



2023 ANNUAL REPORT





CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Dear Friends of the White House Farm Foundation,

I am proud to present the first edition of the White House Farm Foundation's Annual Report. This report is intended to inform the broader public of all that we do, including educational programs, research, partnerships, philanthropy, scholarships, and the many activities taking place at Leopold's Preserve, our public park in Haymarket, Virginia.

Folks like you that support our mission help make our work possible. We are thankful for our partners in the educational community, civic leaders, research entities, and, most importantly, a slew of volunteers who help amplify our impact.

I'd also like to highlight our unbelievable staff, Marie Pinto and Nick Davis. Marie (who is responsible for this wonderfully done report) is in constant contact with all our friends in the community through social media and direct outreach. Nick is the lynchpin that keeps Leopold's Preserve in pristine and ever-improving good shape. Don't hesitate to reach out to either of them; they would be happy to hear from you!

In closing, I extend my sincere thanks to each and every one of you for your interest and support of the White House Farm Foundation's mission.

Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



Our namesake "White House" is a historic building located at the White House Farm in Luray, Virginia.

WHITE HOUSE FARM FOUNDATION

The White House Farm Foundation (WHFF) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) foundation based in Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. We are an educational foundation with a focus on conservation of local natural resources, which in turn protects our global ecosystem. We care about living more sustainably and using natural resources wisely. Our work is supported by the Plein Family Charitable Trust.

MISSION & Core Activities

Our mission is to enrich individuals with knowledge of and involvement with our natural ecological systems, holistic community planning, and respect for local history and culture.

We embody our mission through three core activities:

1. Maintaining **Leopold's Preserve** for public enjoyment and habitat value.
2. Facilitating **Education & Outreach** programs in Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley.
3. Supporting like-minded organizations through **Charitable Giving**.



LEOPOLD'S PRESERVE

Nestled in the suburbs of Washington, DC, Leopold's Preserve is a 380-acre natural oasis, owned and managed by the White House Farm Foundation. It features a 7-mile trail system that allows visitors to explore diverse habitats, scenic overlooks, and historic sites. The Preserve has earned recognition as a top wildlife-watching spot from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and sees more than 10,000 visits annually.



Spring Beauty



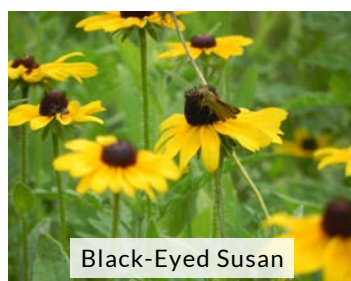
Tufted Titmouse



Purple Milkweed



Spotted Salamander



Black-Eyed Susan



White-Tailed Deer



Spicebush Swallowtail

Infrastructure Improvements

In 2023, we moved forward with multiple projects to improve accessibility and visitor experience at Leopold's Preserve. Our largest project, supported by a \$25,000 grant from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, involved major upgrades to our wetlands observation deck and ADA-compliant trail. We increased visibility through the deck's railing, installed built-in seating, and extended the paved trail by 300' to a secondary viewing location. These improvements have increased access for wheelchair users, children, and visitors who face mobility challenges, helping more people enjoy the outdoors.



The new deck railing.



Second wetland observation area.



North Trail - Before



North Trail - After

One of the main draws of Leopold's Preserve is our extensive trail system. We completed ongoing trail maintenance projects throughout the year, including trail resurfacing, repairs to flood-damaged areas, and removal of overgrown vegetation. We have also continued to widen trails on the north and east sides of the Preserve. With the support of local Eagle Scouts and the Northern Virginia Audubon Society, we installed three benches along the trails where visitors can rest and enjoy scenic views.



Eagle Scout Nikhil Varma built and installed this bench on Wood Frog Loop.

Our interpretive signage is another key aspect of Leopold's Preserve. This year, we completed the first phase of a planned three-year upgrade of our signage. We replaced 13 of our fiberglass panels with Gel Coat Laminate, a sturdier material that resists sun and water damage. By 2026, we'll have replaced all 35 of our sign boards with this improved material.

Habitat Restoration

In 2023, we've been focused on three major habitat restoration projects, two of them funded through a cost-share program of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The largest project has been our work to restore the Thoroughfare Meadow, an approximately 8.5-acre grassland. We have begun to implement a long-term restoration strategy designed by NRCS to eliminate invasive and woody vegetation while enhancing native plant communities. This year, work included mowing, tilling, and seeding of the meadow as well as three herbicide applications. We are now working to provide a detailed account of our work in the Thoroughfare Meadow on our website, which will allow visitors to learn more about effective habitat restoration practices.

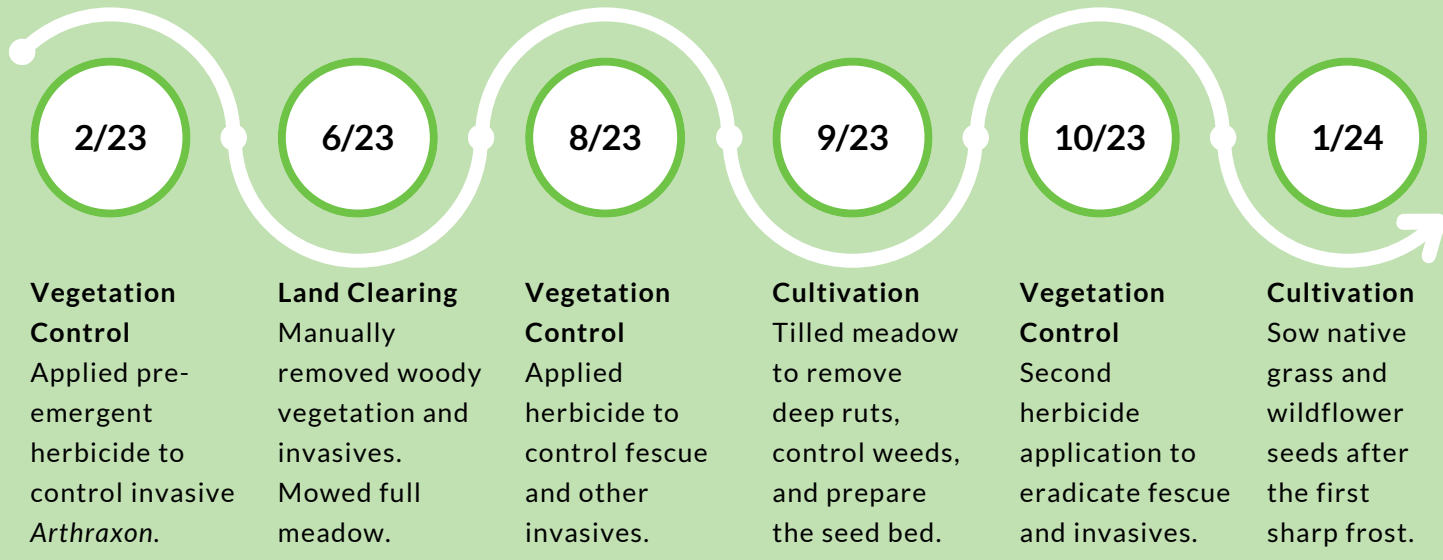


Thoroughfare Meadow - June 2023

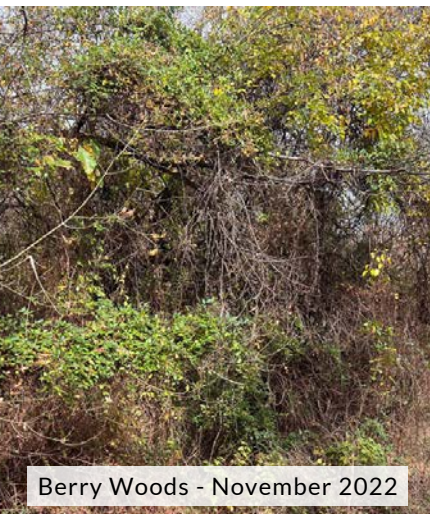


Thoroughfare Meadow - November 2023

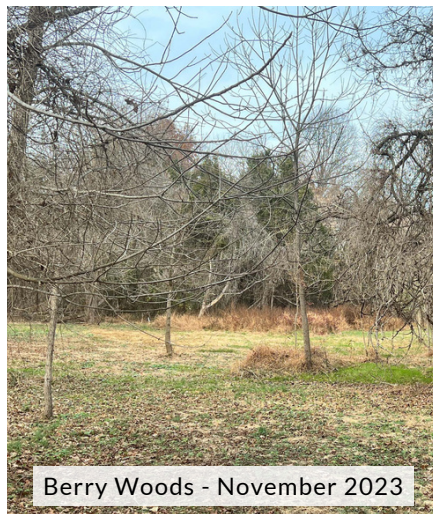
One Year of Restoration: Thoroughfare Meadow



Our second major project has been rehabilitating the young forest located near the main Leopold's Preserve parking lot. This 10-acre forest was overrun with a multitude of invasive plants, including tree of heaven, Japanese honeysuckle, English Ivy, autumn olive, mile-a-minute, and more. These plants effectively eliminated a native understory layer, reducing essential habitat for reptiles, birds, and small mammals. In late 2022, we cleared this invasive understory through a process called "Forestry Mulching", with consulting and financial support provided by NRCS. This process eliminated much of the invasive vegetation while preserving the forest's overstory trees. Over the past year, staff and volunteers have worked to manually remove invasive plants which were missed by the mulcher or which have sprouted from seed. In 2024, we plan to begin restoring the understory and herbaceous layers of this forest by planting small trees and sowing native seed.



Berry Woods - November 2022



Berry Woods - November 2023



5th grade volunteers planted trees in the savanna to celebrate Earth Day.

Finally, we've made great progress on our savanna habitat project. In the spring, we planted 30 trees across the 2-acre former farm field with help from dozens of local volunteers, including Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts, and a middle school environmental club. We treated the area with herbicide and were amazed to see a diversity of native plant species sprout from the dormant seed bed, including milkweed, ironweed, and goldenrod. To protect these species, we decided to test a new type of targeted herbicide to control invasive grasses over the summer and fall. This herbicide worked well, killing grasses while leaving native broadleaf plants unharmed. In 2024, we'll continue spot-treating invasive grasses as needed, and we will expand the savanna an additional 2 acres north.

Visitation

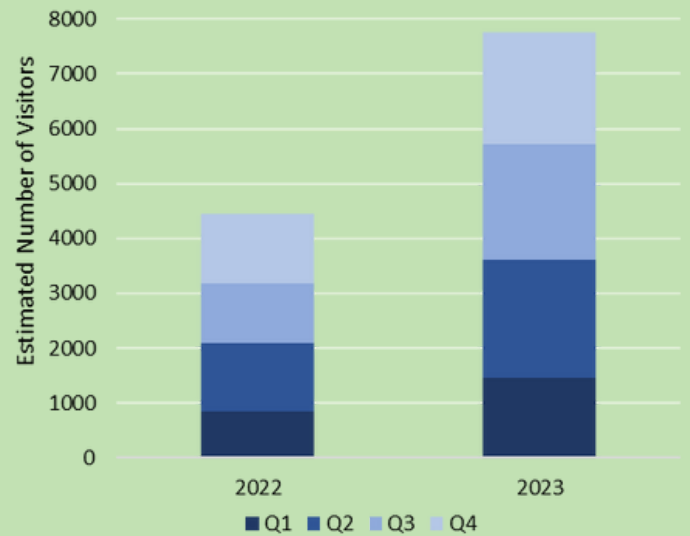
More people than ever are coming to Leopold's Preserve to enjoy our trails and programs. This year, we've seen an increase in visitation of more than 70% over our 2022 numbers. Keep in mind that this data is based on the number of cars that park at Leopold's Preserve on weekdays, which excludes weekend visits and guests who enter the Preserve on foot. As such, we estimate that our total annual visitation is greater than 10,000 per year. Our increasing popularity underscores the importance of Leopold's Preserve as a publicly accessible natural area within the suburban Northern Virginia landscape and highlights the success of our ongoing community outreach efforts.



Our educational programs connect children with nature.

What is a visit? A visit is the entry of a person into Leopold's Preserve. It is not the same as a 'visitor'. Unique visitors can generate more than one visit if they leave the Preserve and return on a different day.

Increasing Visitation to Leopold's Preserve



We track visitation on weekdays by counting the number of vehicles entering our parking areas. A 1.7 person-per-vehicle multiplier is applied to give an estimate of the number of people who visit the Preserve. We chose 1.7 as our multiplier because it is also used by nearby Shenandoah National Park.



Attendees at our "Art in the Park" event.



Volunteers survey dragonflies at Berry Pond.



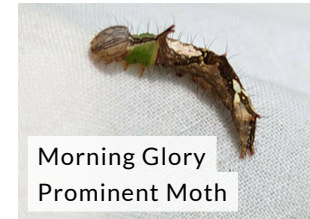
Volunteers at our annual
Trash Cleanup.



Volunteers install native plants
near the Old House.



Bluebird chicks, day 7



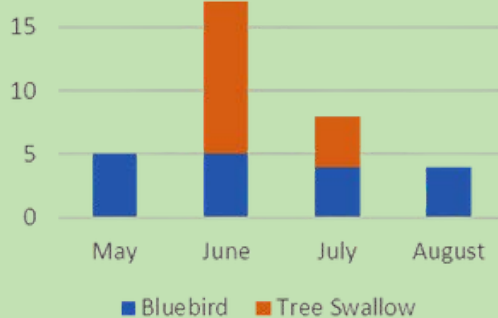
Morning Glory
Prominent Moth

Volunteers and Citizen Science

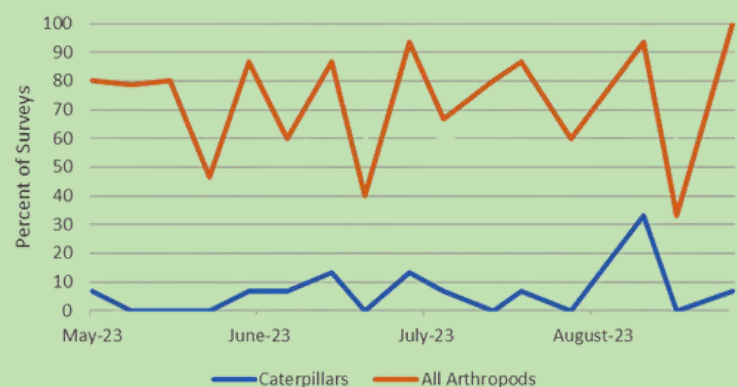
124 volunteers contributed more than 880 hours towards projects at Leopold's Preserve this year, including trail maintenance, habitat restoration, research projects, and more. We developed new partnerships with Yahoo and Micron to host corporate volunteer events, and we expanded our equipment-sharing network to leverage local resources including tractors, brushcutters, and tilling equipment. Our close connection with the Virginia Master Naturalist program has continued to grow, with their volunteers supporting multiple wildlife monitoring projects.

Citizen scientists are volunteer members of the public who gather or analyze data for scientific research. This year, citizen scientist volunteers supported two research projects at Leopold's Preserve: bluebird box monitoring and "Caterpillars Count!" arthropod population surveys. Data collected by our volunteers were shared with the Virginia Bluebird Society and the University of North Carolina, respectively. These data help us understand bird and insect population health.

**Fledglings from WHFF
Bluebird Boxes 2023**



"Caterpillars Count!" Phenology 2023



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

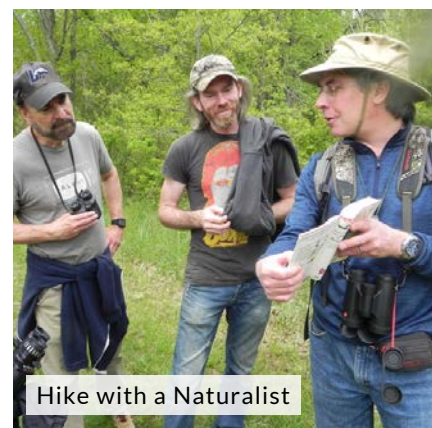
This year, we have continued to work with partner organizations to provide educational programs. Our free programs increase environmental literacy and connect visitors to natural and historic features of our properties. Outreach to local communities spreads awareness of our work at Leopold's Preserve and beyond.

Education - Leopold's Preserve

A key aspect of our work at Leopold's Preserve is to provide educational opportunities for the local community. Beyond our interpretive signage, we offer two guided hikes per month, homeschool programs, a winter lecture series, and special educational events throughout the year. In 2023, we hosted 62 programs at Leopold's Preserve. Our program attendance this year topped 1,000 participants - an increase of more than 60% over 2022.

Our Winter Lecture Series was a huge success, drawing more than 120 participants over the course of four lectures and earning press coverage in the Prince William Times. The series, geared primarily towards older adults, provides an accessible way to learn about nature during the colder months. We're excited to be hosting the 2023-2024 Winter Lecture Series in partnership with the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy.

The installation of an overflow parking area along Thoroughfare Road this year has enabled us to host larger events than we could previously accommodate. As such, attendance at our annual 5k/10k race and our Halloween Safari both rose as we were able to offer more tickets for these popular events.



Outreach - Leopold's Preserve

Leopold's Preserve is beloved by local residents and the wider Northern Virginia community. This year, we received support from the Dominion Woman's Club and Seven Bends Nursery to install a native plant demonstration garden in our parking lot. This garden showcases native plants in a traditional garden setting, providing inspiration for visitors who may want to incorporate these plants on their property.

Beyond the Preserve's borders, we have continued to make strides in community outreach. In 2023, we grew our social media following by more than 300 and reached over 60,000 users through our posts and stories. We worked with Team Avatar Films to produce "Discover Leopold's Preserve", a short film showcasing our community impact. Leopold's Preserve was also highlighted in the July/August edition of the Bay Journal, an esteemed regional environmental publication that reaches more than 250,000 readers per month.



A Dominion Woman's Club member installs native plants in the new demonstration garden.



Cub Scout Pack 107 visited Leopold's Preserve for Earth Day 2023.

Travel

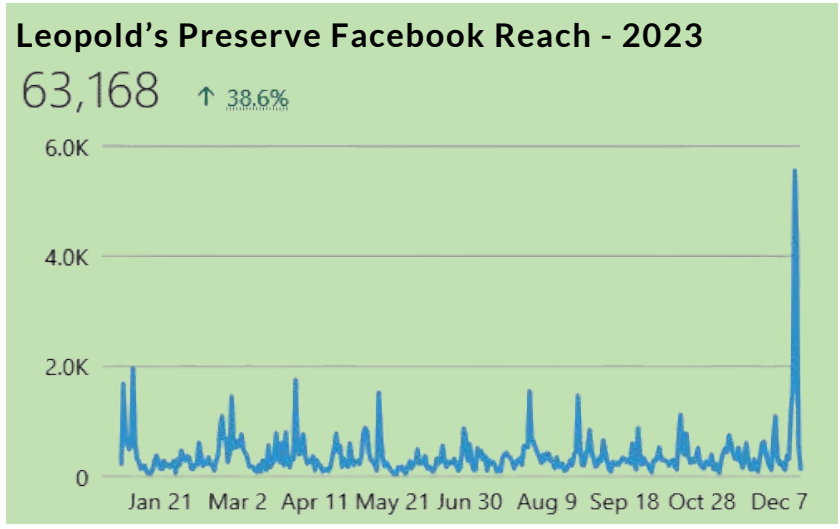
Let birdsong drown out city noise at Leopold's Preserve

By Whitney Pipkin

When the birdsong is so loud and clear, it's hard to hear anything else. It's a beautiful sound, one that fills the air and brings a sense of peace to the heart. It's a sound that is often missing in our busy, noisy lives. It's a sound that is often missing in our busy, noisy lives. It's a sound that is often missing in our busy, noisy lives.

Leopold's Preserve received press coverage in the Bay Journal's Travel section.

RAY JOURNAL July/August 2023



Education - White House Farm

Visits to the White House Farm are by invitation only, but it's still an important place for us to connect with Page County residents. WHFF hosted three events at the Farm this year, which drew 95 total participants. We engaged the community in a butterfly count, partnered with the Potomac Riverkeeper Network to raise awareness of watershed issues, and captivated students with a riparian exploration.

Our largest event in Luray, affectionately named the "Shenandoah Low Down", connected 58 local residents with information and resources about the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. Partner organizations including the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources hosted booths where participants learned more about aquatic ecosystems. Following a keynote speech by the Shenandoah Riverkeeper, participants were able to explore our riparian buffer and enjoyed a history tour of the White House and adjacent historic buildings.



NABA Butterfly Count



DWR hosted an outreach booth at the Low Down.



Fun at the Shenandoah Low Down!



Staff lead a field trip for the Sheridan School.

Outreach - White House Farm Foundation

Outreach efforts for the White House Farm Foundation have included sponsorship of multiple large events, notably the American Horticultural Society’s annual gala, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust’s annual gala, and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay’s annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum. Staff attended the Watershed Forum and forged connections with other professionals in the region while promoting WHFF’s mission through an outreach table.

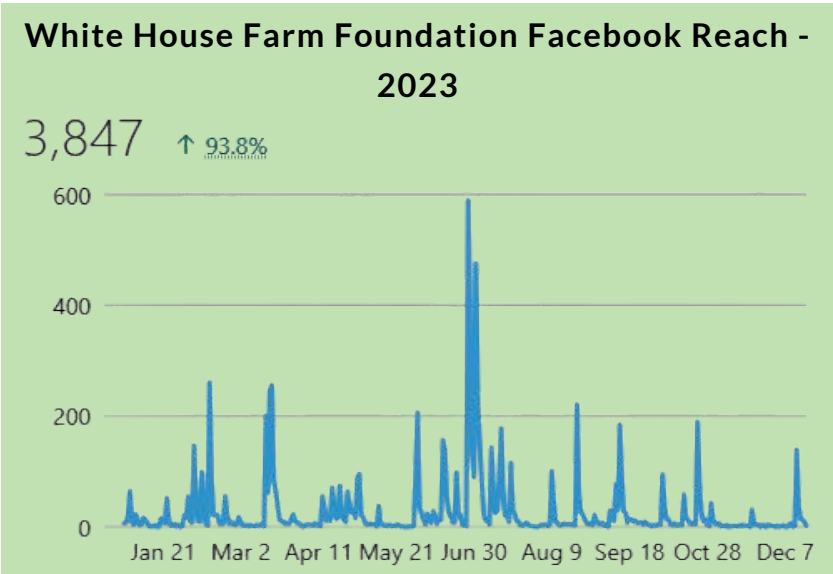
The White House Farm Foundation holds a smaller digital footprint than Leopold’s Preserve. We have seen a modest 60 follower increase this year, and our social media content reached 4,000 users. Our email list, which is shared with Leopold’s Preserve, has grown to nearly 600 subscribers.



WHFF’s table at the Chesapeake Watershed Forum.



Chairman Scott C. Plein spoke about WHFF’s mission at the Shenandoah Low Down.



CHARITABLE GIVING

Plein Environmental Scholarship

The goal of this scholarship is to enable local students to pursue environmental coursework at Northern Virginia Community College and Virginia public universities. Since its inception in 2022, four students have been awarded this scholarship and have received a total of \$27,500 in financial assistance.

Though we plan to restructure the scholarship for future years, we remain committed to the goals of the program, especially increasing access to higher education for students interested in the environment. Applications for the 2024-2025 school year are open now through April 26, 2024.



“The Plein Scholarship is helping me achieve my goal of becoming an educational farmer.”

- Ahmed Ibrahim,
2022 Scholarship awardee

“With the help of the Plein Environmental Scholarship, I can focus on my academics instead of worrying about my finances.”

- Anna Labrie, 2023 Scholarship awardee



AHS & River Farm

WHFF and the American Horticultural Society (AHS) have a shared interest in sustainable horticulture and in the preservation of local history. We are in the midst of a multi-year partnership with AHS to support accessibility improvements at their River Farm headquarters.

River Farm, a historic property once owned by George Washington, is the place where AHS lives its mission. Its grounds showcase a blend of traditional and sustainable horticultural practices. At River Farm, we have contributed to the installation of native plant gardens, the rehabilitation of degraded habitats, and the development of invasive removal volunteer programs. We also donated more than 150 hours of staff time to help modernize AHS's digital presence.

Other Donations

In addition to the American Horticultural Society, WHFF supports a number of environmental organizations. In 2023 we were proud to support:

- Animal Education and Rescue Organization
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Bay Journal
- Bull Run Mountains Conservancy
- Clifton Institute
- Earth Sangha
- Human-Beaver Coexistence Fund
- Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
- NOVA Educational Foundation
- Potomac Riverkeeper Network
- Prince William Conservation Alliance
- Virginia Native Plant Society and Prince William Wildflower Society

Love of Nature Begins in the Garden



The historic Manor House at River Farm.



Volunteers remove invasive vines in wooded areas of River Farm.

FUTURE GOALS

We have set ambitious long-term goals for the White House Farm Foundation. We remain committed to broadening our impact at Leopold’s Preserve and beyond, and we hope to continue building on the success of 2023.

Land Use Planning

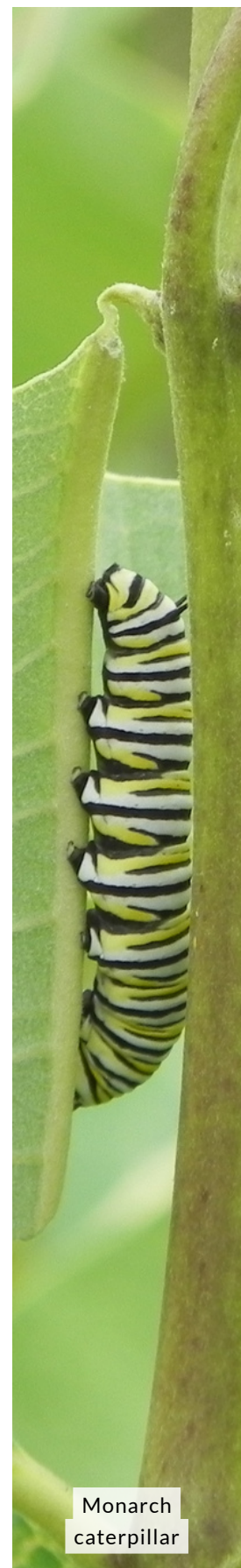
Moving forward, we hope to spread the word about wise land use strategies in developing areas. One of our major goals is reimagining stormwater management ponds as natural habitat features. As demonstrated at Leopold’s Preserve, native plantings around these ponds reduce maintenance costs while providing benefits to wildlife and water quality. We hope to work with local officials and other landowners to adjust regulations related to landscaping around stormwater ponds.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility

We are committed to engaging with diverse communities in Prince William and Page Counties. Our largest goal is to begin providing free guided hikes in Spanish at Leopold’s Preserve. We also plan to continue researching the history of our properties, exploring connections with Indigenous communities and the historic Thoroughfare community.

Expanding Programs at the WHF

We aim to increase our program offerings at the White House Farm in Luray, offering more tours of the riparian area and potentially developing a series of lectures or guided hikes similar to our offerings at Leopold’s Preserve. We have also set longer-term goals for the Farm, including stabilization of the historic White House and involvement in sustainable farming research.



Monarch caterpillar

THANK YOU!

We could not have achieved our goals this year without your support. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who have played a significant role in realizing the White House Farm Foundation's mission:

VOLUNTEERS

- Steve Daly
- Mike Dow
- Frank & Lisa Filipy
- Frank Jaworski
- Rick Rogowski
- Amy Scala

EDUCATORS

- All Saints Catholic School
- Alternative Paths Training School
- Prince William County Public Schools
- Sheridan School

CORPORATE PARTNERS

- Micron Technologies
- Wild Birds Unlimited
- Yahoo

COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Villages of Piedmont I & II
- Regency Garden Club
- Heritage Hunt Garden Club
- Cub Scout Pack 107
- Eagle Scout Nikhil Varma & Troop 1188
- Eagle Scout Andrew Weitzel & Troop 58

GRANTMAKERS

- Bishop's Events
- Dominion Woman's Club
- Erkiletian Family Foundation
- Plein Family Charitable Trust
- Virginia Bluebird Society
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Virginia Society of Ornithology
- USDA - NRCS

NONPROFIT PARTNERS

- Animal Education and Rescue Organization
- Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
- Bull Run Mountains Conservancy
- Clifton Institute
- Human-Beaver Coexistence Fund
- Merrimac Farm Master Naturalists
- Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
- Potomac Riverkeeper Network
- PW Soil & Water Conservation District
- Virginia Native Plant Society
- Virginia Working Landscapes



Micron corporate volunteers



WHITE HOUSE FARM FOUNDATION

WITH SUPPORT FROM **PLEIN FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST**

The White House Farm Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation dedicated to conservation and education.

The Foundation's work is supported by the **Plein Family Charitable Trust.**

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