



WHITE HOUSE FARM FOUNDATION

Fall 2026 Newsletter

"A land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it." - Aldo Leopold

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

With the return of cooler weather comes an increase in our outdoor programming at Leopold's Preserve. I hope to see you at our Fall Festival on September 19th, where you'll have the opportunity to connect with many of our partners and supporters.

Fall also marks the return of homeschool programs at Leopold's Preserve, hosted by our friends at the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy. These programs offer an opportunity for field-based learning that is suitable for learners of all ages. [Check out their calendar](#) for a full listing of fall and winter homeschool programs.

As summer draws to a close, I want to thank Elisa Dass, our 2026 Field Conservation Intern, for her work at Leopold's Preserve this season. You can read more about her research on page 2.

Finally, I would also like to thank Fairfax Water for generously supporting our Broad Run Understory Restoration project. I hope you can join us for one of our tree planting volunteer days this fall!

Happy trails,
- Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



FALL FESTIVAL AT LEOPOLD'S PRESERVE

COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION COLLIDE AT LEOPOLD'S PRESERVE FALL FESTIVAL ON 9/19

With the fall season comes our annual Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve! For the third year in a row, we are excited to host this seasonal celebration in partnership with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Join us on Saturday, September 19th, 10 AM - 2 PM, for this free, family-friendly event and enjoy activities and educational programs offered by dozens of organizations along our scenic Wood Duck Way trail.

Returning to the Fall Festival this year are favorites like guided hikes led by Bull Run Mountains Conservancy, a native plant sale, food trucks, and free face painting. New this year, we are providing event passports for visitors to complete as they visit booths for a chance to bring home a native tree sapling and additional prizes!

Special thanks to our 2026 Sponsors: Bull Run Mountains Conservancy | K2C Snake Consultants Inc | Wild Birds Unlimited Gainesville | Keep Prince William Beautiful | Prince William Parks Foundation | Rocklands BBQ | 4M Vending | Fillagreen



Visitors exploring the booths.



An interactive leaf shading activity.



Hikers being led along Wood Duck Way. Photo by Kevin Dwyer.

PLEIN ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP

We were honored to receive 23 applications for the Plein Environmental Scholarship this spring. Our scholarship committee selected three exceptional students to receive \$5,000 in aid towards their undergraduate degrees.



Norah (middle) and Jackie (right) during a live taping of the “We’re Good” podcast. Photo from CFNOVA.

Our board member and scholarship chair, Jackie Plein, and one of our 2026 awardees, Norah McCormick, joined in a live podcast taping during the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia’s 2026 Impact Celebration. [Listen here](#)



Madeline Gammache
James Madison University
Majors: Environmental Science & Education



Haley Markusson
Virginia Tech
Major: Environmental Science



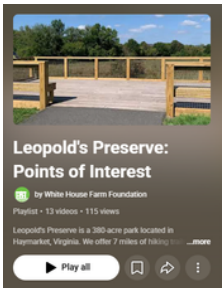
Norah McCormick
College of William & Mary
Major: Biology

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

Updates from the Preserve in Haymarket

Visit Us Virtually!

We are excited to share that all thirteen parts of our short video series “Leopold’s Preserve: Points of Interest” have been released on our YouTube Channel. This playlist takes you around notable spots in the Preserve without ever leaving your seat! We want to extend a huge thank you to Victor Zheng and Team Avatar Films for creating these short videos that showcase Leopold’s so well. Each video is roughly a minute long. [Watch the playlist here](#)



Diving Into Berry Pond

Our summer intern, Elisa Dass, made a splash during her time at the Preserve. For her internship capstone project, Elisa conducted an Environmental Impact and Health Assessment of Berry Pond. Her assessment was a multi-part survey that documented and inventoried surrounding land use, pond depth, vegetation composition, macroinvertebrate communities, fish diversity, and early management needs of Berry Pond.

Tree Rescues

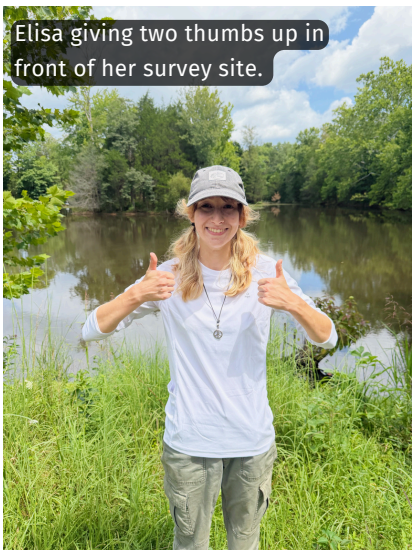
So far in 2026, staff and volunteers have saved 1,288 native trees from invasive honeysuckle and bittersweet vines. [Read the manager’s note here](#)



Seasonal Observations

- Moth caterpillars
- Goldenrod
- Eastern box turtles
- Pickerelweed
- Ironweed

Tickseed



After completing her surveys, Elisa found Berry Pond to be a regenerating freshwater ecosystem that is on the lower end of the biological health index. Her baseline data will allow us to conduct further research and work towards improving its quality!

Along with her capstone project, Elisa spent the summer learning trail management techniques and engaging with our volunteer force. While we're sad to see her go, we know Elisa has a fun journey ahead of her at Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment. [Read Elisa’s report here](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE FARM

Updates from the White House Farm in Luray

White House Rehabilitation Progress

This summer, extensive paint and carpentry work has continued inside the White House. Repairs and restoration of interior wood elements are mostly complete! The faux-painted doors and cabinets are still being cleaned and restored - this work will continue through the fall. Check out these before-and-after photos showing the incredible change in faux-painted surfaces after conservation!

The project team is on track to complete several big milestones this fall, including installing new wood flooring on the ground level, restoring the shutters, and selecting period-appropriate furniture. We're also consulting with the Plein Family to develop interpretive signage that will be installed inside and around the house.

We're looking forward to opening the White House for visitors and tours next spring! Keep an eye out for more updates and announcements in the months to come.



A Meadow's Journey

Back in 2024, we began converting the five-acre field that surrounds the historic White House into a native wildflower meadow.

Previously a hayfield, these five acres had become rife with nonnative and invasive grasses that provided little benefit to pollinators or other wildlife. This transformation project will preserve and complement the historic character of the White House while supporting the local ecosystem.

Habitat restoration often presents challenges along the way, and unfortunately, our first attempt to seed the meadow in early 2025 yielded non-native clover and plantain that dominated the field. Not ones to balk at a challenge, we worked with Virginia Working Landscapes and the Virginia Forestry & Wildlife Group to develop a new restoration plan for 2026.

In early July, we reseeded the field with a newly developed wildflower and cover crop seed mix. Since seeding, there has been tremendous growth of the cover crop, millet! This cover crop will support wildflower growth by suppressing aggressive weeds and protecting the young wildflowers underneath. As the millet dies off in the fall, we are hopeful to see the rest of the native seed mix emerge throughout the meadow.

Stay tuned for more updates on this hay-field-turned-native-wildflower-meadow at the White House Farm!



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: K2C SNAKE CONSULTANTS, INC

K2C Snake Consultants, Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Northern Virginia that provides wildlife education and conservation, with a strategic focus on native snakes and reptiles. Their objective is to help people co-exist with local native snakes and reduce the fear through education, hands-on experiences and providing accurate information for local communities.

It was one of those educational, hands-on experiences that brought us together back in 2023, when K2C hosted a snake program at Leopold's Preserve. Since then, we've been delighted to continue working with K2C as they spread their mission. Bill Crisp of K2C presented at our 2023-2024 Winter Lecture series, and the organization has attended our Fall Festival since its inception. For the past two years, we have been grateful for their sponsorship of the event at the Oak Level. Stop by the Fall Festival on Saturday to chat with this organization and meet their wildlife ambassadors!



JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

Naturalist Walk

Sunday, September 20, 10 AM - 12 PM
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

Join us to enjoy and learn about the fall bird migration and early fall blooms at Leopold's Preserve! Led by a professional naturalist.

Volunteer Tree Planting

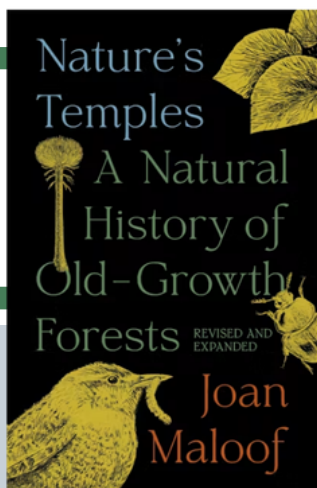
Saturday, October 17, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

Help us plant native trees as part of our Broad Run Understory Restoration project, generously supported by Fairfax Water. Volunteer activities suitable for ages 13+.

Halloween Safari

Friday, October 16 & 23, 7 PM - 8:30 PM
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

A non-scary night hike! A guide will lead you along the trail, where you meet native "wildlife" that perform natural history skits. \$10 per person.



Nature's Temples: A Natural History of Old-Growth Forests, by Joan Maloof

Beginning with the emergence of trees over 350 million years ago and running through the present day, Maloof (founder of the Old-Growth Forest Network) showcases the unique ecology, natural features, and ecosystem services that distinguish old-growth forests and make them worth protecting.

What We've Been Reading



@WHFarmFoundation
www.whfarmfoundation.org



@LeopoldsPreserve
www.leopoldspreserve.com

Join our mailing list to get updates and newsletters sent right to your email inbox!

*The White House Farm Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation dedicated to conservation and education. Our work is supported by the **Plein Family Foundation**.*