

OAK LEAF

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

Volume 37 • Issue 3

September – October 2013

FALL HAPPENINGS

Take advantage of these wonderful events!

Guided Nature Walks

at Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve Winchester, VA

Discover fall beauty in the heart of Winchester with Jim Smith as he points out unique fall foliage and migratory birds.

September through October, Jim will lead walks every other Saturday and discuss the changes in the environment from week to week.

► Birding with Jim Smith at Abrams Creek on a crisp fall morning.



Walks begin at 8:30 AM, last approximately 2 hours and are non-strenuous. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, and/or cameras. Participants are also encouraged to bring water and dress for the weather.

Upcoming walk dates are **September 21st, October 5th and October 19th.**

Interested walkers should meet in the Children of America parking lot off of W. Jubal Early Drive, approximately 1/2 mile west of Valley Avenue. Park at the west side of the lot by the woods. If you arrive a few minutes late, simply walk the path until you catch up with the group.

All of Jim's guided walks are **FREE** and open to everyone. In the case of inclement weather, these events will be cancelled. For more information, contact Jim Smith at (540) 303-3983.

Fall Bird Walk

at Sky Meadows State Park Delaplane, VA

Join naturalist Margaret Wester for an educational walk on the Woodpecker Lane and Gap Run trails at Sky Meadows State Park.



The focus will be on Red-headed Woodpeckers and Bluebirds. Both species thrive at the park and can be spotted regularly.

This walk will be held **Saturday, October 5th, from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM.** Daily parking/State Park fees apply (\$4.00 per vehicle). Interested walkers should meet at the Visitor's Center. In the event of inclement weather, there will be a lecture on the same subject as the walk at the Carriage House. Please contact Margaret with any questions at margaretwester@hotmail.com (preferred) or (540) 837-2799.

Shenandoah Audubon, your local Chapter of the National Audubon Society, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. Financial statements are available upon request. Our Audubon Chapter Code is X-54.

Visit us on the web at
AUDUBON-NSVAS.ORG

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We welcome your feedback!

WRITE:

Shenandoah Audubon, PO Box 2693,
Winchester, VA 22604

EMAIL:

shenandoahaudubon@yahoo.com

CALL:

Our friendly Programs/PR chair Rosemary Rogers can field any questions or concerns at (540) 323-7627

Enjoy the glory of Autumn!

Don't miss these FREE programs!

Our September and October program meetings will be held at **Hester Auditorium** in **Henkel Hall** on Shenandoah University's Main Campus in Winchester (exit 313B off Interstate 81). Parking is available next to the Auditorium or at Ohrstrom-Bryant Theatre.

Maps and directions can be found at <http://www.su.edu/campus-maps/>

Celebrating the "Flora of Virginia" September 18th - 7:00 PM

After 250 years, one of the most anticipated books is out. The *Flora of Virginia* is the first guide to all of Virginia's plants since 1762. This modern, comprehensive 1554-page manual exhaustively covers 3164 species of native and naturalized plants along with their genera and families, 1400 of which are illustrated. It also includes keys to plant identification as well as detailed chapters on the history of botanical exploration and the natural history of Virginia.

The need for the *Flora* was discussed for about 80 years, but the ball didn't get rolling until 12 years ago, when Marion Lobstein suggested to Chris Ludwig, Chief Biologist of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, that he lead the staff of volunteers who brought this book to life.

"It felt like running a marathon...figuratively, an 11 year marathon that took a lot of effort and concentration," Ludwig explained. "It feels great to be done and have a tangible finished product, and it really is only the beginning of what we can do now that we have gathered all of this information."

At our program, co-author Ludwig, who is Executive Director of the *Flora of Virginia* Project, will give a short presentation about the production and significance of the book. A copy of the *Flora* will then be presented to the Shenandoah University Library.

Ludwig's presentation and the Library's formal acceptance of the *Flora* will be followed by a short presentation by Woody Bousquet of Shenandoah University's Environmental Studies department entitled "The Flora of Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley".

A reception will follow. This program is co-sponsored by Shenandoah University and The Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

The *Flora* can benefit anyone with an interest in or career that relies on land, plants and wildlife. Take advantage of this FREE event to learn more about your diverse Virginia habitat!

To aid in planning, if you will be attending, please contact Cathy Mayes of the Piedmont Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society at piedmontvnps@gmail.com or (540) 364-4525.



▼ The board and staff that made the *Flora* a reality! Center is co-author Chris Ludwig, who is holding the original watercolor depicted on the dust jacket. Chris will be speaking at our program.



“MUCH NEEDED AND LONG AWAITED”

A HELPFUL REVIEW FROM A *FLORA* OWNER ON AMAZON.COM

To get right to the point, the new *Flora of Virginia* is something that anyone interested in Virginia's natural history should own. While the keys and descriptions are certainly on the technical side of the literary spectrum, it is certainly accessible for anyone willing to make the effort to learn the lingo (I suggest a good plant terminology dictionary like *Plant Identification Terminology: An Illustrated Glossary*).

Some highlights:

The two introductory chapters detailing Virginia's history of botanical exploration and the natural history of the state (including excellent full-color photographs of various habitat types), respectively, are extremely informative, well written, and alone are worth the price of admission.

The line drawings are exceptional and very useful. The authors made a point to include extra illustrations in sometimes confusing genera like *Quercus* and *Carex*. No, there aren't species photographs, but line drawings generally are better at conveying important diagnostic charac-

teristics, and the illustrators have certainly done so.

In my opinion, one of the best things about the species descriptions in the *Flora of Virginia* is that they provide habitat information that is far more detailed and useful than what is presented in other, much older floras from surrounding states that Virginia's botanical students have relied on for decades. For instance, the habitat description for *Quercus marilandica* (Blackjack oak) in this new *Flora* states “Dry upland forests and woodlands; typically associated with poor soils, including alternately wet and droughty shrink-swell clays, xeric hardpans, deep sands, and shallow, nutrient poor soils over acidic bedrock.” The habitat description for *Quercus marilandica* in *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas* simply states “Dry, poor soil.” Similarly, *Flora of West Virginia* says only “Dry soils” for habitat information. More than any other flora I've used, the habitat descriptions in the *Flora of Virginia* help the reader to actually visualize where various species can be found.

Similarly, distribution information isn't just a list of counties but rather includes more useful information like the watersheds and geologic formations/substrates where species can be found.

Another note:

The taxonomy in the *Flora of Virginia* reflects newer systematic research. Some families like the Liliaceae and the Scrophulariaceae have fallen under the taxonomic axe. This will probably bother some, and it does take a bit of time to get used to, but I'd rather be correct than comfortable.

As I said in the first sentence, the *Flora of Virginia* is a necessity for anyone interested in any facet of the natural history of Virginia, be it botany, forestry, geology, geography, habitat protection, or land conservation. Given a little bit of practice, the *Flora of Virginia* is accessible to anyone with botanical interests and it has certainly become my go-to reference when botanizing in Virginia and surrounding states.

- Z. Bradford

Meet your Shenandoah Riverkeeper! October 16th - 7:00 PM

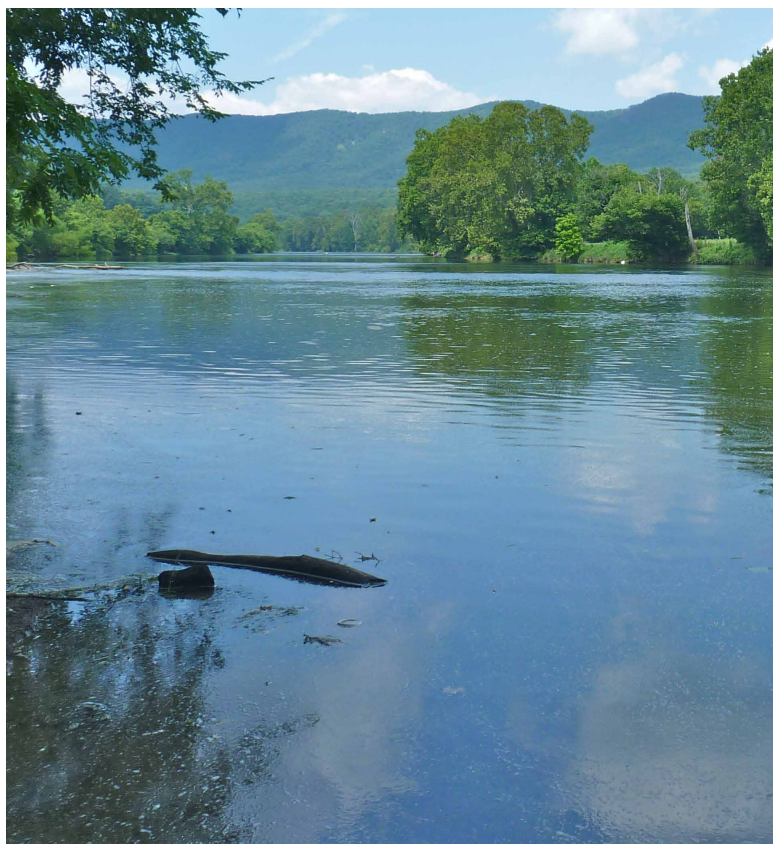
On October 16th, Jeff Kelble will be on hand to discuss all things river!

Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc. is home to two Riverkeeper programs: one for the Potomac River and one for the Shenandoah River. Riverkeepers use community action and legal enforcement to protect and restore water quality for people, fish, and aquatic life.

Jeff Kelble, the Shenandoah Riverkeeper, patrols the water, educates the community, and advocates for a healthier Shenandoah River. Jeff knows how an unhealthy river can hurt the local economy and the health of the local residents. After fish kills ruined his fishing guide business in 2005, Jeff closed his 6-year old venture and joined up with Potomac Riverkeeper Ed Merrifield.

Jeff's job is to investigate pollution in the Shenandoah and start a dialogue with the polluters. If the polluters do not listen, Jeff is ready to use the citizen suit provisions of the Clean Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and other environmental laws.

At our program, Jeff will discuss human activities that used to threaten the river and those that still do. We'll learn how we can lessen our footprint with easy ways to get involved to reduce or eliminate these threats.



Don't miss this opportunity to voice your concerns about the Shenandoah!

For more information, visit <http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org/shenandoah-riverkeeper>

HAWK WATCH HIKE

September 21st - 12:00 PM

Following the early morning walk at Abrams Creek, naturalist Jim Smith will lead a hike at Snickers Gap. This area is an official Hawk Migration Association of North America counting site where over 19,000 migrating raptors have been spotted in a single day!

This moderate hike begins at Snickers Gap and follows the Appalachian trail to Bears Den overlook. There Jim will point out woodland birds, ravens, and migrating raptors. Wear good hiking shoes and bring binoculars, scopes and cameras. You can even bring a bagged lunch and a folding chair if you wish.

Interested hikers should meet in the parking lot at Snickers Gap on Rt. 7 and Blue Ridge Mountain Road at 12:00 PM.

Eyes to the Sky: Watching raptor migration at Snickers Gap. ►



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QUACK FOR THOUGHT

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.

—Albert Einstein

Shenandoah Audubon wants YOU!

The terms of our current 2012 - 2014 board members will soon be over. If you would like to make a difference in your local community and promote environmental awareness, please contact us! We will be detailing the roles that need filled at our program meetings.



Please recycle.

