Over the course of the day, we'll learn how to ID raptors as they fly far overhead, and dive into the life history of these fascinating animals. Getting to the hawk-watch lookout – you'll want to bundle up for this rocky and open-air viewing site! – requires walking up a short, but rocky, trail to an outcropping of perched boulders.

Sparrows and Finches: An Introduction to the Season's LBJs

Lecture: Thursday, October 17, 7-9:30 pm (Woodend Nature Sanctuary) (Mike Bowen)

Field Trip A: Sunday, October 20, 8-11:30 am (Blue Mash) (Mike Bowen & Anne Cianni)

Field Trip B: Saturday, November 2, 8:30-11:30 am (Occoquan Bay NWR) (Rob Hilton & Lisa Shannon)

Lecture: members \$20, nonmembers \$28

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

It's that time of year when sparrows and finches can present beginning to mid-level birders with some of their most difficult ID challenges. Feeling that way about yourself? You're invited to join one (or both) of our field tutorials for an introduction to the most common sparrows and finches in our region during this season. Tips for recognizing plumage, voice, habitat preferences and more will be shared by our teacher-leader teams. To help you prepare for the walks, leader Mike Bowen will present an optional illustrated photo & vocalization lecture at our Woodend Sanctuary. Registration for the lecture is separate from the walks.

Fern Basics and Reproduction

Friday, October 18 (9:30 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Kit Sheffield

Location: Great Falls, VA

Members \$35, nonmembers \$49

We will learn about the identification, evolutionary history, and myriad reproductive strategies of ferns on a walk along the Swamp Trail in Great Falls Park, Virginia. Our walk will cover less than two miles on trails that are mostly flat and well maintained. There is one ten-foot section of the trail that requires navigating a rocky area. Fee covers field activities only; park pass or entry fee are required to access Great Falls, VA.



Introduction to Tree ID

Tuesday, October 22 (10 am-2:30 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary

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 identification 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.

Outdoor Wellness for Mind and Heart

Saturday, October 26 (9 am-12 pm)

Leader: Lorena Saavedra Smith

Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary

Members \$35; nonmembers \$49

Join this transformative outdoor program to navigate life's challenges, which often induce feelings of being alone and overwhelmed, leading to self-neglect. Embrace the fall season's essence of rest and renewal. Through practical guidance, participants learn to prioritize self-care, find solace in nature, and recover strength and resilience amidst external turmoil. Cultivate mature compassion within a supportive community, understanding that nature is a loyal ally.

Wander at the Wetland Wonder

Sunday, October 27 (3-5 pm)

Leader: Rita Peralta

Location: Dyke Marsh, VA

Members \$33; nonmembers \$46

Join naturalist and Naturally Latinos speaker Rita Peralta for a walk on the wild side at Dyke Marsh. Tidal freshwater marshes are gems of biodiversity and play an important role in filtering water and mitigating floods and storm surges. On this wander, we'll explore the trails and boardwalks of Dyke Marsh, and encounter wildlife like bald eagles and beavers. When you take a walk on the wild side, you never know what you'll find. *Expect a mixture of paved and natural surface trails; depending on rainfall, some muddy and puddly terrain may be possible.*

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

Fall on Wheels

Thursday, October 31 (9 am-2 pm)

Leader: Stephanie Mason

Geology at Theodore Roosevelt Island

Sunday, November 3 (1-4 pm)

Leader: Joe Marx

Forest Bathing at Theodore Roosevelt Island

Wednesday, November 6 (9:30 am-12:30 pm)

Leader: Melanie Choukas-Bradley

Botanical Gems at Hoyles Mill

Thursday, November 7 (9:30 am-12 pm)

Leader: Carole Bergmann

Take Nothing But Pictures: Nature Phone-tography

Friday, November 15 (8-11 am)

Leader: Liz Guertin

On the Prowl for Winter Waterfowl

Lecture: Thursday, November 21 (7-9:30 pm)
(Woodend Nature Sanctuary)

Field Trip: Saturday, November 23 (8-11:30 am)
(Gunner's Lake, MD)

Leaders: Mike Bowen & Anne Cianni

Botanical Drawing in Pencil

Monday, December 2 (10 am-1 pm)

Leader: Jen Brown

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

Wildlife Ecology

NATH8265E, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Mondays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: September 9-November 18 (No class November 11)

Lectures online via Zoom

Field trip dates: Saturday, September 21, 9:30 am-12 pm (Huntley Meadows); Saturday, October 12, 9:30 am-12:30 pm (Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens); Saturday, October 19, 9:30 am-2 pm (Occoquan Bay and Mason Neck NWR)

Instructor: Sally Valdes

Members \$390; nonmembers \$440



Photo by Sally Valdes

Gain an understanding of wildlife research methods, basics of life history, identification, population, community, and ecosystem ecology, management, and animal behavior. Find out how institutional missions and federal laws influence wildlife and habitat conservation, and how humans affect and are affected by wildlife in rural, suburban, and urban environments of the Mid-Atlantic region. Learn about the various threats faced by wildlife including invasive species, climate change, and the loss and degradation of habitats and the actions that individuals and communities can take to benefit wildlife.

Required books: None.

Recommended:

- *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Mid-Atlantic*—it has the advantage of including a variety of fauna and flora in one guide.
- *Wildlife of the Mid-Atlantic* by John Rappole—includes all terrestrial vertebrate species.

Non-Native and Invasive Plants of the Mid-Atlantic

NATH8319E, 1.5 CEUs

Class night and time: Tuesdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: September 17-October 15

Lectures via Zoom

Field trip dates: Saturday, September 28, 9 am-12 pm (Theodore Roosevelt Island); Saturday, October 5, 9 am-12 pm (Patapsco Valley State Park). Times may shift forward or back a half an hour to accommodate weather and park traffic.

Instructor: Paula Becker

Members \$210; nonmembers \$260

What IS the definition of “invasive” and why should we care? Consequences of invasive plants in mid-Atlantic natural areas may be medical, ecological, environmental, or economic. This course will explore the historical and ongoing arrival of invasives, look at their cultural, legal, and ecological significance, and focus time on identification of major species of concern in the mid-Atlantic and possible control measures. And we’ll look at how our choices have far-reaching effects. Two field trips to local parks will reinforce identification skills and emphasize current management issues.

Required books:

- *Mistaken Identity: Invasive Plants and Their Native Lookalikes* by Matthew Sarver: https://sarverecological.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/mistaken_identity.pdf

Recommended:

- *Invasive Plants: A Guide to Identification, Impacts, and Control of Common North American Species*. Author(s): Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman and Wallace Kaufman Publisher: Stackpole Books ISBN: 0811733653

US Conservation History

NATH8252, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Wednesdays, 1-3 pm

Class meetings: September 18-December 4 (no class October 9, November 27)

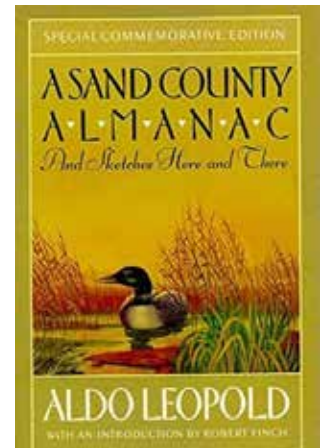
Lectures via Zoom; 11/20 and 12/4 hybrid with in-person option at Woodend

Field trip dates: Sunday, October 6; Sunday, October 27; Sunday, November 17 (all start 10 am)

Instructor: Eliza Cava

Members \$390; nonmembers \$440

This course examines the development of natural resources conservation and preservation thought and policy in the United States from the pre-colonial era through the early twenty-first century. The class considers how land and natural resources have been fundamental agents in shaping the lives of the country’s inhabitants and, in parallel, how Americans’ perceptions of the environment and its resources have shaped the natural world. Some of the topics studied include varying cultural views of nature and wilderness; U.S. land dispersal policies; the creation of National Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges; principal conservation policies from 1900-1964; the environmental and ecology movements from 1960-2000s; and the intersection of conservation with the climate and environmental justice movements of the 1990s-2020s. Students will learn about famous conservation “heroes” as both professionals and people, whose complicated, and often racist, views shaped patterns and divisions in the early conservation movements that continue to echo today. Students will explore the historical origins and development of a conservation topic of great interest to them with a written paper and class presentation. Field trips will visit sites of local conservation initiatives from different eras. Recommended reading: visit www.natureforward.org/nhfs for a reading list.



COMING IN JANUARY

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

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.

Costa Rica and Italy 2025 are FULL! By popular demand, we are exploring offering a second trip for each destination. If interested, contact pam.oves@natureforward.org to be notified of any updates on those second trips and/or to receive a detailed itinerary.

Costa Rica: A Trove of Tropical Birds—and Much More

January 31-February 12, 2025

(FILLED! Second option tentatively in March)

Leaders: Stephanie Mason & In-country guide Eddi Recio

Cost: \$5,475

The ABCs of Central Italy (Adventure, Birding, and Cuisine!)

April 29-May 8, 2025

(FILLED! Second option tentatively in May)

Leaders: Paul Pisano & Valerio G. Russo

Cost: \$6,595

NEW! Arctic Canada Expedition: Into the Northwest Passage

August 16-September 1, 2025

Leaders: Mark Garland and Martin Aldrich

Cost: \$10,872-\$21,747 per person depending on cabin.

Charter and international flights extra.

Visit our website at natureforward.org/nature-travel for all the details!



Upcoming Destinations We're Considering

Oregon

Summer 2025

Arizona

Fall 2025

Iceland

Summer 2026

Peru

2026 or 2027

Cuba

2026 or 2027

Got somewhere you'd like us to travel? Let us know! Share feedback and destination ideas with us at pam.oves@natureforward.org.

FALL GARDENING AT WOODEND NATURE SHOP

Open daily 11am-3pm | Closed Sunday



Members receive 10% off!

Visit us at natureforward.org/shop or call (301) 652-3606.

woodend nature shop
BY NATURE FORWARD



Dear friends:

There's no wildlife experience on Earth that can match the wondrous experiences of an African safari. The scenery of East Africa is worth the trip on its own, with tree-dotted savannas stretching on for miles and rugged mountains punctuating the horizon in many locations. When you come over a rise and suddenly realize that you're close to a herd of elephants, zebras, giraffes, impalas, or other big mammals, you can't help but feel wonder and awe. Toss in the thrill of spotting predators – lion, leopard, cheetah, jackal, hyena, and others – and each day afield can bring countless highlights.

While the big mammals get all the headlines, East Africa supports a dazzling variety of bird life. Lilac-breasted Rollers and Superb Starlings and showy and widespread songbirds. Wet spots harbor many different herons, egrets, waterfowl, flamingos, and shorebirds often side by side with hippos. Glance skyward and you're likely to see soaring eagles, vultures, storks, or swallows. Curious and observant naturalists will also enjoy seeing African butterflies, beetles, frogs, and lizards, and some enormous crocodiles. Cultural experiences are also included, from meetings with pastoral Maasai natives to a wildlife rehabilitation project.

You are cordially invited to join Nature Forward for an unforgettable trip in March of 2025 to Kenya, a country long considered the premier safari destination. Our trip is organized by Classic Escapes, a US-based company known for organizing top quality trips to Africa and other locations around the world. Nature Forward has worked with Classic Escapes on all of our previous trips to Africa. Nature Forward Senior Naturalist Genevieve Wall and I will accompany the group and work with an outstanding team of native African naturalist guides. We'll travel in rugged and comfortable safari vehicles, with window seats for all, and stay in wonderfully comfortable lodges, enjoying outstanding meals and service.

This will be my 15th trip to Africa's safari region, and I'm just as excited for this trip as I was for my first, nearly 20 years ago. I look forward to sharing magical experiences with Nature Forward members.

*Asante sana (thank you),
Mark S. Garland*

Kenya: The African Adventure of a Lifetime

March 3-15, 2025, with optional extension until March 20

Leaders: Mark Garland & Albert Mitcho Karisa

Cost: \$12,595, or \$17,590 with the optional extension

Beloved Nature Travel leader Mark Garland returns for a sweeping, 13-day expedition in Kenya. After you arrive in Nairobi, your adventure will take you to the stunning scenery of Nairobi National Park; to the Yasabara Waterhole, the largest salt-lick in the Aberdare mountains; to the Great Rift Valley, where an ancient geologic fault line divides the landscape; to the biodiverse riparian habitats at Lake Nakuru, Lake Elmenteita, and Soysambu; and to wildlife sanctuaries that will allow you to encounter rare species like Black Rhino, Rothschild Giraffe, and Chimpanzee. You will also visit the Maasai Mara, the "Jewel of Africa," home to 500 species of birds. Along the way, you'll relax in superior accommodations and enjoy traditional Kenyan and Maasai cuisine. This is the African adventure of a lifetime. If you stay for the optional extension, you'll also experience the volcanic hills and rivers of Tsavo West National Park, where ancient baobab trees grow. You'll also visit an underwater observatory to safely observe hippos and crocodiles up-close. You'll end your adventure at Amboseli National Park, where the snow-capped peak of Mount Kilimanjaro towers into the heavens. Register with Classic Escapes by mailing in a registration form found at naturetravel.org/kenya.



Saluting Lisa Alexander's 20-year Career at Nature Forward



Breaking ground on Nature For All projects with MD Senator Jeff Waldstreicher during the pandemic.



Marching for science to let our decisionmakers know that facts matter.



Enjoying a moment with Rocky the Barred Owl, a frequent guest at Nature Forward events.



Celebrating completion of the Woodend 2065 Master Plan with planning team members Megan Carroll, Diane Lill, and Pearl Marks.



Introducing creek critters to GreenKids middle schoolers.



Smiling at the first Taking Nature Black in 2016 with conference planning committee members Shanita Rasheed, Kelli Holsendolph and Chanté Coleman.



Putting smiles on students faces through hands-on stormwater lessons.



Joyfully cutting the ribbon on the accessible nature trail with Board member Beth Ziebarth.



Woodend Sanctuary & Mansion

woodendsanctuary.org

Social and Corporate Events



Photos by Shelly Pate Photography



@woodendsanctuary

THANK YOU, nature forward **birdathon** SPONSORS!

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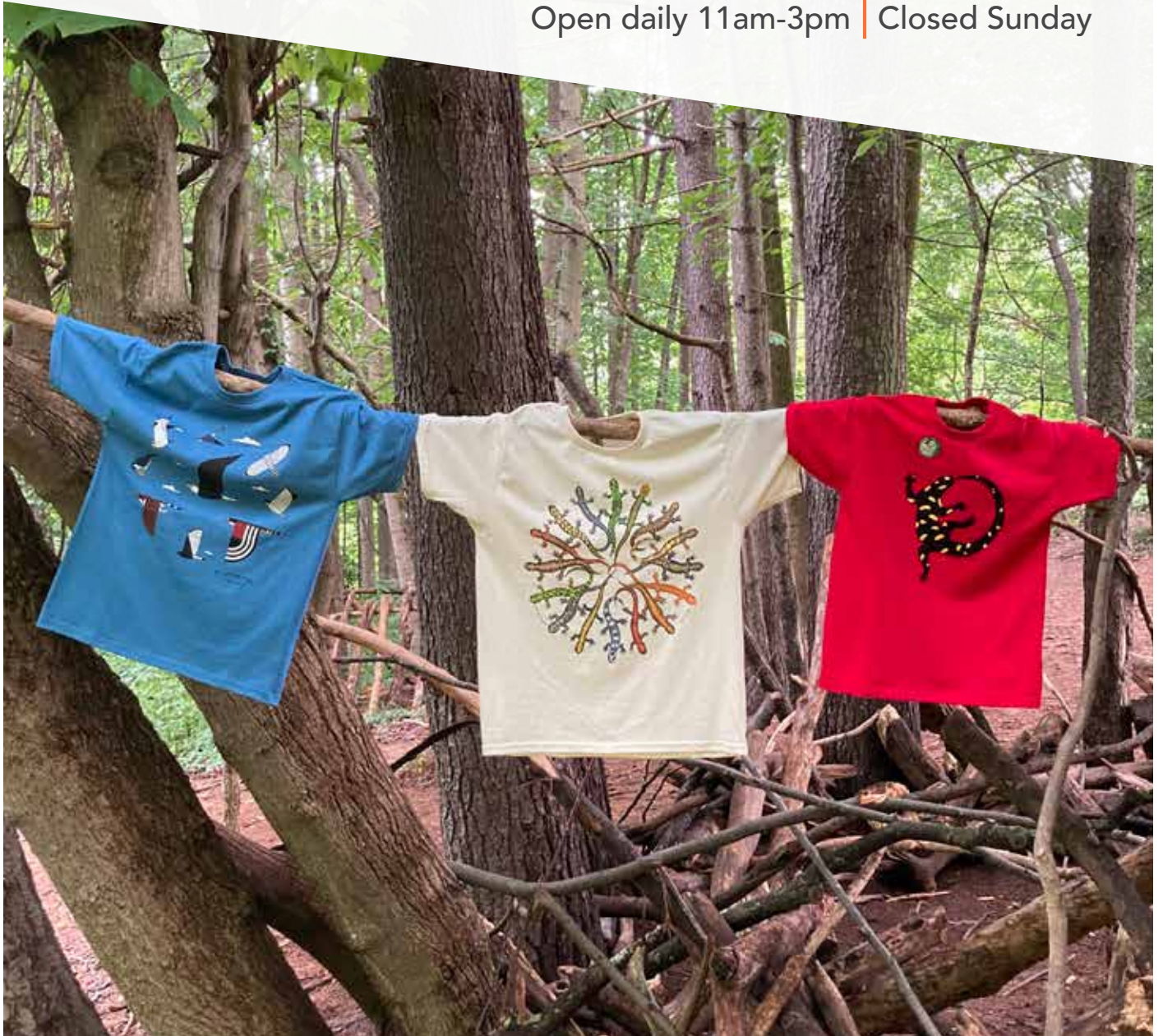
Contributing Sponsors



To learn about sponsorship opportunities for 2025's Nature Forward Birdathon, please visit natureforward.org/birdathon-sponsor

WELCOME FALL AT WOODEND NATURE SHOP

Open daily 11am-3pm | Closed Sunday



Get outside this Fall with your kids in these
Liberty Graphics 100% cotton t-shirts.

Members receive 10% off!

Visit us at natureforward.org/shop or call (301) 652-3606.

woodend 
nature shop
BY NATURE FORWARD

Fall 2024 Planting

This fall, the restoration department will be planting 300 native trees and shrubs around Woodend, a much larger amount than past planting seasons. This year, we received an additional \$4,000 from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Commission and the Maryland Department of Transportation to support restoration efforts at the sanctuary. These plants will be added to various locations around Woodend including the forested area between the Teale Learning Center and our new parking area, along the stream on the 7-acre portion of Woodend across from Jones Mill Road, and between Jones Mill Road and our deer fence. The funds will also allow us to install deer protections around trees planted outside of the deer fence. Look out for volunteer opportunities this fall to help plant all these trees at Woodend!

Forest edges provide great opportunities for restoration because we can reduce the amount of pressure from invasive plants to the forest as a whole.

—BRADLEY SIMPSON,
HABITAT MANAGER



Removed stems of honeysuckle in the forested area between Teale Learning Center and the Nature Playspace parking area.

Plant Shop

In April 2023 we replaced our seasonal native plant sales with a permanent plant shop, open from April to November, in front of the Woodend Nature Shop. Plants are even available for purchase when the shop is closed via a QR code. We have sold well over 1,000 native plants since beginning our plant shop, which is around 30% more per year than we sold through our seasonal plant sales, fulfilling our goal of getting more native plants into the ground in our area!

We sell plants from a variety of sources—some that we purchase specifically to re-sell from high quality regional nurseries that sell only in bulk, and some transplants from our gardens, when plants need to be divided or thinned. On top of that, we sell some plants that we have propagated ourselves in our new greenhouse in the learning garden.

Among those we propagate ourselves, our native prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) is one of our favorites. Our large specimen in the Blair Garden delights us every summer with profuse blooms—once it has finished blooming and begun to set fruit, in July, is the time to clip off pads to propagate. First, we dry them in our greenhouse (this reduces rot), then we pot them up! Once they set roots, we make this difficult-to-find native plant available for purchase. We also have some of the northern red oaks (*Quercus rubra*) we grew from seed (that is, from acorn!) available for purchase—these tiny trees are a wonderful way to ensure your yard has a canopy into the future, and will catch up to larger plant material relatively quickly due to experiencing less transplant shock.



Above: baby cacti for sale at the shop. Top right: the source plant for our eastern prickly pear cuttings in the Blair Garden. Bottom right: eastern prickly pear pads drying in the greenhouse, ready to be potted.



Connecting to Nature by Counting for a Cause

Successful 44th Birdathon supports Nature Forward's mission

The Nature Forward Birdathon, our longest-running fundraising tradition, is a celebration of nature and community.

We are thrilled to announce that this year's 44th annual Birdathon raised more than \$63,000 thanks to each of the dedicated fundraisers who counted birds, flowers, and other nature items, and secured pledges from caring donors. We also appreciate the generous support of our sponsors. See page 32 for a special thank you to them.

Special recognition goes to this year's top 5 Birdathon fundraising team:

- Team Mason, Oves & Wall: \$9,815.03
- Team Cottingham: \$9,141.43
- David Blockstein & Debra Prybyla: \$4,887.08
- Nature Forward Board: \$3,896.99
- Carolyn Peirce: \$3,241.90

All funds raised provide much-needed support for Nature Forward's environmental education, conservation, and restoration programs. You can find more highlights in our 44th Annual Birdathon report at natureforward.org/birdathon or scan the QR code below.

The Nature Forward Birdathon welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds to experience and enjoy nature and become part of a community of nature lovers who care about the future of our planet. A number of this spring's Adult Field Trips helped encourage and support newcomers to birding.

"Igniting people's love for and protection of nature is so important," says Nature Forward Board President Nancy Voit.

We were also excited to reconnect with some familiar faces. Paul D'Andrea is a former Board member who joined in to count birds as part of this year's Nature Forward Board Birdathon Team.

"I was reminded how much I enjoyed being a part of the Nature Forward community: kindred spirits with boundless curiosity and a true love of nature," Paul says. "I'll be back next year!"

"The Birdathon truly is our mission in action—bringing people and nature together in the Capital region."

— NOEL CARSON
NATURE FORWARD BOARD
MEMBER



Autumn Lights

Planning is already underway for one of Nature Forward's most exciting holiday traditions! We hope you will join us for Autumn Lights, our popular annual holiday event, on **Saturday, November 16**.

"It's the same event we've loved as Holiday Lights, just now in November instead of December," Nature Forward Development Director Corinna Fisk explains. "More than just an event, Autumn Lights is really about coming together as a community to celebrate a cause we all care about."



Autumn Lights will take place on November 16 from 5:00 until 8:00 pm at our historic headquarters at beautiful Woodend Nature Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD. The evening will include a fun cocktail reception with a beer and wine bar and a special event-themed cocktail option. Guests will also enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres, a cheese and crudités appetizers table, and a mouthwatering desserts assortment accompanied by a tea and coffee selection. Another much-anticipated highlight is our silent auction which will feature unique nature experiences, hand-crafted art and textiles, themed gift baskets and more.

All proceeds from Autumn Lights will support Nature Forward's environmental education, restoration, and conservation mission work. However, the opportunity to gather together is an equally important part of our effort to create a larger and more diverse community of people who treasure the natural world and work to preserve it.

"Fundraising matters, but the real value is in the community we build," Corinna adds. "I look forward to this holiday season tradition every year, where we can enjoy great food and drinks and catch up with friends who share our passion."



Tickets for Autumn Lights are available now at bit.ly/AutumnLights2024 or by scanning the QR code.

Call for Silent Auction Donations

We are accepting donations for our Autumn Lights Silent Auction! Traditionally, our most sought-after auction items include outdoor nature experiences like private tours and walks; vacation getaways; dining gift certificates; and themed gift baskets. Please note that we can only accept new and unused items only. Auction donations benefits Nature Forward's mission work and is tax deductible to the full extent of the law. If you or someone you know would be interested in contributing items to our auction, please contact Talissa at talissa.bavaresco@natureforward.org before October 18.

Nature Forward is proud to have earned top ratings for fiscal responsibility and transparency from these trusted, independent charity evaluators.





Welcome Talissa

We are delighted to welcome our first Special Event and Sponsorship Manager, **Talissa Bavaresco**. Talissa is a Brazilian-native nature lover with a passion for fundraising and event planning. She is a professional dancer graduate from the Joffrey Ballet School in NYC, and continues to pursue dancing, choreography, and teaching while excitedly joining the Nature Forward team to coordinate our wonderful Special Events! Seja bem-vinda, Talissa!

Farewell Loree



Welcome Vince

In May, **Vince Grace** joined the Nature Forward staff as our new Database Manager. Prior to joining Nature Forward he was the Systems Administrator at Politics & Prose where he was the go-to person for running complex reports and helping different departments work more effectively. He was no stranger to our beautiful sanctuary—Vince was married at Woodend in 2022. Welcome, Vince!

After 19 years with Nature Forward, **Loree Trilling** stepped down from her full-time Database Manager position in April to take a part-time role at another organization. Loree shepherded our data through numerous changes including a conversion to our current Bloomerang system. Thank you, Loree, for your many years of service. We will miss you!



Farewell Grace

In June, **Grace Dho** moved forward in her environmental career, leaving the Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps and joining the Chesapeake Bay Trust as a full-time staff member. Grace made a huge impact at Woodend Sanctuary through removing numerous invasive plants, monitoring forest health, and planting many native species such as many ferns as part of her capstone project. She was an integral part of the forest survey team and helped to encourage an increase in urban forest canopies throughout the DC area through our Tree-cosystems project. She now serves as the Trust's Program Assistant for the restoration team and manages the Mini Community Engagement and Restoration grant program. We look forward to continuing our work Grace in this new and exciting capacity.



Welcome Tori

In August, our newest Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps member, **Tori Carr**, began helping the restoration department with many projects at Woodend and the surrounding communities. Tori is a graduate of William and Mary where she double majored in Environment & Sustainability and Government. Her experience in the environmental field has so far been focused on aquatic ecosystems through a position at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science within the Coastal and Estuarine Ecology Lab. We are excited for Tori to bring her unique experiences to the terrestrial ecosystems at Nature Forward and see her develop professionally.

Memorial and Tribute Contributions

MAY 2024 - JULY 2024

IN HONOR OF:

Lisa Alexander

Laurence D Wiseman &
Robin Jeweler; Patricia
Smith

Mary Belknap and Peter Boice

Sandra Clark

Marianne Olson Scott

Karen Olson Weaver

Rebecca Wall

Deborah Gelin

Wonderful Teachers of Oak Class

Nancy Schneider

IN MEMORY OF:

William 'Bill' Adams

Jane Andrus; Jane Brophy;
Alise & Brian Orloff

Edith "Eddie" Davis Daharsh

Marlin & Kathy Daharsh;
Linda Davis; Barbara
Gordon; Liz Jones; Charlie
Pyne; Jean Rissman

Don Messersmith/ Crowder-Messersmith Fund

Alesha Drain; Lynn Rust

Cynthia McGrath

Flo Stone

Betty Oves

Pamela Herrick

Robert & Frances Lawrence

Robin Lawrence

Sudi Press

Jacky Wershbaile; Lazarus
Vittas

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.

Nature Forward Annual Meeting at Woodend Sanctuary

Thursday, October 24, 6-8:30 pm

Guest Speaker: Dana Milbank, columnist for *The Washington Post*

Calling all Nature Forward members and supporters! Be sure to join us for the 2024 Annual Meeting. The evening event will include recognition of retiring Executive Director Lisa Alexander, recognition of our Volunteer of the Year, and election of members to the Nature Forward Board of Directors. Coffee and dessert will be served.

Best-known for his political commentary for *The Washington Post*, columnist Dana Milbank has recently been sharing his experience moving from the city to a farm and training to become a master naturalist. Join Dana for a dialogue about nature discovery, challenge, and hope! Please RSVP to this free event at <https://give.natureforward.org/MembershipMeeting24> by Friday, 10/18.

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 slate of Board candidates presented by the Nominating Committee will be posted at natureforward.org/board after October 1.

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Autumn Lights

Saturday, November 16
5:00 - 8:00 pm
Woodend Nature Sanctuary
8940 Jones Mill Road
Chevy Chase, MD

You're Invited!
Kick off the holiday season with an evening of friends, food, drinks, music, and our exciting auction!



For tickets, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/AutumnLights2024