

SUMMER 2026

# nature forward

Q U A R T E R L Y

**The Potomac in Peril**  
**The Nation's River at a Crossroads**



**ON THE COVER**

Photo of Potomac River by Lydia Lawrence

**NATURE FORWARD QUARTERLY**  
Summer 2026

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ISSN 0888-6555  
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A L I S O N P E A R C E

Nature Forward recently finished our 46th annual Birdathon fundraiser. I would love to travel back in time to that first Birdathon in the year 1980. I feel sure that some of the bird counters were wearing leg warmers and Members Only jackets. Of course, people have been bird watching with our organization since well before Richard Simmons popularized short shorts. Here's one gem from the attic showing a birding trip sometime in the 1950s. I find it interesting that this group is dressed so formally. Nowadays, many people rarely wear ties to work, let alone to go in search of ducks.

On a more serious note, I would love to go back in time to see the parks and natural areas where our members went birding in the past. How different were they from the landscapes we see today? What wildlife species did they support? From our organization's founding in 1897 to now, the DC region has changed profoundly. Former farmlands have become suburbs, and former suburbs have become densely urban. Despite this, the Capital Area is relatively rich in green space for a major metropolitan region. And our Nature Forward community deserves a lot of credit for that. We've been advocates for the protection of natural areas like Dyke Marsh, the C&O Canal park, and Rock Creek Park for nearly 130 years!



I visited an interesting corner of Rock Creek Park this year for my own Birdathon effort. I counted over 30 species of birds in Ken-Gar Palisades, including green heron, wood thrush, and several warbler species. Apparently, an American bittern also hangs out there. This diversity exists thanks to a recent urban wetland restoration project. What was once a soggy soccer field is now more than three acres of palustrine wetland. It exists because Nature Forward and other environmental groups demanded robust mitigation for the wetlands impacted by Purple Line construction (which were less than one acre).

While wandering around this wetland with my binoculars, I made an observation of a different kind. On dog walks in Rock Creek Park, I have noticed areas where someone is diligently working to remove invasive bush honeysuckle. On a hillside above the wetland, I finally caught sight of this weed warrior in person. I thanked her and showed her an oriole nest I had found. We introduced ourselves and then I realized...of course, she is a Nature Forward member. Thank you, Lynn Parsons!

To be sure, we humans are often agents of habitat destruction. But we also have the power to protect, create, and heal natural areas. Nature Forward can help you to make positive change for the environment at home and in our communities. Join us to advocate, to restore and to learn. Wear whatever you'd like—corset, bell bottoms, or fleece—we won't judge.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Pearce".



CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE IN THE CAPITAL REGION



¡Gracias!

Thank you!

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# The Potomac in Peril

## The Nation's River at a Crossroads

by Vince Robinson, Director of Marketing and Communications



*"We have a shared responsibility to safeguard one of the region's most important natural resources."*

—LYDIA LAWRENCE,  
NATURE FORWARD  
CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

In January, an estimated 200 to 300 million gallons of untreated sewage poured into the Potomac River and the C&O Canal after a major wastewater pipe gave way. The failure of the Potomac Interceptor sewage line in Montgomery County triggered the largest sewage spill ever recorded in the US. A stretch of the river was closed to all public access as bacteria levels near the breach soared to more than 4,000 times the safe recreational limit. The main drinking water collection point for Washington, DC is upstream of the spill and was thankfully unaffected. However, a secondary drinking water intake downstream of the spill was shut down entirely.

This disaster, polluting a critical regional waterway, threatening local ecosystems, and disrupting recreation, earned the Potomac River a troubling distinction. American Rivers, a DC-based nonprofit advocating for local, state, and federal protection for our nation's waterways, named the Potomac River as the #1 Most Endangered River in the United States for 2026. However, January's sewer pipe collapse and the dangers posed by aging infrastructure are only part of the reason for the designation. The rise of data centers across our region is another major concern. According to American Rivers' 2026 Endangered Rivers Report, "rapid development of data centers in the watershed poses an expanding threat to river health and the resilience of drinking water supplies." You can read the full report at [americanrivers.org/potomacriver2026](https://americanrivers.org/potomacriver2026).

"The Potomac River is the primary drinking water source for more than 6 million people across our region," Potomac Riverkeeper Network President Betsy Nicholas wrote in a statement. "There is no backup system. No alternative supply waiting in reserve."

Nature Forward and other environmental organizations across the region are playing a critical role in monitoring the aftermath of the spill, communicating risks to the public, and pushing for accountability. Nature Forward led dozens of

members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition to sign a letter to DC Water insisting on an investigation, accountability, transparency, improved monitoring, and long-term infrastructure planning. Nature Forward also participated in DC Water's oversight and performance hearing in March, urging city leaders to prioritize investments in aging sewer infrastructure and to ensure that the public is informed about environmental and health risks.

"Protecting waterways like the Potomac demands immediate action to ensure sustained investment, transparent governance, and strong community oversight," says Nature Forward Conservation Director Lydia Lawrence.

Flowing more than 380 miles from the mountains of West Virginia to the Chesapeake Bay, the Potomac River is both an essential resource and a beloved natural landmark. The river supports world-class recreational trout fisheries, significant commercial fisheries for oyster, blue crab, and striped bass, and cherished outdoor spaces used by hikers, kayakers, birders, and families every day. Its watershed has been home and ancestral territory to Indigenous communities, including the Monacan, Rappahannock, Patowomeck, and Piscataway peoples. The Potomac made a remarkable environmental comeback over the past half-century to recover from decades of severe pollution. But today, that progress is in grave danger.

January's sewage spill wasn't a random disaster. It was a warning. The Potomac Interceptor pipe that failed was more than 60 years old, and it is far from alone. Many of our region's wastewater pipes are approaching or have passed their 50-year service life. Without urgent investment in water infrastructure, January's catastrophe could be a preview of what lies ahead. At the same time, the Potomac watershed is absorbing an unprecedented wave of data center development. The greater Washington, DC region already has more than 300 data centers (the largest concentration of data centers anywhere in the world) and is on track to see that number reach as many as 1,000 facilities. A single hyperscale data center can consume up to a million gallons of water per day for cooling. That massive level of water consumption draws from groundwater and municipal supplies already strained by population growth and extreme weather. Data center cooling systems can periodically discharge biocides and heavy metals into local waterways. Backup generators, powered by diesel fuel, require enormous on-site storage capacity, which increases the risk of fuel spills. Electronic components treated with PFAS, or "forever chemicals," eventually find their way into landfills throughout the watershed. Many of these data center complexes are being sited on or near previously contaminated land, upstream of the very drinking water intakes that serve millions of residents.

"Decisions in state capitals and in Congress over the coming months will determine the Potomac's trajectory for decades," Lawrence says. "Our time to act is now!"

Two critical federal funding programs, the State Revolving Fund and the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Grant program, both expire on September 30, 2026. If Congress fails to act, communities across the Potomac watershed and the entire country will lose access to urgently needed funding for sewer and stormwater upgrades.

At the state level, Virginia and Maryland leaders must require full transparency from and enforceable standards for data center developers, including disclosure of water use, discharge plans, and stormwater management. That information needs to be publicly accessible. States should also conduct comprehensive environmental assessments of cumulative watershed impacts, rather than continuing to approve projects on a case-by-case basis. Safeguards must be in place before approvals proceed, not promised for later.

"If a project puts drinking water at risk, it should not move forward," suggests Nicholas. "If its impacts are unknown, it is not ready for approval."

"We are asking our members and advocates to take action now by contacting their elected representatives," Lawrence urges. "If you live in Virginia or Maryland, write to Governor Abigail Spanberger or Governor Wes Moore to demand greater transparency and meaningful safeguards for any new data center development near our river and tributaries. And wherever you live, write to your US Senators and Representative asking them to reauthorize both the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant program before they expire this fall."

Nature Forward has a letter-writing tool to make it easy to reach out to your elected representatives. You can find it at [natureforward.org/potomac-action](https://natureforward.org/potomac-action).

# Spring Along the Platte: Witnessing the Crane Migration

by Corinna Fisk, Director of Development

Each spring, 80 miles of the Platte River Valley in central Nebraska becomes one of the most remarkable wildlife gatherings in North America. During peak migration, sandhill cranes arrive by the hundreds of thousands, pausing on their long journey from wintering grounds in Mexico to breeding areas in Canada and the Arctic.

The Platte River Valley's wide, shallow waters provide safe nighttime roosting habitat, while surrounding grasslands and agricultural fields offer the food cranes need to refuel. This March, my husband and I flew to Nebraska to join three of our closest friends in witnessing this spectacle. We had all researched the migration in advance, but nothing compared to experiencing it firsthand.

On our first day, we drove from our Airbnb in nearby Ayr to the Rowe Sanctuary, operated by the Audubon Society. Along the way, we spotted a few cranes standing in cornfields or flying overhead—thrilling glimpses of what was ahead.

As we drew closer to the river, entire cornfields seemed transformed, washed in silvery gray by the plumage of hundreds of birds. Stepping out of the car at the sanctuary, we met with an astonishing sight: thousands of cranes stretching along the river as far as the eye could see. They were close enough to reveal intricate feather patterns, pale golden eyes, and vivid red crowns glowing atop their heads. The scale of it was breathtaking.

The following evening, we headed to Crane Trust, another major conservation site, for a dusk visit to watch the birds return to their roosts. Standing on a bridge at the golden hour, we watched as the sky slowly filled with incoming V-shaped formations, dark silhouettes crossing a glowing sunset backdrop.

*“Standing there, surrounded by the voices of thousands of cranes, it was impossible not to reflect on the broader story of migration—ancient, awe-inspiring, and increasingly vulnerable in a changing world.”*

—CORINNA FISK,  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

## If You Go: Crane Migration Along the Platte

### Best Time

Late Feb–early April; peak mid March to early April

### Free Viewing

Public decks at Rowe Sanctuary, Gibbon, and at Alda bridge  
Marked roadside turnouts near Alda and west of Rowe

### Guided Viewing and Reservations\*

Rowe Sanctuary, Gibbon – Sunrise & sunset blinds  
Crane Trust, Wood River – Morning & evening tours

**\*Dawn tours sell out fast; booking opens in early January**



Cranes called as they flew, their voices rolling across the landscape. A sandhill crane call is loud and resonant—deep, rattling, and slightly musical. Their long, coiled tracheas act like built-in horns, amplifying the sound across the valley.

The next morning brought the most astonishing experience of all: a dawn liftoff. In the darkness, our group was quietly escorted to viewing blinds along the river. At first light, the cranes rose in clusters from the shallow, braided channels of the Platte and filled the sky with motion and sound. Their collective calls formed a living chorus.

Among the vast sea of them, one bird stood out: a whooping crane. With only a few hundred individuals living in the wild, the whooping crane is one of North America's rarest birds. Taller even than sandhill cranes, with a broader wingspan and striking white plumage; it was unmistakable. We watched it spread its wings and lift off among the masses—on my birthday, no less—an unforgettable gift.

What struck me most was how interconnected everything felt. This migration depends not only on the river itself, but also on thoughtful water management, careful land stewardship, and long-term conservation partnerships. The cranes' annual return is both a natural wonder and a testament to sustained conservation efforts.

Standing there, surrounded by the voices of thousands of cranes, it was impossible not to reflect on the broader story of migration—ancient, awe-inspiring, and increasingly vulnerable in a changing world.

That inspiration followed me home. This spring, I launched my own Birdathon team to turn wonder into action. Birdathon is Nature Forward's annual fundraising event, now in its 46th year, supporting conservation work here in the Capital Region—another vital stop along the migration routes that connect places like the Platte River Valley to our own backyards.



During peak spring migration in mid-March 2026, an estimated 600,000–700,000 sandhill cranes were present at one time in Nebraska's Central Platte River Valley, with more than one million cranes using the corridor over the full season. Photo by Corinna Fisk.

# The Silent Coyote Book Awards

*Silent Coyote is a notorious figure at Camp Woodend. For decades, he's gone unnoticed, sneaking into camp classrooms to leave gifts for unsuspecting campers. This month he sat down with Director of Education Maggie Crawford to discuss the new Silent Coyote Book Awards. The conversation below has been edited for clarity and to fit this space.*



**M.C.** Welcome Silent Coyote to the Nature Forward Quarterly. S.C. (Do you mind if I call you S.C.?) You're known for slipping in and out of classrooms at camp, often leaving notes or small gifts.

**S.C.** Yes, stickers, piles of leaves, and other such treasures are my calling card. It's my way of saying, "I noticed you."

**M.C.** An elusive figure like yourself really relies on your powers of observation to go undetected. So, it's only natural that this year's theme in the Silent Coyote Book Awards is "observing the natural world."

**S.C.** Exactly! The three books I've selected all inspire families to slow down this summer and take time to observe nature around them.

**M.C.** I love this theme because that's how I spent my summers. My aunt was a teacher. So I stayed with her during the summertime, following her around as she watered her flowers, tended to the garden, refilled the bird feeders, etc. We investigated everything: noticing what insects were in the pots, whether the tomatoes were ready to be picked, and what seeds were the least popular with her backyard birds.

**S.C.** That sounds like a lovely way to spend time off from school! I see kids at Camp Woodend do similar things.

**M.C.** Let's get to the books you've chosen to award this year. The first up is "Bud Finds Her Gift" by Robin Wall Kimmerer, the author of "Braiding Sweetgrass."

**S.C.** In this story, a character named Bud wants to do big, important things like the other members of her family. With the guidance of her grandmother, she discovers that she has a gift for noticing the natural world. She learns to use all her senses to observe the world around her. She begins to see the connections between the plants and animals in the ecosystem, the "gifts" they share with each other. I chose this book because of its message that everything in nature is connected, and everyone (even children!) has an important role to play. The book shows how, if we slow down, noticing can be a superpower, helping us to connect with the world around us and each other.

**M.C.** The illustrations by Naoko Stoop are particularly beautiful. The next book on your list takes that power of noticing a step further to ask "Why?" and "How?"

**S.C.** Yes, "You Can Be a Nature Detective" by Peggy Kochanoff encourages kids to solve the mysteries that are all around us in nature. After noticing something fascinating in nature, this book encourages children to become scientists investigating everything from frog calls to owl pellets, nest shapes, and much more.

**M.C.** I particularly liked the detailed, yet easy to understand, scientific explanations of each mystery in this book. Okay, S.C., our final book uses a tool that many adult beginner birders love to use.

**S.C.** We all love Merlin! This book is a fantastic way to share the powerhouse that is the Merlin app, but without screens. "The Backyard Birdsong Guide" by Donald Kroodsma is published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the same people who bring us Merlin.

**M.C.** My favorite part of this book is that it's like a field guide that sings.

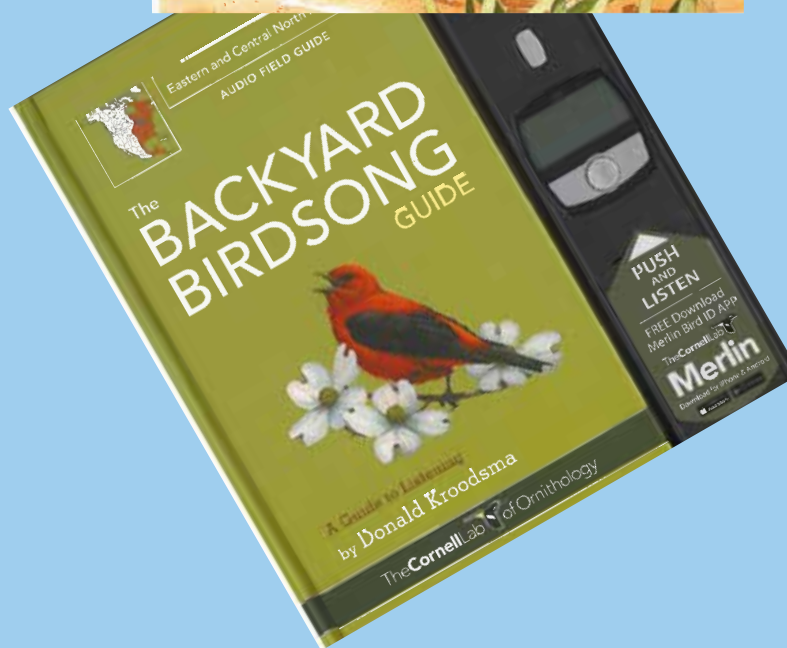
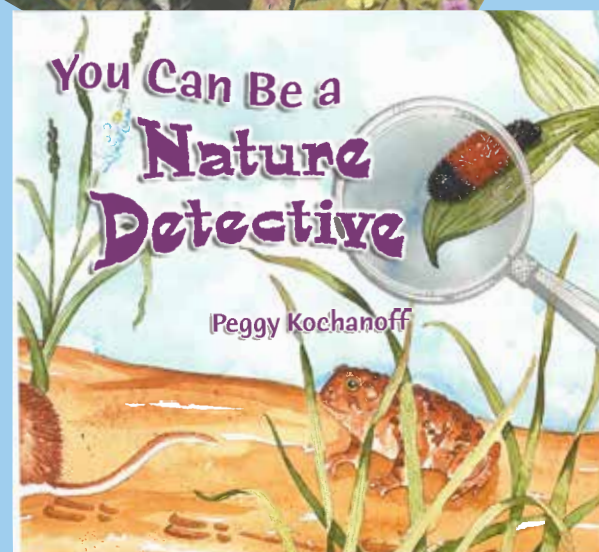
**S.C.** The book has all the normal entries of a field guide, like habitat, description and illustration. But it goes beyond just the mnemonic for the birdsong. It has an attached audio player that allows you to actually listen to the birds sing. Children can practice noticing with their ears before going outside to identify their backyard residents.

**M.C.** Well S.C., you've brought us three excellent books to inspire families to get outside together this summer to make observations in the natural world. Thank you for all you do at Camp Woodend!

Interested in adding these books to your personal library or gifting them to a curious child near you? They're available at the Woodend Nature Shop:

- Bud Finds Her Gift by Robin Wall Kimmerer \$19.99
- You Can Be a Nature Detective \$14.00
- The Backyard Birdsong Guide by Donald Kroodsma \$34.95

Members get 10% off!



# Fighting for Clean Water in DC

by Jamoni Overby, DC Conservation Advocate

Each year, Washington, DC, like other states, has a legislative period where city residents and advocates work with leaders to determine the City's legislative priorities. The annual Performance Oversight hearings are uniquely tied to the budget process where residents, organizations, advocates, agency leads, and industry can weigh in on agency effectiveness, legislation, and budget decisions for the upcoming year.

This year, Nature Forward's clean water advocacy took on new urgency when a section of the Potomac Interceptor collapsed. The pipe is part of a 54-mile system that carries approximately 60 million gallons of wastewater daily from parts of Maryland and Northern Virginia to the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant in Washington, DC. This historic spill into DC's only water source became a focus of this year's Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) and DC Water's Performance Oversight hearing.

The spill exposed critical weaknesses in the District's water infrastructure, emergency response systems, and environmental justice protections. Nature Forward, along with many other advocates and residents, mobilized to address the spill as part of a larger public health and environmental crisis that impacted the waterways that thousands rely on for recreation, ecosystem health, drinking water, and food. Nature Forward asked the Committee on Transportation and the Environment to examine DC Water and DOEE's cross agency coordination and whether both agencies are prioritizing equitable investments in water infrastructure and community-centered resilience strategies.



DC Conservation Advocate, Jamoni Overby, cleaning up trash in the Potomac River.

Additionally, the incident highlighted the broader connection between environmental stewardship and fiscal accountability. District residents invest significant public dollars into clean water initiatives, stormwater management, and climate adaptation programs. The Committee must evaluate whether those investments are effectively reducing system vulnerabilities and whether agencies are meeting performance expectations related to maintenance, emergency preparedness, and environmental compliance.

Despite the need for stronger investment in DC's clean water infrastructure, Mayor Muriel Bowser proposed a budget that cut significant funding DC's Department of Energy and Environment. These cuts become even more devastating when DOEE already had to make significant cuts to its clean water programs in the previous year's budget. Nature Forward led the charge with partners for the 2nd Annual Green Budget Day of Action on Monday, May 4. With support from Councilmembers Charles Allen and Wendell Felder, 60 advocates called on the DC Council to restore funding to many programs including stormwater infrastructure, lead pipe removal for clean drinking water, and water quality monitoring as a top concern for many residents across the District. Read more about the Potomac Interceptor Pipeline spill on page 6 and here:



# Getting Data Center RELIEF for Marylanders

by Angie McCarthy, Clean Energy Campaign Manager

When the Maryland 2026 General Assembly started, Marylanders for Data Center Reform was concerned with transparency, grid reliability, resource adequacy, and developers paying their fair share. We also knew that ratepayer impact was likely to be a huge talking point, given all our lived experiences, and the resulting news coverage. To address as many of these concerns as possible, we were following and advocating for legislation that would establish: a demand response program, a large load registry, a repeal of the sales and use tax exemption for data centers, and transparency measures. While these bills did not pass in their own right, many of their provisions made it into the Utility RELIEF Act, an omnibus bill spotlighted by the Governor and leadership team. When signed into law, RELIEF will be an important first step in establishing a regulatory framework for data centers in Maryland. Originally, the bill's data center provisions were fairly weak but we were able to strengthen the new and clean energy requirements as part of the demand response work. This bill now asks developers to listen to the wise words of BYONCE—Bring Your Own New, Clean Energy. After the hard work of this coalition and all of you who wrote in, several of our priorities were amended into the final bill. In particular, the Act:



Lydia Lawrence, Conservation Director (middle), and partner advocates speaking at a lobby day meeting with Senate President Bill Ferguson.

- Redefines large load customers so that more data centers and other large load customers are subject to regulations and oversight
- Establishes a Clean Capacity program that encourages data centers to be cleaner and place less strain on the grid
- Creates a large load registry so regulators can predict and make informed decisions to manage data center development in the future
- Prevents forecast test years and speculative rate setting, which will curtail the rate setting practices that have costs ratepayers unduly



Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Lorig Charkoudian at the Data Center Reform Rally & Lobby Day.

We still have a long way to go, but there is hope. Not so long ago, data centers were seen as a taboo area for regulation. Many politicians did not want to touch the issue because of the myth that if we regulate data centers, they would not come to Maryland. Thanks to the Coalition and our legislative champions, more and more legislators are standing up and putting forward legislation. We cannot wait to support them as we continue to advocate for Maryland's environment and communities.

# Big Wins for Controlling Invasive Plants in Virginia

by Renee Grebe, VA Conservation Advocate

This year's 2026 Virginia General Assembly was poised to be different. Virginia started off the year with a new governor—the first female governor in Virginia's 250-year history—and a more conservation-friendly legislature. Virginians got some distinct and unique conservation wins, with the topic of managing invasive plants taking a wonderful center stage.

Nature Forward co-authored the Virginia Conservation Network's white paper on "Preventing Harm from Invasive Plants," the guiding light of our invasive plant advocacy as we spoke with legislators in Richmond. This year, all four pieces of invasive plant related legislation that were introduced were signed into law by the governor. These bills will help us control the spread of non-native, harmful plants in our ecosystems:

- **Empower communities through funding**  
Localities now have the authority to raise funds specifically for controlling invasive plants, through the use of public service districts. Nature Forward provided advice and support for leaders of the Fairfax Invasive Removal Alliance (FIRA) as they advocated for this legislation (HB388/SB89).
- **Stop the sale of additional noxious weed species**  
Virginia's noxious weeds law had prevented invasive plants from being considered noxious weeds if they were "commercially viable" (e.g. sold in a nursery). That exception has been removed, clearing the way to ban the sale of additional plants from DCR's list of invasive plants over the course of the coming years even if they had been commercially viable (HB109).
- **Plan to control invasives along roads**  
The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is now required to develop a plan for controlling invasive plants along the 60,000 miles of public roads they maintain and to provide a report by December 1, 2027 (HB88).
- **Adding another tool for fighting invasives**  
In 2024, volunteers were granted authority to apply pesticides and herbicides for invasive control when partnering with local jurisdictions. Now volunteers can do the same when partnering with state agencies too. This is one more necessary tool in our toolbox to fight particularly challenging invasives with minimal or no soil disturbance (e.g. porcelainberry, kudzu, tree of heaven) (SB163).

Read about the other legislation that was passed during this year's Virginia General Assembly on our blog: <https://natureforward.org/2026-va-ga-wrap-up/>.



Renee Grebe cuts invasive wisteria vines to save native trees from damage as part of Nature Forward's De la Maleza a la Naturaleza (From Weeds to Nature) program on April 4. Photo by Maria Cruz.

# Stream Science Water Quality Monitoring Update

This past January and February, more than 70 volunteers stepped into cold streams to collect benthic (bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates. Working with their teams, they surveyed 13 stream sites and dedicated over 285 hours to stream health assessments.

Teams of Water Quality Monitoring volunteers visit their sites 3-4 times a year, once each season. Winter monitoring is optional. Still, many volunteers look forward to the opportunity to spend several chilly hours with their peers, hoping to see macroinvertebrates they generally don't find in other seasons.



Winter can be the best time to observe some types of stoneflies like this small winter stonefly (Family Capniidae). Photo Credit: Charlie Dorian

You can view monitoring data on Nature Forward's WQM webpage: <https://natureforward.org/water-quality/>.

Open the webpage and click on the map to see where we monitor:



Nature Forward volunteers set up a Creek Critters learning station with live aquatic macroinvertebrates from Sligo Creek at the Takoma Park Earth Day Festival in April. Over 350 festival goers observed the critters in pans of stream water and through microscopes while learning about our community science program.

Please help us welcome our new Water Quality Monitoring Manager, **Sam Brown**. Sam joined Nature Forward in April. You can read about Sam on page 38 of this Nature Forward Quarterly as well as in the conservation blog. **Gregg Trilling**, who joined the organization in 2007 and has coordinated the stream monitoring program since 2020, will be retiring on June 1. Gregg will continue to serve as the team leader for our Northwest Branch at Adelphi Mill site and will work on a few projects for Nature Forward.

# 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)

SCAN TO FIND FAMILY PROGRAMS



To find programs and events that connect your family to nature, visit [natureforward.org](http://natureforward.org).

**ENROLLING  
NOW!**

nature forward  
preschool

**Acorns**

September 9, 2026 - May 27, 2027

Once-weekly nature discovery and learning program for children up to age 4 with a caregiver

**Wednesdays or Thursdays**

**9:00 am to 10:15 am**

*or*

**10:45 am to Noon**

**Tuition: \$150 per month**  
(plus one-time \$75 application fee)

*Sibling discounts available*



Learn more and enroll at [natureforward.org/preschool-acorns](http://natureforward.org/preschool-acorns)

mark your calendars for  
**days off**  
 **camps**  
 (Grades K-5)



When school is out, let your child join us for days filled with outdoor adventures and nature exploration at Woodend Nature Sanctuary in Chevy Chase, MD.



**DAYS OFF CAMPS** 8:45am - 5:00pm

September 21    March 9    April 22  
 January 25    April 12    May 17

**Price per each one-day camp:**

\$150 for Nature Forward members - \$200 non-members

**FALL MINI CAMP** 8:45am - 5:00pm

November 4 and November 5

**Price for two-day camp:**

\$295 for members - \$345 non-members

**SPRING BREAK CAMP** 8:45am - 3:00pm

Monday, March 29 - Friday, April 2, 2027

**Price for week-long camp:**

\$545 for members - \$610 non-members

*Extended camp available Mon-Thurs until 5PM for \$145*

[natureforward.org/daysoff](http://natureforward.org/daysoff)

**camp woodend**  
 BY NATURE FORWARD

**Nature Day, Travel & Overnight Camps for Grades K-9**

**June 22 - August 21**

**LIMITED SPACES STILL AVAILABLE!**

See our camp sessions and register today at

[natureforward.org/campwoodend](http://natureforward.org/campwoodend)

**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](http://natureforward.org/birthday-parties)

# Spring at Woodend with Master Naturalists

Our class of Master Naturalist trainees have been busy—spring is the perfect time to learn about the birds and the bees (literally—ornithology and entomology)! We’ve already gone on multiple field trips, worked with Nature Forward staff on our group projects, and learned about everything from mushrooms to raccoons in the Piedmont region of Maryland. Our next class begins September 2026 and registration opens June 15. Here are some pictures from recent classes with Mike Raupp, aka “The Bug Guy,” and Gemma Radko with the American Bird Conservancy. Photos by Ben Israel.





# Strengthening Communities, Strengthening Ecosystems at Naturally Latinos 2026

by Vince Robinson, Director of Marketing and Communications

Under the theme “Fortaleciendo comunidades y ecosistemas (Strengthening communities and ecosystems),” the 2026 Naturally Latinos Conference, held March 26-28, drew nearly 300 participants from around the region and across the nation. Dozens of inspiring presenters led discussions on issues including environmental justice, green careers, youth, faith-based environmental work, and the arts. At a time of mounting challenges for Latino communities and the environment, the event showcased the power of collective action and resilience.

“When we gather together, we recharge, we inspire each other, we learn from our successes and challenges, and we come out with a renewed strength to keep doing the work that we do,” says Conference Chair Gina Ghertner, who also serves as Nature Forward’s GreenKids Lead Educator.

That work has rarely felt more urgent. Drawing on her international upbringing and her service in the Obama Administration, Dr. Gabriela D. Lemus, Executive Director of Maryland Latinos Unidos, argued that environmental justice ultimately turns on a single question: “Who gets to live in healthy environments—and who does not?” Dr. Lemus was keynote speaker for the March 27 in-person conference day at the Silver Spring Civic Building in downtown Silver Spring.

“Strengthening ecosystems and strengthening communities are not separate goals,” Dr. Lemus explained. “They are the same goal. One and the same.”



NLC Advisory Committee member Anna Arriaza of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Wendy Howard of One Montgomery Green, NLC Chair Gina Ghertner, and Lindolfo Carballo of WE ARE CASA.

A subsequent session titled “Science, Justice, and Collective Power” bolstered that idea. Dr. Juan Deplet-Barreto, Senior Social Scientist for Climate Vulnerability at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), and Pri Oliveira, Outreach and Inclusion Manager at The Watershed Institute, described the “colliding crises” of climate change and affordable housing.

National research by the UCS finds that approximately 6.2 million affordable-housing units (home to

roughly 7.4 million people) are in areas subject to extreme heat. The picture is even sharper close to home. Ninety-nine percent of Maryland’s affordable units, and 100 percent of DC’s, fall in counties exposed to those extreme heat alerts.

“Climate change impacts are endangering and displacing people already dealing with the affordable housing crisis,” Dr. Declet-Barreto told the room. “People should have a right to homes where they feel safe in the face of the worsening climate crisis.”

The pair proposed a multifaceted policy agenda that boosts funding to cover cooling, protects tenant rights, reforms local land-use rules, and invests in climate-resilient affordable housing. They also urged taking approaches that include community members in decision-making.

“Each community will need a fresh and/or different approach,” Oliveira said. “Redefine who we consider to be subject matter experts. Let’s consider community members true experts.”

Many conference presentations mirrored those convictions. March 26 opened with virtual sessions accessible to participants nationwide, including keynote speaker Isaias Hernandez, founder of Queer Brown Vegan, who joined the event from California. In-person conference activities in March 27 included discussion panels in English and Spanish, a marketplace of local sustainable businesses, live music, and packed networking sessions. Other featured voices included author and ecopsychologist Lorena Saavedra Smith and storyteller Orietta Estrada. March 28 took attendees outdoors, including field trips hosted by Montgomery County’s Department of Environmental Protection, Latino Outdoors, and Glenstone Museum. Thirty-five sponsors, including The Campbell Foundation, supported the event with financial and in-kind contributions.

“This opportunity to connect, collaborate, and motivate is more important than ever,” Ghertner said.

“The future of our communities—and the future of our planet—will not be shaped by chance,” Dr. Lemus explained. “It will be shaped by leaders. Leaders like all of you.”

See more details and images from the 2026 Naturally Latinos Conference at [natureforward.org/nlc-report-2026](https://natureforward.org/nlc-report-2026).

*“This conference is a space for us to come together as a community that embraces the importance of our connection to nature and to one another.”*

—GINA GHERTNER,  
CONFERENCE CHAIR



Attendees visit sponsor booths during the in-person conference day in downtown Silver Spring, MD..



Author and speaker Lorena Saavedra Smith.

# Beat the Heat with these Cool Classes

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## For the Birder

### Summer Birding Strolls

**A: Tuesday, July 7 (7:30-10 am) – Huntley Meadows, VA (Paul Pisano)**

**B: Saturday, August 15 (7-9:30 am) – Hughes Hollow, MD (Rob Hilton and Lisa Shannon)**

**C: Thursday, August 27 (7:30-10 am) – Occoquan Bay NWR, VA (Paul Pisano)**

**D: Saturday, September 5 (8:30-11 am) – Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC (Rob Hilton and Lisa Shannon)**

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

Summertime...and the living is easy—unless you're a bird busy with nesting chores and the many challenges of raising young. That means summertime can be a more challenging period for nature lovers to encounter birds as they quiet down and move around with greater stealth. Still, the challenge is worth the reward: there is lots to observe, discuss, and enjoy on a summer birding walk, as the nesting, feeding, and fledging stages of life are full of drama, risk, and fascination! When the series begins, breeding bird activity will still be ongoing, but as summer moves into late July and August, the movement of southbound migrants will be underway. Expect some open and sunny field conditions at all of our locations. There will be chances, however, to duck into the shade periodically.

### Shorebirds on the Move

**Thursday, August 13 (9 am-3 pm)**

**Leaders: Paul Pisano and Cyndie Loeper**

**Location: Bombay NWR, DE**

**Members \$44; nonmembers \$60**

Shorebirds—sandpipers, plovers, and related birds—are among the most spectacular migrants of the avian world. Most of them nest in the Arctic—where the breeding season is quite short—and many of them travel there from points far to the south. Southward migration of shorebirds—starting as early as July—presents a challenge as both adults and juveniles are on the wing. Our August field trip will give us good chances to see and study a mix of young birds in fresh plumage, as well as adults in the remains of breeding plumage. The field trip will begin at Delaware's Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge and may include other stops nearby based on the leaders' scouting efforts the previous day. Our shorebird tutorial is aimed at mid-level birders, but beginners are welcome. Expect hot, open, and sunny field conditions with little or no shade. Don't forget summer insect activity. Transportation to the field trip will be by personal car. Carpooling information will be shared.

## For the Botanist

### Seeing the Forest in Spring

**C: Wednesday, June 10 (10 am-1 pm) Jug Bay Natural Area, MD**  
**Leader: Bradley Simpson**  
**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

Spring is arguably the best time to explore our local forested areas. These spaces are full of color from spring ephemerals to flowering trees and shrubs. Life is buzzing as various pollinators visit the yummy-looking flowers. Birds are flying about to grab a snack. So much life! Come explore how full of life our forests can be in the springtime through this series of walks. We will explore sites in Virginia, DC, and Maryland, all of which come alive in the spring.

### Blooms of June: A Wildflower Intensive Workshop

**Class: Thursday, June 11 (9 am-3 pm) – Woodend**  
**Field Trip: Sunday, June 14 (9 am-12 pm) – Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Glendening Nature Preserve, MD**  
**Leader: Clare Walker**  
**Class and field trip: members \$75; nonmembers \$95**  
**Class only: member \$40; nonmember \$56**

You may have tried to identify wildflowers using iNaturalist or other point and click apps. However, these apps often fail (confidently giving the wrong species) or give only an identification to family. In this class we will cover the knowledge needed to take the next step to confidently identify our local plant species. This workshop will cover the botanical terms needed to understand a simple guide with lots of fun hands-on exploration. Then we will work through the identification process step by step using both wildflower guides and the best current apps for the Mid-Atlantic. We will take the knowledge outside to practice all these skills on plants around Woodend. The class will also discuss some of the best locations in the area to see wildflowers and the importance of their ecology. Half the process of identification is recognizing the habitat where each species of wildflower is found and their growth forms. Class requires a copy of "Newcomb's Wildflower Guide" by Lawrence Newcomb. The book is available at the Woodend Nature Shop but any edition will work as all are identical. On Sunday, we'll practice your new identification skills in the diverse habitats of meadow, woods and wetlands found at Jug Bay Wetland Sanctuary.

## How Does Her Garden Grow?

**Saturday, August 29 (9:30-11:30 am)**  
**Leader: Karoline Anders**  
**Location: Boyds, MD**  
**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

Here's your chance to visit the home garden of a Nature Forward member who has worked to reduce lawn coverage, increase food and shelter for wildlife, and incorporate native plants whenever possible. Karoline will share her successes and failures while guiding you on a leisurely stroll through her yard. Karoline's 2/3-acre yard includes more than 101 native plant species in multiple sun and moisture combinations, plus an extensive vegetable garden.

## For the Nature-Lover Generalist

### Natural Heritage Series: Pine Barrens Playground, Summer Edition

**Thursday, June 18 (10:30 am) - Friday, June 19 (2 pm)**  
**Leader: Liz Guertin**  
**Location: Pine Barrens, NJ**  
**Members \$270; nonmembers \$320**

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). Navigating the dizzying maze of sugar sand roads offers the chance to see plants you can't see anywhere else, hundreds of breeding bird species, and the remnants of American history. In this two-day whirlwind, we'll go deep into an Atlantic white cedar swamp and your leader's favorite ghost forest. We'll explore one of the world's few pygmy forests, visit the best heron rookery (where heron species breed in colonies) in the entire mid-Atlantic, and explore the beauty of carnivorous plants and unique summer wildflower species. 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 be able to walk up to two (very flat) miles at a relaxed pace. We'll walk a couple miles at least a couple of 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.

## Summer Shuffles Along the Canal

**Wednesdays (9-11:30 am)**

**A: June 24 (Widewater, MD)**

**B: July 15 (Violettes Lock, MD)**

**Leader: Genevieve Wall**

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

Summer arrives and it's likely to be hot, so we'll keep our pace along Maryland's C&O Canal to a shuffle as we visit spots along the Potomac River Parkland. We'll stop often to observe birds, wildflowers, butterflies, dragonflies, snakes, and whatever else we may find underfoot or overhead. The Canal Walks will continue every other Wednesday through the fall with Stephanie Mason.

## Wetland Wednesdays

**Wednesdays (10 am-1 pm)**

**A: July 1 (Dyke Marsh, VA)**

**B: July 29 (McKee Beshers, MD)**

**C: August 19 (Jug Bay Natural Area, MD)**

**Leader: Bradley Simpson**

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

Join Habitat Manager, Bradley Simpson, to explore three local wetland areas in the DC region: Dyke Marsh, McKee Beshers Wildlife Management Area, and Jug Bay Natural Area. While the forest blooms in spring and the meadows in fall, wetlands come alive in the summer months. From water lilies to swamp rose mallow to bog orchids, these saturated environments are a summer spotlight.

## A Rocky Hike at Cascade Falls

**Thursday, July 9 (10 am-1 pm)**

**Leader: Genevieve Wall**

**Location: Patapsco State Park, MD**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

Visit Maryland's oldest state park! From the banks of the Patapsco river, we'll set off uphill along the Cascade Trail, hugging close to the stream at first and then returning on the uplands side. Along the way, we'll pay close attention to the progression of summer, as well as the wildflowers, trees, mammal tracks and signs, birds, or reptiles we encounter. We will cover nearly three miles on natural surface trails, which include a couple of steep uphill/downhill sections and some rocky terrain. There is a \$2 entry fee per car to enter the park.

## Revel on the River: Paddling the Anacostia

**Thursday, July 23 (8:45 am-12 pm)**

**Leader: Genevieve Wall**

**Location: Bladensburg Waterfront Park, MD**

**Members \$44; nonmembers \$60**

Connect with the Anacostia River this summer with a relaxed-pace paddle through at Bladensburg Waterfront Park. We'll discuss the history and ecology of the river. On our way, we'll likely observe herons, osprey, and bald eagles on the hunt, and riverine summer plants such as cardinal flower and pickerel weed in bloom. Come, dip a toe in—connecting with the river is always fun in community! Beginner paddlers welcome. A mixture of canoes and single kayaks, paddles, and lifejackets will be provided. Participants must be able to carry up to 20 pounds, sit in a low seat, and keep their balance getting in and out of a boat. Limit 8 participants.

## On the Wing Along the Canal

**Sunday, July 26 (8-10:30 am)**

**Leaders: Rob Hilton and Lisa Shannon**

**Location: Carderock Recreation Area, MD**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

The varied habitats of the C&O Canal between Carderock and Widewater include Potomac waters, bottomland forests and swamps, watery impoundments, and even rocky cliffs, which attract an abundance of bird species in all seasons. These habitats can also be a productive spot for summer dragonfly and damselfly watching. Join our morning's search for both birds and dragonflies as the experienced leaders share ID tips. Don't forget your binoculars!

## Natural Heritage Series: Western Virginia Highlands

**Friday, August 7 at 8 am (option to join at noon) – Saturday, August 8 at 5 pm**

**Leader: Mark Garland**

**Members \$210; nonmembers \$260**

Explore the rich and diverse highlands of West Virginia in the vibrance of summer. Based in Canaan Valley, we'll walk trails in Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley State Park, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and perhaps some other nearby areas. This will be a general natural history exploration, searching for birds (including early southbound migrants), butterflies, amphibians, observing wildflowers and other plants, and generally enjoying the richness of nature in the cool highlands. Program cost covers field activities only; participants are responsible for their own meals/lodging. Each day will consist of short strolls with plenty of observation stops. Walks may contain slight uphill/downhill sections on natural surface trails.

## Star Party!

**Friday, August 14 (8:30-10 pm) – Rain date Friday, August 21**

**Leader: Carrie Fitzgerald**

**Location: Woodend Nature Sanctuary, MD**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

Summer is the perfect time to learn about the night sky. In this program, an astronomer from Montgomery College will demonstrate how to find and identify summer constellations as well as how to use the stars for basic navigation. Perched on the lawn at our Woodend Sanctuary, participants will view visible solar system objects, star clusters, and nebulae through a telescope provided by the leader. You'll leave with an enriched understanding of the science of astronomy, as well as the ability to locate, identify, and navigate by constellations and other celestial objects using your very own star map! Keep your fingers crossed for clear skies.

## Golden Hour Magic at Huntley Meadows

**Sunday, August 23 (5-8 pm)**

**Leader: Danielle Brigida**

**Location: Huntley Meadows, VA**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

During the heat of the day, many wildlife hunker down to rest. But as afternoon deepens into evening and the low-angle sunlight sets the marsh aglow, a flurry of foraging activity begins! On this walk, we'll enjoy the woods and wetlands of Huntley Meadows. We will hope to encounter amphibians, herons, or even beaver along the boardwalk. We'll enjoy the lush late summer plant life as well. As we wind down at dusk, we may glimpse some nocturnal creatures beginning their nighttime routines. No matter the season, Huntley Meadows never disappoints!

## For the Insect Lover

### Summer Pond Life

**Saturday, June 20 (9-11:30 am)**

**Leaders: Rob Hilton and Lisa Shannon**

**Location: Governor Bridge, MD**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

Come join Lisa Shannon and Rob Hilton at Governor Bridge Natural Area. We'll be looking for dragonflies and damselflies of course, but also warblers, frogs, butterflies, plants, and anything else that catches our eye at this cool group of ponds in a wooded area on the coastal plain.

## Dragons of the Air

**Saturday, July 18 (9:30 am-12 pm)**

**Leader: Lisa Shannon**

**Location: Lake Artemesia, MD**

**Members \$33; nonmembers \$46**

The wetlands around Lake Artemesia are an ideal spot to begin learning how to ID the most common dragonflies in our area. Naturalist Lisa Shannon will help dragonfly enthusiasts (beginners welcome!) focus on identification characteristics, as well as the life histories, of these aerial insects. Close-focusing binoculars are recommended for optimal dragon-watching in the open and sunny habitats we'll explore. Depending on the forecast predicted closer to the date, the start time may shift to 9 am to keep us in cooler, more comfortable temperatures.

## Introduction to Dragonflies and Damselflies

**Lecture: Thursday, July 30, 7-9 pm (Woodend)**

**Field Trip: Saturday, August 1, 9:30 am-12 pm, Pine Lake at Wheaton Regional Park, MD**

**Leader: Lisa Shannon**

**Lecture: members \$24; nonmembers \$32**

**Lecture and field trip: members \$48; nonmembers \$68**

Grab your binoculars and prepare to set your sights not on birds—although "mosquito hawk" is a common moniker—but on those six-legged, aerial acrobats of wetland habitats: the dragonflies and damselflies. During the evening lecture, our leader will discuss ID, biology, and behavior of the more common species of Odonates in our area. You'll join our leader for a morning field trip to the wetland habitats of Pine Lake in Wheaton Regional Park, where all will have a chance to test their identification skills.

### See September offerings on our website:

*Botanical Watercolors: Coneflowers*  
Tuesday, September 1

*Late Summer Insect Quest*  
Thursday, September 10

*Midweek Meanders Along the Canal*  
Wednesdays starting September 16

*Fall in the Parks*  
Starting September 19 at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC

*Fall Birding Series*  
Starting Tuesday, September 22 at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, DC

# Nature Notes from Genevieve's Journal: Summer

by Genevieve Wall, Senior Naturalist

*Welcome to Nature Notes! Those who have met me on Adult Forays know I keep a nature journal. I find the habit sharpens my observations, connects me to the rhythms of nature, and brings me joy. In this column, I'll share some notes from the pages of my nature journal, in hopes that it may inspire you to connect with nature this season.*

"The tallest, grandest waterfalls attract most of the fanfare, but in my experience, small waterfalls that we can almost touch do more honest work on the soul."

—Tristan Gooley

My breath quickens as I clamber up over the rocks at Patapsco State Park. As I hop from one to the next, I can still hear the rush of the river behind me. And up ahead, just around the bend—another, subtler swell of sound.

When my feet bring me around the bend face to face with the titular cascade on the Cascade Falls trail, I'm hushed. Each rivulet of water ricochets off the rocks and adds its own unique note to the rich symphony. At the base of the

little falls is a shallow pool, maybe shin-height at its deepest. Its stillness contrasts with the unceasing movement of the falls. Water striders flick across the surface with barely a ripple.

Sitting by a small pool at the base of a waterfall always seems a bit intimate, like being let in on a secret. Perhaps it's the way the water hollows out the hillside over time, so that these pools seem cupped in the curve of rock. It's how I imagine it feels to be a bug held gently in a giant's hand. I've stood in the spray of powerful falls—the kind that make you feel small and insignificant before their raw power—and found it exhilarating. But next to the humble heights of these little falls, the sensation is somewhat softer.

With the Potomac River recently recognized as the most endangered river in the United States in 2026, the fragility of freshwater systems is painfully fresh on my mind. None of us can live without water. Water is life itself. As the insatiable expansion of data centers, aging infrastructure, and aftermath of the historic sewage spill this January reverberate through the river on which all of us in the greater DC area depend, ask yourself—what can you do to turn the tide?



The author penning Nature Notes by the side of Cascade Falls.

# Woodend Walks and Tours

## Family Walk at Woodend

**First Saturday of every month: 6/6, 7/4, 8/1 (9-10 am)**

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

Come explore Woodend with your family this summer! Join expert naturalists on a leisurely walk through the habitats of our 40-acre nature sanctuary. 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. Returning families will get 50% off their second walk.

## Beginner Bird Walk

**Second Saturday of every month: 6/13, 7/11, 8/8 (8-9 am)**

**Members \$12; nonmembers \$16. Second person FREE.**

Join us for a guided bird walk for beginners at Woodend! Observe what common birds are found in the DC area, learn binocular basics, and practice using online ID tools. No experience needed. Binoculars are provided.

## Play Space Naturalist Hour

**Fourth Saturday of every month: 6/27, 7/25, 8/22 (10 am-12 pm)**

**FREE, no registration required.**

Where do frogs come from? Why do birds migrate? Whose fur is that? Ask all these questions and more at Woodend's Nature Play Space on the fourth Saturday of the month, where a naturalist educator will set up a display of fascinating nature items for family audiences to explore! This interactive, hands-on, free program encourages curiosity in our youngest naturalists. Drop by anytime between 10 am and noon to meet our naturalist!

## Storytime at Woodend

**Third Saturday of every month: 6/20, 7/18, 8/15 (10:30-11 am)**

**Members \$6 a family; nonmembers \$8 a family**

Join us for Nature Storytime at Woodend Nature Sanctuary! An expert naturalist will read engaging children's books selected for that month's nature theme alongside exciting, hands-on activities. Open to children of all ages but recommended for those 0-6 years old. Storytime is half an hour, but feel free to stick around and enjoy our Nature Play Space afterward!

## Summer Tree ID Tour

**Friday, June 5 (10-11:30 am)**

**Members \$12; nonmembers \$16**

Join Nature Forward's Habitat Manager, Bradley Simpson, for a guided tree ID walk at Woodend! Learn tree ID basics by observing bark, buds, leaves, and fruits; visit three county "champion" trees; and learn about the ecological and cultural significance of native and introduced trees species found in the Capital Region.

## Nature Journaling

**Sunday, June 14 (10-11:30 am)**

**Members \$12; nonmembers \$16**

Are you curious about Nature Journaling but don't know quite how to get started? If so, this workshop is for you! Our enthusiastic nature journaling instructors will share their insights and provide guidance as we go out to observe and record the wonder of nature at Woodend. No artistic skill or experience is needed, just a desire to slow down and develop a deeper connection with the natural world. Bring a journal with blank pages and a pen or pencil.

## Ecological Restoration Tour of Woodend's Habitats

**Saturday, June 20 and August 15 (9-10:30 am)**

**Members \$12; nonmembers \$16**

Restored habitats provide food and shelter for bees and butterflies in our meadow, frogs and salamanders in our pond, and many bird species in our forest. Explore what stewardship means for Woodend's natural habitats on this walk through our 27 acres of forest, 5 acres of wildflower meadow, native plant gardens, ephemeral stream, and pond.

## Forest Movement at Woodend: Gentle Yoga & Nature Immersion

**Saturday, July 25 (9:30-11 am) Rain date is 8/8**

**Members \$12; nonmembers \$16**

Enjoy a peaceful morning of gentle movement and sensory connection with nature at Woodend Nature Sanctuary, with a focus on stillness, deep breath, and slow, accessible movement. This is not a traditional yoga class, but a nature-based movement experience that invites connection with the living world around you. All levels welcome; no prior yoga experience needed. Bring a mat/towel, water, and dress for the weather and uneven outdoor terrain.

# 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](http://natureforward.org/nhfs).

## Online Registration for Natural History Field Studies

**Sign up at [natureforward.org/nhfs](http://natureforward.org/nhfs)**

Registration is handled completely online. Register at [natureforward.org/nhfs](http://natureforward.org/nhfs).

Questions? Contact [pam.oves@natureforward.org](mailto:pam.oves@natureforward.org).



**Required reading lists and instructor bios at [natureforward.org/nhfs](http://natureforward.org/nhfs).**

SCAN FOR REGISTRATION,  
REQUIRED READING LISTS  
AND INSTRUCTOR BIOS

## Butterflies of Summer

**NATH8271, 1.5 CEUs**

**Class night and time: Wednesdays, 7-9 pm**

**Class meetings: June 3-July 8**

**Lectures in person at Woodend**

**Field trip dates: June 6, June 13, and June 20; generally 9 am-3 pm. Locations TBD to allow flexibility to best observe target species.**

**Optional activity: Summer Butterfly Count at Green Ridge State Forest, June 27**

**Instructor: Rick Borchelt**

**Members \$270; nonmembers \$320**



By late May, most of the early spring butterflies are history and an entirely new set of butterfly actors takes stage in the Mid-Atlantic. June offers the greatest diversity of butterflies of the year, and the season offers a unique insight into butterfly-plant interactions and coevolution. Participants will learn to identify the expected butterflies in the mid-Atlantic that fly in the height of summer with special emphasis on swallowtails, hairstreaks, and nymphalids, including Maryland's state butterfly, the Baltimore Checkerspot. In addition, we will observe and document nectar resources for select species, participate in citizen-science documentation of butterfly diversity and abundance, and discuss Maryland's process for determining rare, threatened, and endangered species status for butterflies. Field

trips will include a wide variety of habitats to maximize the numbers of species class participants will see; locations will be chosen closer to the class dates based on what is on the wing but are likely to include the US National Arboretum, Frederick Watershed Forest and environs, and Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge. Participants will also have an optional opportunity to participate in the annual summer butterfly count at Green Ridge State Forest.

## Introduction to Ferns and Lycophytes

NATH7144, 1.5 CEUs

Class night and time: Thursdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: July 2-30

Lectures via zoom

Field trip dates: July 11 (9 am-12 pm): The National Arboretum; July 25 (8:30-11:30 am): Riverbend Park, VA

Instructor: Kit Sheffield

Members \$210; nonmembers \$260

This course covers the identification, evolutionary history, and ecology of ferns and lycophytes. Lectures will focus on understanding the life and reproductive methods of these ancient plants, the local fern families and species, their characteristics, and their uses by humans and animals. Field trips will focus on identification of ferns using a variety of resources, and on the habitats where they can be found.



## Summer Tree ID

NATH7148, 3 CEUs

Class night and time: Tuesdays, 6-8 pm

Class meetings: June 16-August 18

Lectures via zoom most dates; in-person: June 23 and July 7

Field trip dates: Saturdays from 10 am-1 pm. June 27:

Patuxent River Park – Jug Bay Natural Area; July 18:

Woodend Nature Sanctuary; August 1: Little Bennett

Regional Park; August 15: Sugarloaf Mountain

Instructor: Bradley Simpson

Members \$380; nonmembers \$430

Learn about trees, shrubs, and vines in this 10-week intensive course! Taxonomy, plant morphology, and forest ecology will all be explored. The course will focus on the identification of our region's woody plants with the use of local dichotomous keys. Field trips will emphasize plant associations and reinforce the use of keys by highlighting identifying characteristics of various woody plants. Two lectures will be in-person to further solidify terminology to be used in field trips.



### COMING IN SEPTEMBER

*Details on fall classes, open for registration in late summer, at [natureforward.org/nhfs](http://natureforward.org/nhfs).*

### NEW! The Ecology of Plant-Animal Interactions

Dr. John Lill

Birds of Prey

Gemma Radko

Non-Native Invasive Plants of the Mid-Atlantic

Paula Becker



# 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](mailto:pam.oves@natureforward.org) for complete itineraries and registration information or visit [natureforward.org/nature-travel](http://natureforward.org/nature-travel).

## Ancora! Adventure, Birding, and Cuisine: Northeastern Italy

April 28-May 8, 2027

Leaders: Paul Pisano & in-country guides Valerio Russo and Andrea Senese

Cost: TBA

Informational webinar via Zoom on Tuesday, June 9, 4-5:30 pm EST

Paul Pisano returns to Italy for a second tour in partnership with K'Nature, a company of zoologists with years of experience in both scientific research and ecotourism. We will move from coastal wetlands and lagoons to dry grasslands (magredi), agricultural mosaics, karst landscapes, and alpine meadows. This variety not only creates a visually stunning journey, but also allows us to experience an exceptional range of birdlife and ecological communities, reflecting the unique biogeographic position of northeastern Italy. And, of course, we'll refuel ourselves with flavorful regional delicacies along the way! Email [pam.oves@natureforward.org](mailto:pam.oves@natureforward.org) to ask to receive the webinar link, and the detailed itinerary and registration information packet as soon as it becomes available.



European Green Woodpecker

Caro,

*Following behind an extremely successful tour to central Italy in May 2025, I'm very happy to invite you to a new tour exploring a different part of the country – Northeast Italy. We will once again combine adventure, birding and cuisine into an itinerary that spans the mountains and the coast, ensuring that every day spent in the field will be complemented by a hearty meal with specialties from each region. Rich in nature, history, culture, and cuisine, we will see a diverse and beautiful landscape as we explore the natural and cultural side of this fantastic country.*

*Venice is the most popular destination in this part of the country, of course, yet the provinces of Veneto and Friuli Venezia-Giulia have much to offer beyond the canals of that magical city. We'll visit famous wetlands along the coast, including the Po River Delta, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site and Biosphere Reserve. Known for its biodiversity, it offers a serene, wild landscape of wetlands, lagoons, and sand dunes. We'll also travel to nature reserves and quaint towns along the fertile plain between the Dolomites and the coast, including Lake Busche, the Duino cliffs and Val Rosandra. The tour will also dip into the Dolomites, visiting breathtaking spots in the mountains, such as the town of Asiago and Monte Grappa.*

*We'll be visiting the region during the height of spring migration, and with visits to varied habitats, we should see a diverse mix of birds from flamingoes and shorebirds on the coast to raptors, griffons, woodpeckers, warblers and other songbirds on the plains and in the mountains. With our friends at K'Nature, we'll spend our days seeing a side of Italy that most never see.*

*I look forward to sharing this sensational experience with Nature Forward members. Sinceramente, Paul Pisano*



## Churchill's Belugas, Polar Bears, & Arctic Wildlife

July 30-August 5, 2027

Leaders: Bradley Simpson & in-country guide

Cost: \$9,295 per person based on double/shared occupancy

Optional Single Supplement: \$945

Internal Air: \$1,689 per person

Informational webinar via Zoom on Thursday, June 25, 6:30-8 pm EST

Few of nature's marvels match the intense aliveness of an Arctic summer. In a region that's frozen, still and dark much of the year, the Canadian Northland awakens with a frenzy of energy during long days when the tundra turns green, wildflowers burst with color, animals come forth in great flocks and herds, and belugas return for their summer feasting. More than 3,000 of these amiable white whales congregate at the mouth of the Churchill River, and our motorized rafts and kayaks put us at eye level with them. On the surrounding tundra, look for terrestrial wildlife—we often spot caribou, Arctic fox, ptarmigan and roving polar bears, their creamy coats contrasting with the rocky shoreline and dark boreal forest. From the remote village of Churchill as our base on Hudson Bay, we are surrounded by the flurry of natural wonders a northern summer provides.



*Hi! I'm Bradley Simpson, Nature Forward's Habitat Manager, NHFS instructor, and all-around botany enthusiast. Here in the Mid-Atlantic region, we are blessed with mild winters and a long growing season. But in the Arctic where the ground is frozen, life is still, and the landscape is dark much of year, the summer comes alive with an intense frenzy of energy during long days when wildflowers blossom and wildlife flock to the area. Join me in the Summer of 2027 to immerse yourself in the the unforgettable energy of an Arctic summer.*

*This trip will venture to Canada's Hudson Bay. From the town of Churchill, inaccessible by road, we'll undertake boat and kayak trips to interact with belugas, hike to search for wildlife such as Arctic fox, ptarmigan, caribou, and polar bears, and revel in the rich wildflower diversity—and these are just some of the exciting activities this expedition offers.*

*This experience is offered in partnership with Natural Habitat Adventures, an ecotourism operator since 1985 with industry-leading sustainability practices.*

*I am thrilled to share this extraordinary experience with Nature Forward members, as we witness the earthly beauties of an awe-inspiring Arctic summer.*

*Your partner in exploration, Bradley*



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

February 2-14, 2027

Leaders: Stephanie Mason & in-country guide Eddie Recio

Cost: \$6,175, single supplement \$900 (limited availability)

This will be Stephanie's 29th trip as a Nature Forward leader to this small, tropical wonderland with amazing plant and animal diversity. Costa Rica's colorful birds—from the elegant Snowcap Hummingbird to rainbow-hued Tanagers to the large, comical Toucans—will turn any nature enthusiast into a bird lover. Of course our group will keep its eyes open as well for other wildlife including mammals, butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians. Our trip will visit moist Caribbean lowlands, Caribbean slope, lush cloud forest habitat at 5,000 feet, and the Cano Negro wetlands in the north. Email [pam.oves@natureforward.org](mailto:pam.oves@natureforward.org) to ask to receive a detailed itinerary and registration information packet as soon as it becomes available.



Violet Sabrewing

# Leave a Legacy for Nature

## August is Make-A-Will Month



This August, during Make A Will Month, we invite you to consider how your love for nature can have impact beyond your lifetime.

When you include Nature Forward in your estate plans, you help protect local habitats, inspire learners of all ages, and ensure a healthier world for generations to come. A legacy gift—made through a will or trust, life insurance, or retirement assets—costs nothing today and creates lasting impact tomorrow.

By sharing your plans, you become part of the Nature Forward Legacy Society, a community of supporters committed to long term conservation. Members receive a commemorative pin and invitations to major donor programs, walks, and special events.



Learn more at [natureforward.org/gift-and-estate-planning](https://natureforward.org/gift-and-estate-planning)

Or contact Corinna Fisk, Development Director, at 301-652-1089, [corinna.fisk@natureforward.org](mailto:corinna.fisk@natureforward.org).

# Make an Impact Today with Your Donor-Advised Fund

You can support Nature Forward right now—simply and meaningfully—through your Donor-Advised Fund (DAF). Recommend a grant from your DAF to help protect local habitats, inspire learners of all ages, and expand access to nature across our region.

### Why give through your DAF?

- It's easy—recommend a grant directly from your fund
- It's flexible—support the programs you care about most
- It's impactful—your gift strengthens conservation and education today

Many supporters choose to use their DAF for annual giving, special initiatives, or to maximize their charitable impact each year.

### To recommend a grant:

Search for *Nature Forward* in your DAF provider  
(EIN: 53-0233715)

Questions?

Contact Corinna Fisk at 301-652-1089 or [corinna.fisk@natureforward.org](mailto:corinna.fisk@natureforward.org).

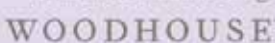


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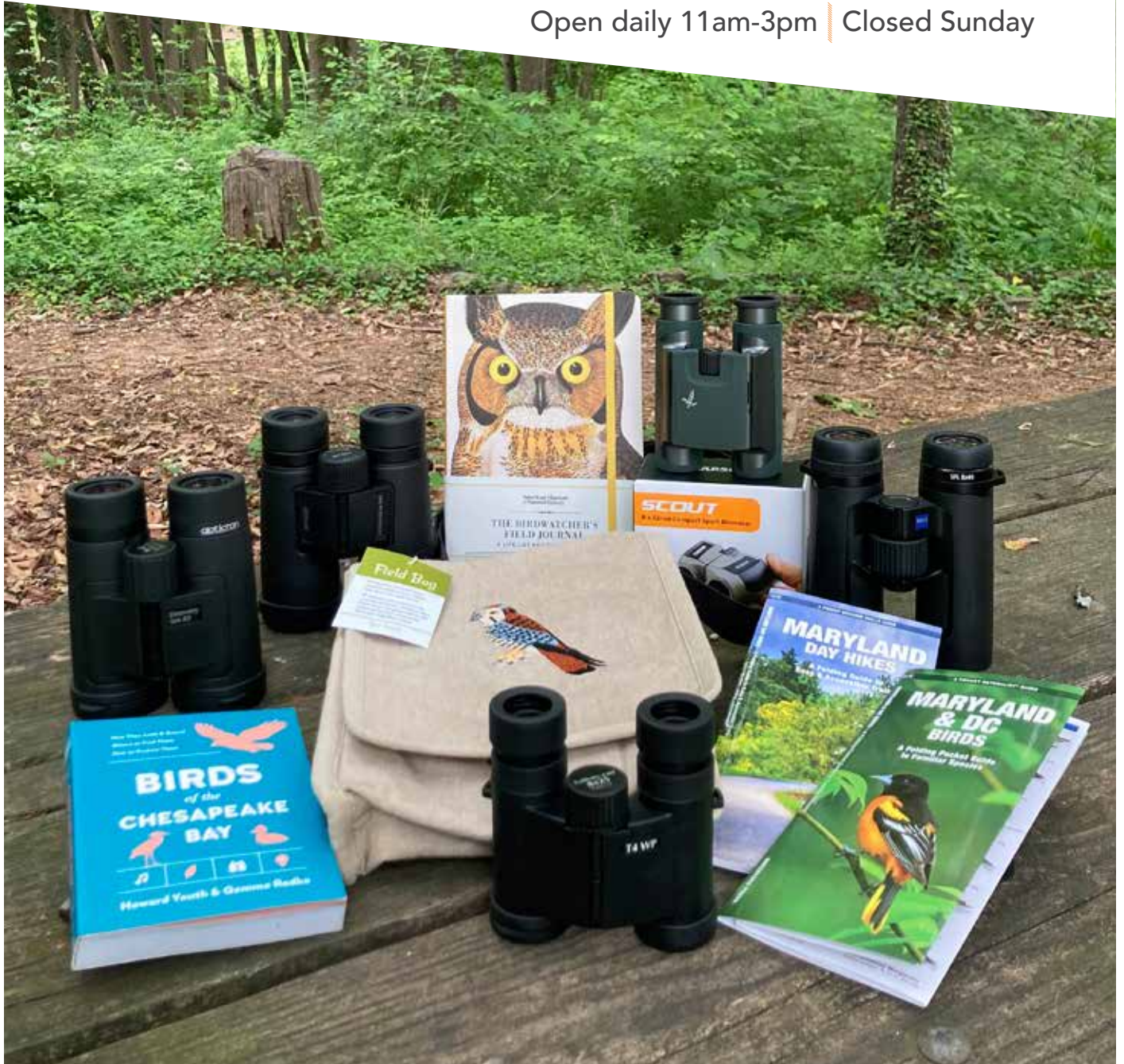
For availability and details, call (301) 450-1407  
or email [beatriz.engel@natureforward.org](mailto:beatriz.engel@natureforward.org)

*Photos by Nessa K Photography (bride),  
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[woodendsanctuary.org](https://woodendsanctuary.org)

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# Cultivating Co-Op Stewards: A Partnership between We Are CASA and Nature Forward

by Alice Sturm, Director of Restoration

In March of 2025, Nature Forward's Restoration Department reached out to We Are CASA (CASA) to see if they would be interested in installing a rain garden at their beautiful historic Multi Cultural Center (MCC) in Langley Park, Maryland. Little did we know, only a few short months later, we would find so many more opportunities for collaboration and community!

We Are CASA is a member-led organization whose mission is to create a more just society by building power and improving the quality of life in working-class Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. Originally founded in Maryland, they have a large membership across the state and immediately saw the opportunity to collaborate on not only ameliorating the drainage concerns at their property, but also with workforce development.

Luckily, these two efforts go hand-in-hand. While we quickly identified a good location for a rain garden at the MCC—a lawn panel with several downspouts draining across it—we also heard from CASA members, youth, and community members that adding more vegetation and edible landscaping to another area of the site was a priority. Thanks to funding from the Klingenstein Fund, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and the US Forest Service, we were able to install not only a rain garden, but also a food forest, pollinator garden, informal stump seating, and picnic tables in a community gathering area.



While installing these new features is great for stormwater management, habitat, and community greening, just as impactful is the opportunity for workforce development that happens alongside. We Are CASA's workforce development program, led by Lindolfo Carballo, has been fostering a worker's Co-op, and members were able to attend the installation of the rain garden, participate in the planting, and now have a maintenance contract to keep it watered and weeded. We've supported this, and their other projects, by providing a number of bilingual trainings to the Co-op members on sustainable landscaping.

Co-op Members weeding the MCC's new rain garden during the spring maintenance training.

They've come to Woodend for classes on tree planting, community forestry, and invasive plant identification and management techniques, and we have also provided on-site training supporting the ongoing maintenance of the MCC landscaping. Lindolfo was able to present this collaboration at our Naturally Latinos conference.

We are looking forward to more projects as a result of this partnership. At the MCC, we will be installing more green infrastructure this fall, with help from the worker's co-op, and we will also partner with them to conduct some invasive plant removal, and to design and install a food forest at We Are CASA's Rockville Welcome Center. Another priority is to expand the audience of our trainings. In addition to working with the members of the co-operative, we will build offerings tailored to day laborers who come to CASA's various welcome centers for support, and offer education on sustainable landscaping and workplace safety for those in the green trades.

This partnership is a microcosm of the work of the Restoration Department. We have leveraged Woodend as a living laboratory where workers have been able participate in and learn about our habitat restoration work on site; seeing established projects and those of different dates of installation is invaluable in learning about maintenance, invasive removal, and how site needs change over time. While we will always start with Woodend, we don't stop there—we've also been able to create more thriving habitats, with more able stewards, across the region, and we're excited to add Rockville and Langley Park to the network of green spaces from which people and wildlife alike can benefit.



CASA youth preparing to plant a pollinator garden at the MCC.



## Goodbye Gregg

**Gregg Trilling**, Nature Forward's Conservation Outreach Manager, will be retiring in June. Gregg joined Nature Forward in 2007 as a GreenKids educator before transitioning to lead Nature Forward's Water Quality Monitoring Program. He helped to develop Nature Forward's Creek Critters app to guide people through collecting and identifying benthic macroinvertebrates and Nature Forward's Water Quality Monitoring GIS Map to allow people to learn about the health of streams across DC and Maryland. Additionally, Gregg expanded the Water Quality Monitoring Program to engage local residents on stream health through outreach events, stream field classes, and stream learning stations. Although he's retiring, Gregg will still contribute to Nature Forward's Water Quality Monitoring Program as a volunteer team leader at the Northwest Branch site near Adelphi Mill.



## Welcome Sam

Welcome **Sam Brown** as Nature Forward's new Water Quality Monitoring Manager! Before coming to Nature Forward, she worked as an environmental educator, naturalist, and ecohydrology research assistant. Recently as a Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps fellow, she worked at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to assess stream health across the state, collecting and analyzing physical, chemical, and biological data. She holds a B.S. in Geology, Earth, and Environmental Science from the University of Maryland. In her free time, you can find Sam kayaking, playing guitar, and looking for critters—especially herps!

## Farewell Melanie, Maggie, and Rose

Nature Forward Preschool sends warm wishes to our incredible Saplings teacher, **Melanie Oppenheimer**, Oaks teacher **Maggie McDow**, and director **Rose Bruseferro**.

Melanie will be welcoming a new bundle of joy in September. We thank her for the incredible care, patience and love she's shared with her students each day. She's helped nurture many little nature-lovers, creating a safe, joyful space where they could grow, explore Woodend, and feel valued.

Maggie will be pursuing a master's degree in reading education. We will miss her warm presence, cheerful spirit, and the special magic she brings to working with neurospicy students. We couldn't be happier for her as she prepares to grow her skillset in the classroom. We know she'll be as amazing as a reading specialist as she's been an outdoor educator.

Rose will be passing the torch to a new director this summer. We want to express our deep gratitude for the vision, care, and heart she's brought to Nature Preschool. Her passion for nature-based early education has shaped the direction of our program. Under her leadership the preschool achieved Maryland EXCELS status, and our teachers gained or increased their Nature Based Teacher Certifications. The culture she nurtured is rooted in curiosity, wonder, and connection and will only continue to grow long after her departure.



# Memorial and Tribute Contributions

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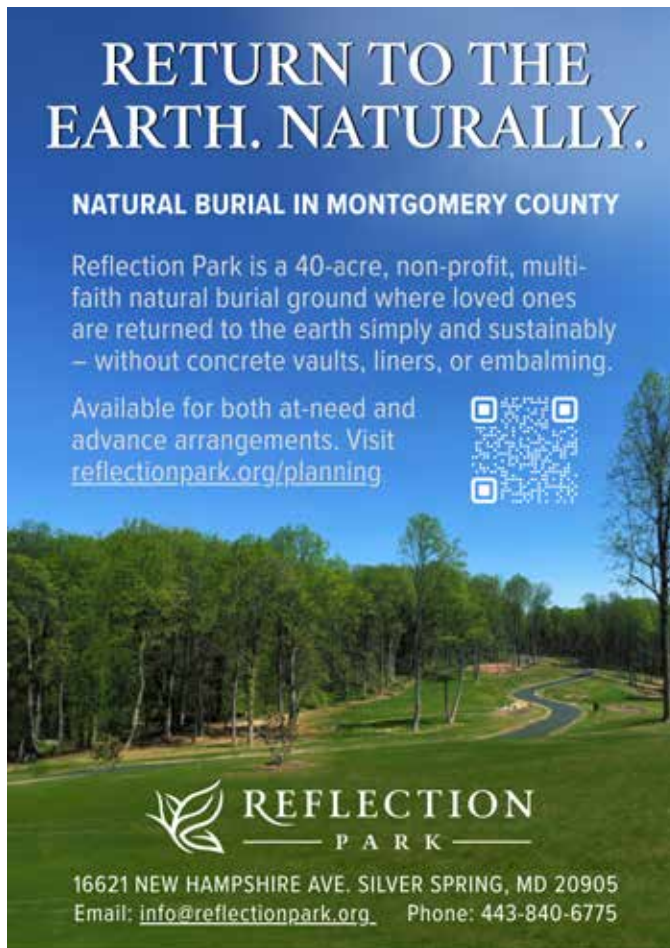
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## Registration Information

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.

### Health Guidelines for Programs

Please stay home if you are sick. Nature Forward follows CDC guidelines for communicable diseases. Policies are subject to change.

## Volunteer Opportunity

### Serve on the Nature Forward Board of Directors and Board-led Committees

Nature Forward is in search of new Board and Committee members! This is a great opportunity for young professionals to advance their careers and for seasoned members to bring their expertise to Nature Forward leadership. In particular, Nature Forward would like to enlist a diverse cohort of Board and Committee members who have a passion for the natural world and a deep commitment to the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

We are eager to include members from throughout the DC metro region, especially those from Virginia and DC where we are seeking broader representation.

If you would like to be considered for Board or Committee service, please contact amy.warren@natureforward.org or apply at <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/EumiUxJwpS>. Applications are due June 14.



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