



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

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WELCOME

Dear Friends,

It was another busy year for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in 2023 as we continued to offer programs and activities while broadening environmental topics specific to Loudoun County.

Throughout the year, we provided a multitude of interesting programs, including nature walks; bee and insect programs; and even live animal programs that included raptors, owls, snakes, and mammals local to the county. Our many birding walks and “Big Sit” events were held in Morven Park, Sweet Run State Park, Algonkian Park, Banshee Reeks Park, Dulles Greenway Wetlands, Snickers Gap, and new locations such as the Goodstone Inn and Izaak Walton League. All the walks were open to birders of all experience levels.

Our annual Bird and Butterfly counts continued to play an important role in monitoring the population of these animals in our community. The past year we also started Young Birders walks to inspire younger adults and children to bird on their own!

Throughout the year, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy offered hands-on educational events, such as stream monitoring; amphibian, vernal pool training with Jenny Erickson, nature journaling with Nancy Morgan, a bat monitoring program with Bruce Kimmel, Bluebird Nesting boxes, as well as a winter sowing workshop with BJ Lecrone. We continue to hold regular workdays and walks at the JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary to help maintain the rare wetlands located on the property. Our Eagle Cam program proved to be wildly popular and successful this year, with three new fledglings born during the spring mating season.

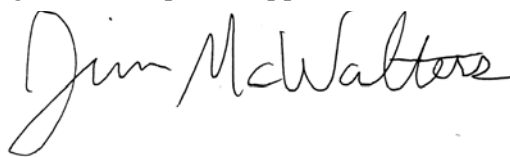
During the 2022-23 school year, we distributed over 6,500 books, The Native Book of ABCs for Virginia, to all first-grade students in LCPS. Over the last two school years we distributed almost 13,000 books. We participated in several regional fairs, including the Leesburg Flower and Garden Show, the Appalachian

Trail Festival and the Bluemont Fair. We also held a photography exhibit at the Government Center called “Wild About Loudoun.”

In addition to our on-going Audubon at Home program, we continued to host the very popular Native Plant sale event at Morven Park in both June and September. 2023 also saw our organization partner with Watermarks Woods Nursery, the Loudoun County Public Library (LCPL) and the Birch Tree Bookstore to offer a Native Plant Book Club that focuses on native plants.

On the advocacy front, we were involved in several key items, including impact of data center growth, the proposed Rt. 15 bypass, a Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, and lighting at Scott Jenkins Park. Finally, I’d like to thank everyone who participated and contributed to our fundraising initiatives. Whether it was Walk for Wildlife, Give Choose, Birdathon, a donation you made, or time you gave as a volunteer, you play a vital part in our continued success.

We would not be able to do all that we do without your generous help and support. **Thank you!**



Jim McWalters
Board President
Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy



WHO WE ARE



MISSION

To inspire, motivate, and engage people to protect, preserve, and restore wildlife habitat.



VISION

A place where people and wildlife thrive together.



VALUES

Passion: Our passion for wildlife and habitat protection drives our commitment to what we do.

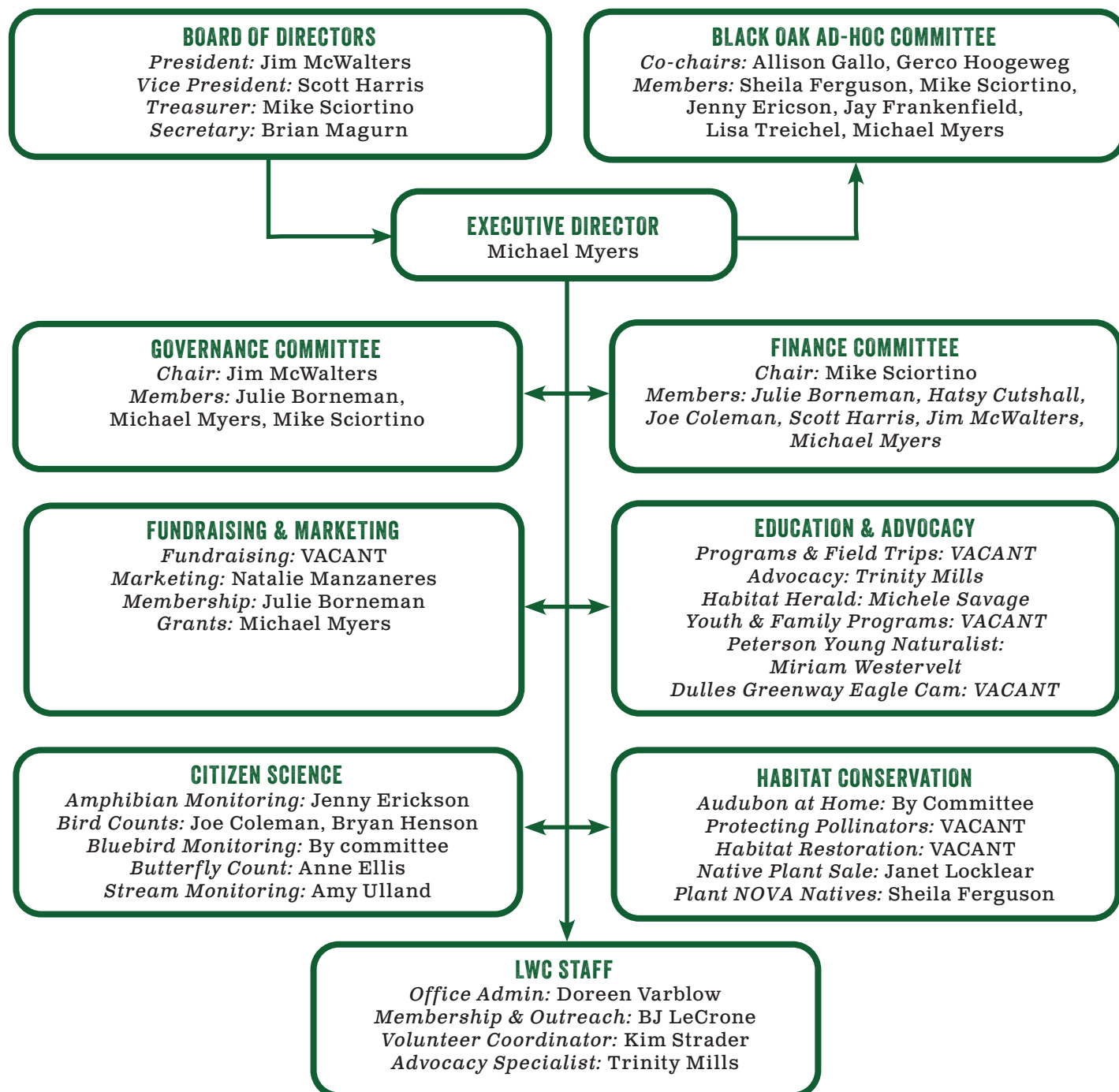
Stewardship: We are good stewards of our gifts.

Partnership: We partner with other nonprofits, government agencies, donors and members to carry out our mission

Diversity: We actively engage everyone in the conservation of nature.

STRUCTURE

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors. Collectively, this dynamic group contributes a wealth of experience, expertise, and passion to realizing our vision of a place where people and wildlife thrive together.



Jim McWalters
President



Scott Harris
Vice President



Mike Sciortino
Treasurer



Brian Magurn
Secretary



Sherri Bartlett



Julie Borneman



Jay Frankenfeld



Allison Gallo



Bruce Hill



Bruce Kimmel



Peter Lyttle



Mike Scott



Amy Ulland



Jennifer Venable



Pat Whittle



PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Our volunteers are a force of nature, and our volunteer program coordinators take the lead in activating our mission. The selfless dedication, passion, and tireless efforts of all our volunteers are the enduring heartbeat of Loudoun Wildlife.



Steve Allen
Habitat Herald
Editor



Joe Coleman
Birding



Anne Ellis
Butterfly Count



Jenny Erickson
Ampibian/Reptile
Monitoring



Gerco Hoogeweg
JK Black Oak



Patrick Lewis
Young Birders



Janet Locklear
Native Plant Sale



Amy Ulland
Stream Monitoring



Rich Wailes
Bluebird
Monitoring



Miriam Westervelt
Peterson Young
Naturalists

LOUDOUN WILDLIFE STAFF

We share a responsibility as stewards of our land, and our small but mighty staff embraces that calling every day. They're driven to protect, preserve and restore the natural wonders that surround and inspire us to ensure generations to come will reap the benefits.



Michael Myers
Executive Director



Sheila Ferguson
*Web Specialist,
Plant NOVA
Natives
Representative*



BJ Lecrone
*Office
Management and
Online Outreach
Specialist*



Trinity Mills
*Conservation
Advocacy
Specialist*



Kim Strader
*Volunteer
Coordinator*



Doreen Varblow
*Office
Management
Specialist*



OUR WORK

Loudoun Wildlife's work is focused on five key areas: **Education, Citizen Science, Habitat Conservation, Conservation Advocacy**, and the ongoing stewardship of our **JK Black Oak** property, an 89-acre, globally rare wetlands in Lucketts, Va. The pages that follow offer some of the top highlights from each area in 2023.

EDUCATION

Loudoun Wildlife hosted 368 programs and events in 2023, 213 falling under the "education" category, which included free nature programs, field trips, and the delivery of nature-based education programs in local K-12 classrooms.

Eagle Cam

This year marked our second season partnering with the Dulles Greenway to provide a window into the life of a mated pair of Bald Eagles via nest cameras installed at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands in 2021. The season was full of surprises, starting in February when three eggs were laid. Everyone rejoiced in watching the eggs hatch and the raising of three healthy eaglets.

Several weeks before the eaglets were expected to fledge, the nest began to collapse, causing two of the eaglets to fall to the ground at separate times. In both instances, Eagle Cam Volunteers quickly alerted and worked with Greenway staff, a local wildlife rescuer, and a wildlife veterinarian to evaluate the eaglets for possible injury.

One was released back to the wetlands within a couple days, while the other was sent to a facility for longer term care. The second eaglet was released back to the wetlands at the end of August, a moment recorded and [aired by Fox 5 in Washington, D.C.](#)

The Dulles Greenway funded rebuilding of the nest at the end of June, and viewers watched in amazement as Windows to Wildlife staff built a frame in the tree to help stabilize the nest area and prevent future collapse. We were relieved when our resident Eagles, Rosa and Martin, returned to the nest in September to begin preparations for egg laying in 2024.

At the beginning of December 2023, the male Eagle, Martin, disappeared and has not been seen on camera since. Shortly afterward, two Eagles began courting the female, Rosa, and by the end of the year, it appeared that Rosa had accepted one as a mate.



This season was a challenging one for everyone involved with the Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam Program. Despite this, our volunteers conducted 60 Nest Fan Chat Sessions via Discord, reaching over 2,000 people, and 53 Classroom Chat sessions (one of which is pictured at right) reaching over 1,800 students and 120 adults.

Additionally, volunteers produced approximately 70 videos posted on the YouTube channel, which reached 6.74K subscribers, while the Facebook page had 14K followers.

The Dulles Greenway Eagle Cam Program is fortunate to have this group of knowledgeable, dedicated, and passionate volunteers who contributed over 2,800 hours to the program in 2023.



Habitat Herald

The Habitat Herald is our member newsletter, and it has continued steadily on the production schedule adopted last year by the LWC board, with the Winter issue arriving in members' mailboxes and other venues on or about Feb. 1, Spring on May 1, Summer on Aug. 1, and Fall on Nov. 1.

We could not do this without the contributions of our tiny all-volunteer staff of talented editors and copy editors — or without support and input from all our dedicated readers. We're grateful to have a corps of steadfast contributors who regularly write articles for the newsletter and share their photography for publication.

We've also been fortunate in finding a few new contributing writers and photographers in the last year, but we are always looking for new ideas, new writers, and new photographers who can help us convey Loudoun Wildlife's important mission to our readers.



Peterson Young Naturalist Program

The Peterson Young Naturalist Program connects Loudoun Wildlife volunteers with teachers in Loudoun County Public Schools to deliver fun nature education activities for students that meet formal learning objectives.

In 2023, the program conducted four “K-12 Outdoor Classroom” workshops for teachers in 18 different schools across Loudoun County. We focused on the positive benefits of outdoor learning on student physical and mental well-being as well as academic success.

Over a thousand students engaged in nature journaling. On a scale of 1-5, teachers rated the Peterson curriculum 4.9 for effectiveness in improving student “naturalistic intelligence;” 4.9 in improving reading, writing and visual art skills; and 4.8 in improving math skills.

New to the Peterson Instructor Team this year were representatives of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Loudoun Pediatric Obesity Coalition, and Loudoun Environmental Education Association. Parents and educators interested in using the Peterson program lessons can find them on [our Peterson webpage](#).

These students received a cash award of \$100, a certificate, a “Peterson Field Guide to the Birds,” and complimentary 5-year LWC membership. Teachers each received a backpack with various supplies.

Thiago Villena Diaz

Kindergarten, Mrs. Cunningham, Frederick Douglas Elementary

Shanvi Rafaliya

Kindergarten, Mrs. Polanski, Arcola Elementary

Ethlyn Koss

Grade 4, Mrs. Beach, Hamilton Elementary

Georgiana Runyan

Grade 4, Mrs. Beach, Banneker Elementary

Amly Park

Grade 4, Mrs. Reid, Buffalo Trail Elementary

Alex Yoon

Grade 5, Mrs. Pitzen, Cardinal Ridge Elementary

Mati Blackford

Grade 7, Mrs. Gomathinayagam, Farmwell Station Middle School

Isabella Demark

Grade 11, Mrs. Gemmer, Woodgrove High School

Sarah Zurfluh

Grade 12, Mrs. Mulvey, Tuscarora High School

Hannah Ercanbrack

Grade 12, Mrs. Javel Gutierrez, Park View High School



Programs, Field Trips, and Outreach

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy continues to inspire, motivate and engage people to protect, preserve and restore wildlife habitat through its ongoing series of educational programs and field trips, most of which are offered free of charge.

In 2023, we also saw the return of several popular programs including Writing in Nature, the Big Sit, Fall Colors Walk with Emily Southgate, and a Hawk Watch at Snickers Gap.

We also participated in several outreach events, including the annual Leesburg Flower and Garden show, Bluemont fair, SEAS at Trailside Middle School, Round Hill Appalachian Trail Fest, Hail to the Trail in Purcellville, and the Leesburg Fourth of July Parade. *(Our parade float won the coveted “Patriot Cup” from Loudoun Now, as pictured at right.)* We also welcomed members to our office for an Open House in December.

In addition, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy continued its monthly bird and nature walks at Bles Park, the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Studies, and Banshee Reeks. We also led several bird walks at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands, Broad Run Stream Valley Park, and Algonkian Park.

We introduced the Young Birders program, which includes walks led by young adults. In December we conducted our Christmas Bird Count and brought back the Tally Rally. Annual events such as amphibian and bluebird monitoring, Nature in Winter, the Spring Wildflowers Walk, and our Butterfly Count continue to be popular.

During 2023, we offered 368 programs and events, including education (213), volunteer (67), and outreach (18) programs; fundraisers (10); and Eagle Cam chats (60). An estimated 11,950 participants took part!



CITIZEN SCIENCE

Through our citizen science efforts, we mobilize passionate volunteers to monitor the health of our ecosystems and share critical data with local, state, and national organizations.

Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring

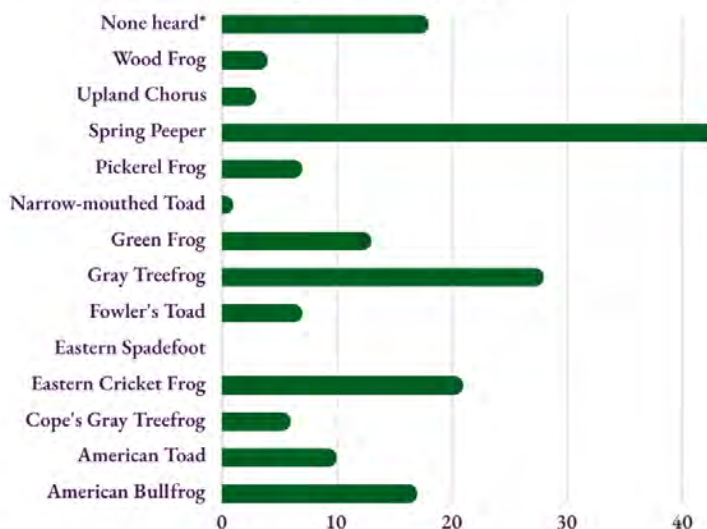
The Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring program provides insights into the effect of habitat loss on various species of wildlife. We recognize the need to develop an inventory of the species present in Loudoun, track populations and trends, and identify areas of critical habitat.

Frog Watch

FrogWatch is a national program in which data (specifically frog/toad calls) is collected and added to a national database. 2023 was the third year that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy participated and contributed to this national database. The season for monitoring frog/toad calls runs from mid/late February to August/September (weather dependent).

A total of 179 observations were made during the 2023 season, with 702 total observations overall since LWC became a Frog Watch chapter in 2021.

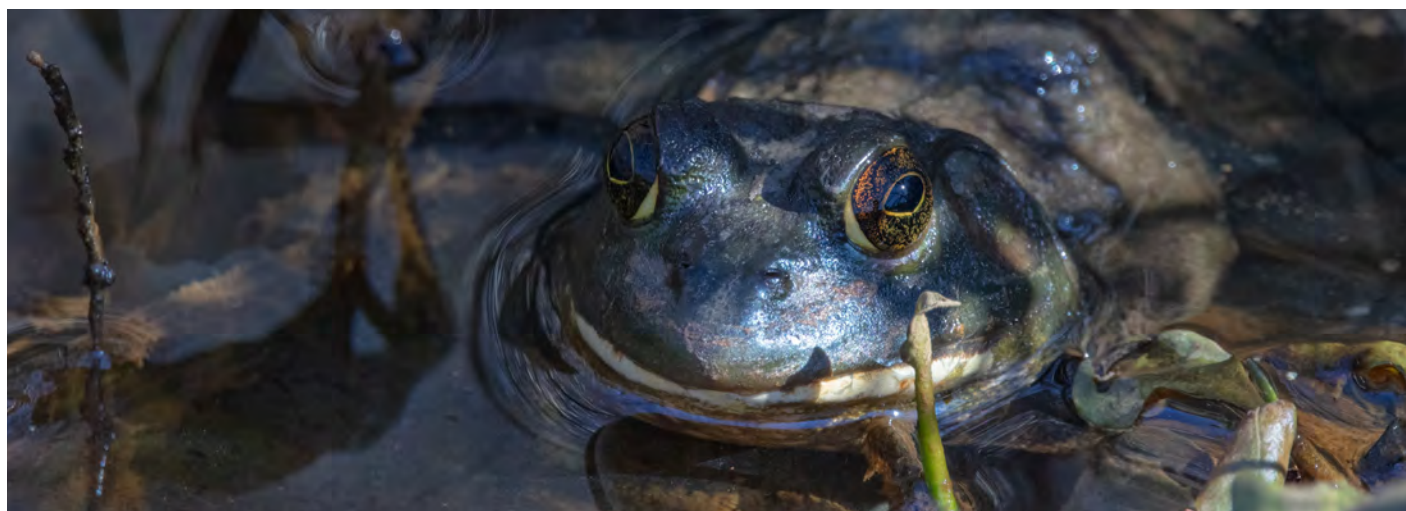
Frog Calls by Species



**None heard is typically documented when there are no frog/toad calls towards the end of the season or dynamic of wetland has changed (ex, vernal pool dries). Naturally, different types of wetlands areas will attract specific species so some sites are short lived depending upon the breeding behaviors of various species.*

iNaturalist Project

The “LWC Reptiles and Amphibians” project through iNaturalist allows citizens of Loudoun County to submit sightings of reptiles and amphibians to a broader database that tracks population trends throughout the county. Since the start of the project in April 2022, volunteers have contributed 700 observations representing 38 reptile and amphibian species. The parameters are set to only record those reptiles and amphibians found within Loudoun County.



Addition of the Marbled Salamander

The Virginia Herpetological Society (VHS) maintains a database of reptiles and amphibians found throughout Virginia. As LWC continues to monitor areas within the county, gaps are being discovered in the presence of herp species which were previously noted as absent.

The marbled salamander (pictured below) was previously noted as absent from Loudoun County on the Virginia Herpetological Society map, which also feeds data to DWR. After collecting data (including photos, GPS coordinates, habitat, etc.), the VHS accepted the marbled salamander as being present in Loudoun County and has updated the maps accordingly.

Amphibian Night Walks and Education

The amphibian program coordinator led one evening walk at the Dulles Wetlands, emphasizing the amphibian population. One evening walk emphasizing amphibians was led at Willowsford in Aldie, Va.

Library Programs

The amphibian program coordinator presented two programs through the Loudoun County Public Library (Ashburn and Gum Springs) focused on our native snakes (identification, co-existence, and deterrent methods).

The amphibian program coordinator also presented a vernal pool program at the Rust library. The program emphasized the obligate and facultative species that utilize the pools for breeding, as well as general vernal pool information.

Given the drought situation of 2023, herpetology surveys were suspended to prevent disturbance of the already sensitive amphibian habitats.





Bird Counts

More than 260 species of birds are known to breed in Loudoun County and hundreds more visit and migrate through every year. We know this through the efforts of volunteers who join us for two major bird counts every year: the Christmas Bird Count and our Birdathon that occurs during “Celebrate Birds” month. The Young Birding Program includes counts by young birders.

The data collected during these events are vital, because birds play a key role in our ecosystem and are important indicators of the overall health of our environment. What follows are highlights from a great year in Loudoun Wildlife birding.

“Celebrate Birds” Month and the 2023 Birdathon

Held during “Celebrate Birds” Month, the 2023 Birdathon was a resounding success, with a record \$22,836 raised for Loudoun Wildlife! The 13 Birdathon teams, the 10 walks, and the Big Sit combined to find 157 species, the same number as last year.

Over 50 people participated in the Birdathon or led walks for Celebrate Birds month. Beyond raising a significant amount of money, these participants gave us an incredible snapshot of bird migration in Loudoun County, which can be compared to previous years and to what we observe in the future.

The 2023 Central Loudoun Christmas Bird Count

The year in birding finished on a beautiful winter day for our 27th Christmas Bird Count. The 167 counters identified 48,916 individual birds, and both of those numbers were all-time records. While the 95 species found was just a bit above average, several notable sightings included the count’s first Laughing Gull and Marsh Wren.



Young Birding Program

In September, several people met to discuss the logistics and vision for setting up a program aimed at fostering birding among youth in and near Loudoun County. Patrick Lewis, who had approached LWC about starting such a program, was named the Young Birding Program Coordinator.

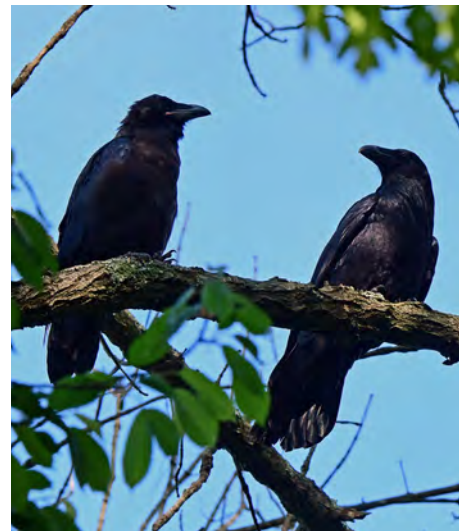
The Young Birding Program offers field trips, workshops, and lectures for youth ages 13-20. It's designed to introduce young people to birding, help them grow as birders, and educate them about conservation. These events — led by experienced young birders and adults — let participants directly contribute to citizen science efforts that support research and conservation in our region and across the globe. We also partner with local organizations, programs, and agencies.

Big Sits and Other Bird Walks

Two “Big Sits” were held in 2023. The first was on Oct. 7 at Algonkian Park. Over the course of 13 hours, participants identified 59 bird species from a 17-foot circle. A fly-by hummingbird would have been number 60, but it wasn't seen from the circle, so we couldn't include it in the count. The count did include 10 warbler species, a Blue-headed Vireo, all seven woodpecker species in the region, and at least eight Bald Eagles.

The second Big Sit was held in on May 6 at Morven Park. This event was sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and NOVA Parks. Over 100 people stopped by to chat with us, visit the Loudoun Wildlife booth, and help us find birds.

During 2023, 54 bird walks were held, with 930 attending. For more on all our birding activities and programs, [visit the Birding page on our website](#).



Bluebird Monitoring

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Bluebird Monitoring program is one of the largest in Virginia, recording more than 3,000 cavity-nester fledglings annually. By monitoring the boxes, volunteers collect information on our native cavity nesters, learn about their lives firsthand, and track population trends. The data we collect is submitted to the Virginia Bluebird Society.

In 2023, our 57 public trails — housing 693 nest boxes — were monitored by approximately 200 volunteers. We kicked off our 2023 monitoring season with an online training program in February, followed by a hands-on training program in March. Our educational activities continued throughout the year with the publication of three issues of “Bluebird Notes,” our program’s newsletter.

Delivered in January, April, and August, Bluebird Notes focuses on issues and successes encountered on our trails as well as helpful information from The Virginia Bluebird Society. This is a successful aspect of our ongoing volunteer education efforts, with a consistent open rate of 80% among the 200 recipients of each issue.

Our Trail Maintenance volunteers visited 34 of our trails in 2023 (some more than once) and replaced 30 boxes, repaired 25 boxes, and installed 20 new boxes on our current trails. In addition to the boxes, the team also repaired and installed numerous poles, guards, and other hardware. The cost of this equipment totaled \$1,315 in 2023. We received a grant from the Virginia Bluebird Society which covered \$355 of this amount.

We compiled and sent our year-end statistics to the Virginia Bluebird Society. With a total of 59 public and home trails sending in reports this year, we can proudly say that our volunteers helped a total of 3,312 birds fledge from 673 nest boxes, including 1,598 bluebirds. That is an increase over our 2022 results, with 58 trails reporting a total of 3,108 total fledglings, of which 1,479 were bluebirds. Our overall bluebird nesting success rate in 2023 was 81.5%, slightly above the 24-year average of 80.2% for Loudoun County.

We celebrated the end of our season by partnering with Zephaniah Vineyards, which hosts a trail of 21 nestboxes, for a volunteer appreciation event. [Learn more about the Bluebird program on our website.](#)





Butterfly Count

2023 marked Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's 27th annual Butterfly Count. August 5 was a classic hot and humid summer day. One hundred and twenty volunteers — 40 of them beginners — participated in this year's count, the most ever. Ten teams with 14 experienced leaders spent 7 hours searching, but butterfly numbers were disappointing.

The total numbers of butterflies (2,277 adults in flight) reported to the North American Butterfly Association were down 40% over 2022 (3,756 adults), a trend that started in 2020 after the astonishing numbers reported in 2019 (6,368 adults). The complete data table for the count [can be found on our website](#).

What accounts for annual variations — especially such a large drop in numbers of adults in flight — is not always clear. Butterflies have been around for eons and have overcome habitat loss, local weather conditions, and even global climate change. In addition, drawing any conclusions from this data is nearly impossible, as there are too many moving parts: the number of teams

and volunteers can vary significantly from year to year, weather patterns and anomalies abound in the mid-Atlantic region, a wonderful butterfly-rich meadow one year may be a new housing development the next, and so on. We can look for patterns by following certain species' populations. In other words, is this a natural trough in the cycle? We won't know for a couple of years. Hopefully, next year's count will be the start of an upward trend.

Though numbers were not what we were looking for, we had some wonderful sightings. Most notably, two different teams spotted the Juniper Hairstreak (*Callophrys gryneus*). This truly green butterfly is not often seen this late in the summer. It was also a good year for the Sleepy Orange (*Euremia nicippe*), a butterfly of the open meadow, rarely seen in our gardens.

The Tally Rally, held again at Loudoun Brewing Company, was larger than ever, requiring two trips to a local restaurant in search of refreshments.

Stream Monitoring

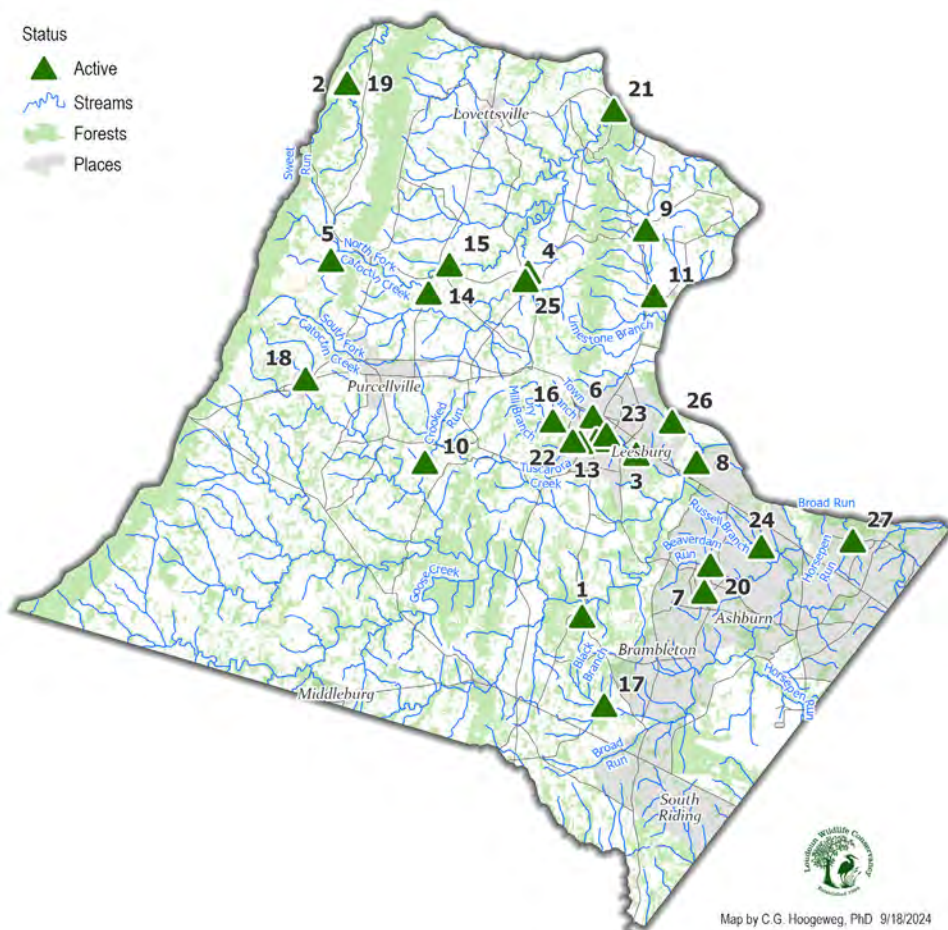
In 2023, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Stream Team of 113 volunteers contributed over 1,730 hours to a variety of stream-related activities, including benthic macroinvertebrate surveys, chemical monitoring, educational outreach programs, and salt monitoring for the Izaak Walton League of America's Winter Salt Watch program.

Benthic Macroinvertebrate Surveys

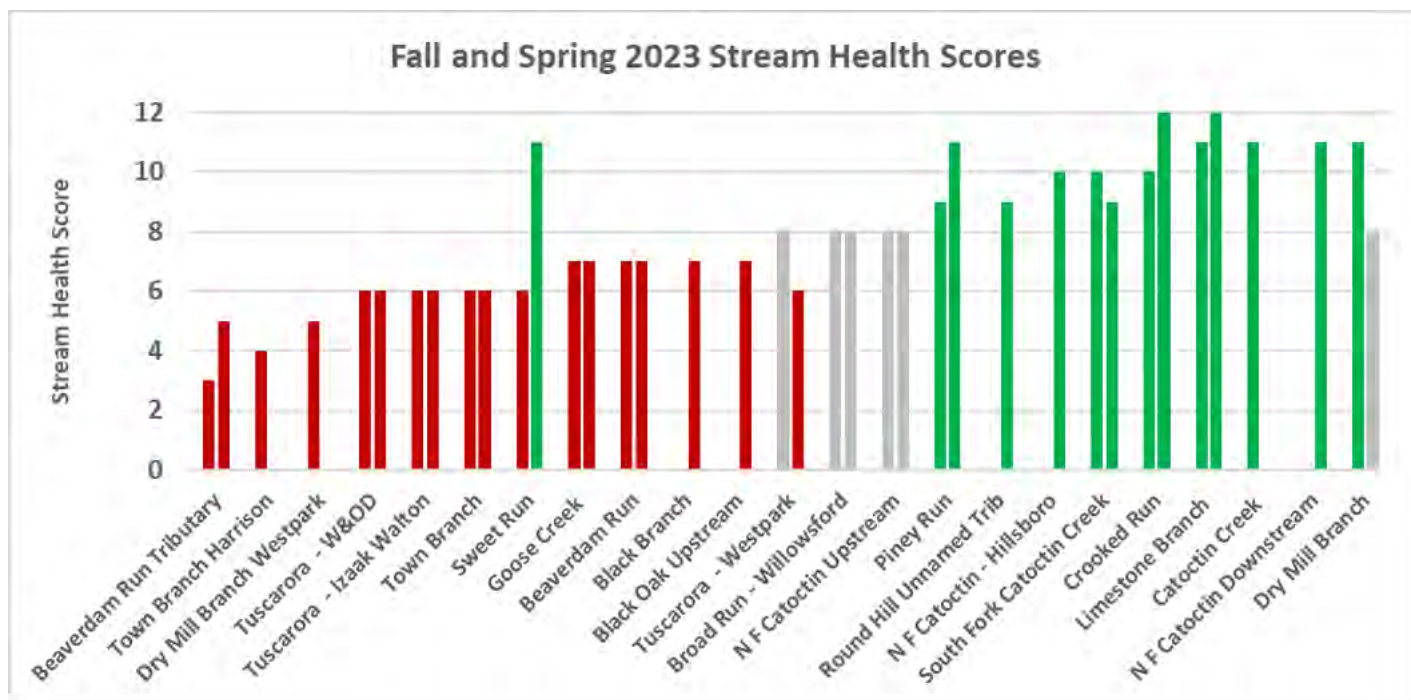
Our Stream Team of 25 certified stream monitors (including 3 newly certified monitors) and numerous volunteers conducted 39 benthic macroinvertebrate assessments of stream health at 24 sites around the county in the spring and fall. Due to drought conditions, seven sites weren't able to be monitored in the fall. The map below reflects our 2023 Stream Monitoring sites.

The team uses the Virginia Save our Streams (VA SOS) Rocky Bottom protocol, which involves sampling the benthic macroinvertebrates present at the site. Benthic macroinvertebrates are aquatic organisms living on stream bottoms that vary in their sensitivity to pollution and are bioindicators of the ecological condition of a stream.

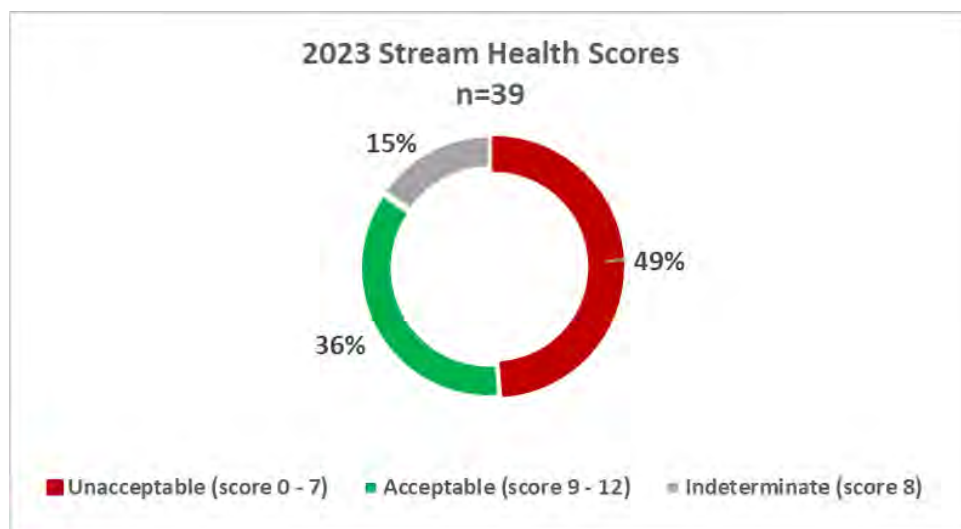
Stream monitors use the type and amount of these benthic macroinvertebrates to compute a stream health score ranging from 0 to 12. (*See chart on next page.*) Scores of 1 to 7 indicate unacceptable ecological conditions and are displayed in red. A score of 8 indicates indeterminate ecological conditions and is displayed in gray. Scores of 9 to 12 indicate acceptable ecological conditions and are displayed in green. Of the 39 stream scores calculated this year, 49% were unacceptable, 36% were acceptable, and 15% were indeterminate.



1. Black Branch
2. Sweet Run Tributary
3. Tuscarora Creek, W&OD
4. South Fork Catoclin Creek
5. North Fork Catoclin, Hillsboro
6. Town Branch
7. Beaverdam Run
8. Goose Creek
9. JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary (x2)
10. Crooked Run
11. Limestone Branch Tributary
12. Tuscarora Creek, IWL Park
13. Tuscarora Creek, Westpark
14. N Fork Catoclin Creek, Upstream
15. N Fork Catoclin Creek, Downstream
16. Dry Mill Branch
17. Broad Run, Willowsford
18. Unnamed Tributary, Round Hill
19. Piney Run
20. Beaverdam Run Tributary
21. Catoclin Creek
22. Dry Mill Branch, Westpark
23. Town Branch, Harrison Street



Loudoun Wildlife first submits the data to VA SOS, a program administered by the Izaak Walton League of America. VA SOS then approves and combines the data for the state and submits it to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, which uses the information to identify impaired streams to target for further monitoring, habitat restoration, and pollution control efforts. The data are then shared with the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative.



Loudoun Wildlife is now a partner with the Izaak Walton League of America's Clean Water Hub, where all our biological and chemical data are accessible by individual sites. If you are interested in viewing this data, please visit www.cleanwaterhub.org/organization/114.



Chemical Monitoring

Working in partnership with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's River Trends program, the LWC Stream Team started conducting monthly chemical monitoring at six benthic macroinvertebrate survey sites on Tuscarora Creek and Town Branch in Leesburg. The sites were selected to provide a more comprehensive understanding as to why these sites have historically received unacceptable or indeterminate health scores. The Chem Crew, consisting of 10 volunteers, collects data on parameters including temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, water clarity, conductivity, chloride, nitrate, and phosphate. The data is uploaded to the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative.



Educational Outreach Activities

Since February 2021, the Stream Monitoring Program has published The Monitor, an e-newsletter covering stream data, volunteer opportunities, and macroinvertebrate features.

[Subscribe or view past issues here.](#)

In 2023, the Stream Team participated in six outreach programs. They co-hosted "Catch and Count Creek Critters" in March and August with Purcellville's Parks and Environmental groups, engaging 55 participants per event in hands-on stream monitoring. They also showcased live macroinvertebrates at the Student Environmental Action Showcase in April and Loudoun Wildlife's Annual Meeting in June. Other programs included a summer camp at Franklin Park in July and a presence at the park's Trout Derby in October.



Winter Salt Watch Program

Partnering with the Izaak Walton League since 2021, Loudoun Wildlife monitors chloride levels in local streams to identify pollution hotspots. Salt runoff from winter treatments harms freshwater species.

What began with 9 volunteers at 14 sites has grown to 50 volunteers at 50 sites. The 2023 Salt Watch Kick-off attracted 28 volunteers, and 195 data points were submitted to the Clean Water Hub. Awareness efforts included social media and The Monitor updates.

Awards

In April, the Loudoun County Environmental Commission awarded the Stream Monitoring Program the Environmental Excellence Award. Stream Team member Emma Lloyd received the 2023 John W. Tolbert Jr. Environmental Achievement Award for her work in stream monitoring and outreach.

Partnerships

In 2023, Loudoun Watershed Watch and the Stream Team successfully nominated six streams for further study by Virginia DEQ. The team also mentored high school students on Salt Watch projects, presented at the EPA Volunteer Monitor Conference, and launched the Loudoun Watershed Roundtable to foster collaboration among local environmental organizations. Additionally, high school partnerships continue to engage students in stream monitoring and citizen science.

[Learn more about the Stream Monitoring Program on our website.](#)

HABITAT CONSERVATION

Habitat is a combination of food, water, shelter, and space arranged to meet the needs of wildlife. Our Habitat Conservation efforts seek to “protect, preserve, and restore” habitat areas for our wild plants and animals.

Audubon at Home Program

In 2023, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy’s Audubon at Home (AAH) program resumed on-site visits to property owners seeking Wildlife Sanctuary certification. Volunteer Ambassadors logged 352 hours performing 35 site visits and writing visit reports for each. Twenty-one properties qualified for certification (101 acres), bringing Loudoun’s certified properties to 363 (4675 acres).

AAH continues to refer clients as appropriate to local conservation specialists, including:

- **Kaiera Ingram**, Land Management Outreach Associate for The Clifton Institute
- **Chris Van Vlack** and **Jay Frankenfield**, representatives of Loudoun Soil and Water
- **Michael Royane**, Loudoun County Urban Forester
- **Natali Walker**, Loudoun Chapter representative for Blue Ridge PRISM
- **Lindsay Long**, Senior Area Forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry

Throughout the year, the program engaged the community with efforts including video recordings on our YouTube Native Plant playlist and presentations through the Loudoun County Public Library at the annual Master Gardner meeting and for the Virginia Master Naturalists. Additional YouTube training videos were used to orient new ambassadors in 2023, and those were followed up with individualized virtual meetings.

Two new ambassadors were welcomed to our team in 2023: Kathy O’Day and Andy McCoy. We presented the 1,000th Audubon at Home certification at Tracy Whittington’s Ashburn property. We also completed

a certification of the George C. Marshall House in Leesburg.

AAH also contributed the following articles to Habitat Herald

- Growing a Better Garden: Habitat Matters
- In Praise of the Audubon at Home Experience
- Know Your Hickories
- Willowsford Family Chooses Native-Plant Zen

Social media posts featuring photographs of proud property owners (both private and corporate) with their new “Wildlife Sanctuary” signs attract a lot of attention and generate new sign-ups. Also drawing readers to the program and helping them to understand our focus are social media posts featuring Ambassador Favorites before Native Plant Sales and native landscape reminder posts throughout the summer. Problem-solving posts such as “Plant This, Not That” are especially successful within the social media community.

Finally, we created a post site-visit survey to solicit feedback from participants. We’re looking forward to growing the program further in 2024.





Native Plant Sales

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sales, which began in 2010, continue to grow in size and attract new people. Hill House Farm & Nursery, Nature by Design, Seven Bends Nursery and Watermark Woods returned to participate in both the Spring and Fall Sales in 2023. The four native plant nurseries contributed 10 percent of their sales for a total of \$7,046 for the year. Sales of LWC merchandise and the quilt raffle brought in another \$2,123.

In previous years, the Spring Sale has been postponed due to bad weather or cancelled due to COVID, but 2023 was the first time we have had to end the Sale early. Shortly after noon weather alerts warned of a severe storm heading for Leesburg. With no place large enough to shelter everyone, the decision was made to end the sale and pack up as quickly as possible. The last plants were being loaded on the trucks as the storm swept in with rain, thunder and lightning.

The Fall Sale brought good weather and some new community partners. The American Chestnut Foundation and Blue Ridge PRISM had booths for the first time. Also new at the Fall Sale was the “Native Plants for Beginners” talk and demo that attracted an audience of 45 people.

The Native Plant Sales rely extensively on volunteers, many of whom return year after year to help out. In 2023, 69 volunteers devoted 439 hours to make the Sales a success.





Restoration Projects

Habitat restoration projects provide an important opportunity to come together to restore and enhance the environment where we live. Loudoun Wildlife volunteers plant native trees and shrubs, remove invasive plants, and clean up areas around streams. These projects help by providing food and shelter for wildlife, controlling pollution and erosion.

Harrison Street

The Harrison Street Pollinator Meadow habitat restoration project began in 2018 next to the Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail along Harrison Street in Leesburg. The project was created as a partnership between Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Friends of the W&OD Trail, and the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority, with support and funding from the Leesburg Garden Club.

Installation began in the fall of 2018 under the leadership of Ann Garvey. Volunteers planted 1,358 native plants over 7,600 square feet. More plants were planted in 2019 for a total of 1,519 plants comprised of 43 species. Volunteers meet monthly from April-November to cut back invasive plants that threaten the native plants. [Read more about the project online.](#)

2023 saw 66 hours of support from April-October, with the planting of nearly 150 native grasses in October purchased through an Earth Sangha grant. Leadership for this project was provided by Susan Abraham.



Garlic Mustard Pull

The Ball's Bluff Garlic Mustard project (*seen below*) was organized in 2020 by LWC staff member BJ Lecrone who, after a visit, was alarmed by the threat Garlic Mustard plants posed to the beautiful Spring Ephemerals at Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park. Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is allelopathic in that it changes the soil chemistry around its roots in a way that displaces natives, allowing the seeds of Garlic Mustard to continue to spread. We believe that pulling the Garlic Mustard plants each year will improve the soil and decrease the seed bank so there will be far fewer plants to deal with in the future. Volunteers for this project are called to action each week from March-April.

In 2023, 113 volunteer hours were counted for the project, completing the third year of this partnership with Virginia Master Naturalist leaders and approved by NOVA Parks. [Read more about the project here.](#)



CONSERVATION ADVOCACY

Conservation advocates were busy in 2023! Development applications, power infrastructure, county policy, and park planning were among the key themes we advocated for during the year, all while simultaneously educating and informing our members on the “how” and “why” of advocacy.

Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

After two years of public input, the Board of Supervisors approved the new Zoning Ordinance (ZOR) on December 13th. Our advocacy efforts led to key improvements, including protections for open space and wildlife corridors, increased native plant requirements, and preservation of river and stream corridors. Remaining environmental concerns will be addressed through Zoning Ordinance Amendments (ZOAMs) and Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAMs) in 2024-2025. Future efforts will focus on data center sustainability policies, rural land use, floodplain updates, and other critical zoning issues.

Data Center Development

The fight against data center expansion continued in 2023, particularly regarding power infrastructure. Dominion Energy advanced transmission line projects along Route 7 and Broad Run to meet data center demands. We collaborated with conservation partners to minimize environmental impact and are actively opposing PJM’s plan for a high-voltage transmission line through Western Loudoun.

Park Planning

Park planning remained a major issue in 2023. A key victory came when advocacy efforts led the county to withdraw disruptive plans for Middleburg’s Mickie Gordon Park. We also worked on the Westpark Golf Course property and Franklin Park’s expansion with Sleeter Lake Park, emphasizing dark skies preservation. Our published white paper highlighted the importance of dark skies for wildlife.

Advocacy 101

Our educational Advocacy 101 program continued in 2023. Guest speakers from partner organizations gave talks to our advocates on key issues relevant to effective environmental advocacy. In 2023, we focused on issues relevant to campaigns in Loudoun County, such as the Route 15 bypass project that would impact our JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary. We continue to work with our advocacy volunteers to protect wildlife in this application and many others.





JK BLACK OAK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

2023 was a productive year at our JK Black Oak Wildlife Sanctuary, with walks, work days, and surveys. Black Oak is an 89-acre, globally rare wetlands owned and maintained by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

JK Black Oak

Our survey and citizen science programs were less active this year, and, due to the drought, amphibian monitoring came to a near standstill. The butterfly count was quiet and yielded only a few species. During the bird walks and limited bird surveys, we found only two new bird species for the sanctuary, bringing the total to 138 species.

One exception to the low counts was the bat monitoring program, which ran from April-October. Once again, a large number of bat species were recorded, including the federally endangered Northern Long-eared bat.

In 2023, we held eight work days on the property, with 11 to 21 people volunteering for each (a strong level of attendance). Over the course of the year, 139 people volunteered 452 hours during our work days. We focused on a variety of activities, including maintaining the tree planting areas, removing invasives, clearing

downed trees from the vernal pools, maintaining the trails, building tree cages, and installing the third deer exclusion fence on the property. We also installed four flying squirrel boxes, a bench, and a bird blind.

The deer exclusion areas and tree cages were made possible due to our first Microsoft/Society for Ecological Restoration (MS/SER) grant. As part of this first grant, we are required to [monitor carbon sequestration over a period of three years](#).

Late in Quarter Four of 2023, we received excellent news that we were awarded our second MS/SER grant. As part of this grant, we will focus on [restoring the western meadows at the sanctuary](#).

These grants also allowed us to expand our media and digital presence, which included press releases, [additional interactive webpages](#) and [articles on the LWC website](#).

For more information about this unique property, what we are doing, and to see volunteers in action, [please visit our website](#).



**567 VOLUNTEERS GAVE
13,041 VOLUNTEER HOURS
IN 2023!**



DONORS

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy relies on the generosity of our donors to accomplish our ongoing mission. We are so thankful to all our supporters for the tangible, difference-making impact they make on the wildlife habitat we cherish ... right here at home.

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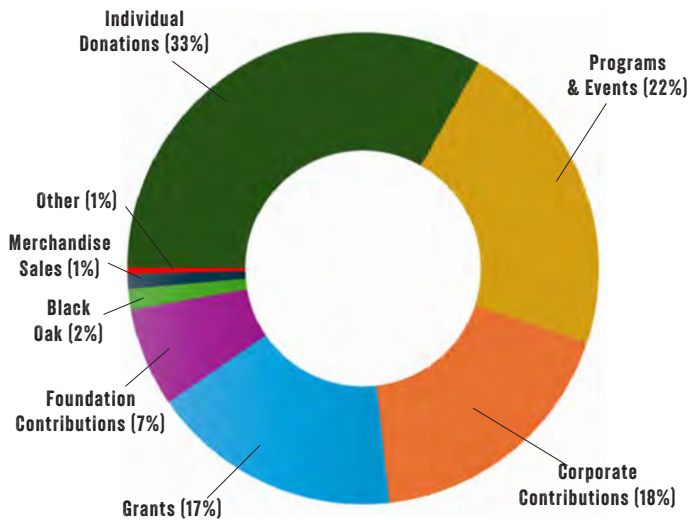


FINANCIALS

Loudoun Wildlife ended the year with a total revenue of \$382,892 and total expenses at \$327,265. The statement of activities below reflects the period of January 1 through December 31, 2023.

Revenue

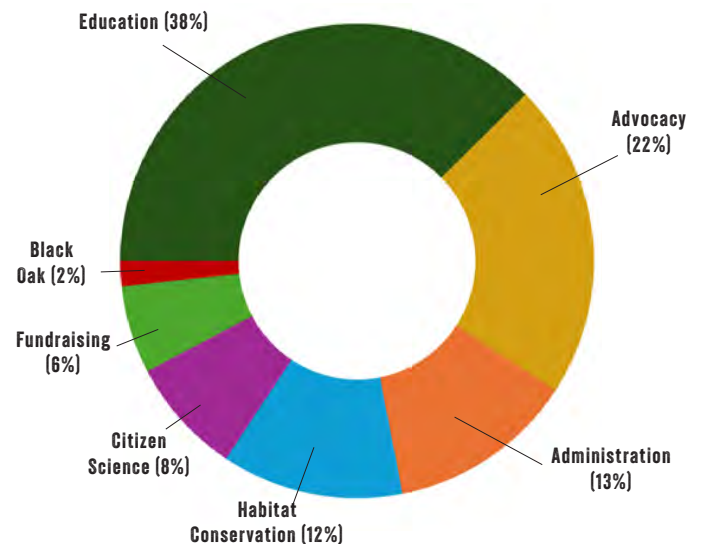
Individual Donations	\$126,712.01
Programs & Events	\$84,028.53
Corporate Contributions	\$69,339.48
Grants	\$65,839.33
Foundation Contributions	\$25,973.20
JK Black Oak	\$5,455.51
Merchandise Sales	\$3,923.82
Other	\$1,621.08



TOTAL REVENUE: \$382,892.96

Expenses

Education	\$123,093.87
Advocacy	\$70,596.53
Administration	\$41,658.68
Habitat Conservation	\$40,613.93
Citizen Science	\$26,131.51
Fundraising	\$19,539.93
JK Black Oak	\$5,630.94



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$327,265.39

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Loudoun Wildlife is so grateful for the incredibly talented photographers who so graciously allow us to showcase our work through their inspiring photos.

Carson Clark

Opossum (Cover)

Jim Clark

Red-winged Blackbirds (Cover), Barn Swallow Profile (Page 16)

Mike Digout

Beaver (Page 4)

Jenny Erickson

Cover: Gray Treefrog Froglet (cover), Wood Frog (Page 4), Bullfrog (Page 13)

Sheila Ferguson

Various Native Plant Sale photos (Page 23)

Walt Gould

Juniper Hairstreak (Page 18)

Janet Hensley

Monarch on Aster (Cover)

Gerco Hoogeweg

Volunteer Work Day (Page 24)

Tom Kercheval

Stream Monitoring (Cover), owl (Page 4), Peterson Program kids (Page 11), Chemical Monitoring (Page 21), Stream in Fall (Page 36)

BJ Lecrone

Volunteers Weeding (Page 24), Black Snake, Japanese Hop After Removal (Page 25), Bluebells (Page 31)

Brian Magurn

Grasshopper (Page 24)

Liam McGranahan

Facing Birds (Page 16)

Michael Myers

Gray Catbird (Page 8), Black Swallow-tail Caterpillar (Page 18), Power Lines (Page 26)

Anne Owen

Common Buckeye (Page 7)

Mike Sciortino

Bald Eagle (Page 9), White-throated Sparrow (Page 15), Tufted Titmouse (Page 32)

Kim Strader

Volunteers working (Cover), Volunteers (Page 28)

Larry Tipton

Bluebird (Page 17)

Amy Ulland

Chemical Monitoring (Page 20), Teaching Students (Page 21), Marbled Salamander (Pages 14 and 30)

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Bird Trail (Page 12), Blue Grosbeak (16)



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