



## Spring 2026 Newsletter

*"A March morning is only as drab as he who walks in it without a glance skyward, ear cocked for geese." - Aldo Leopold*

### CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

2026 is off to a bustling start for the White House Farm Foundation. Our team took advantage of snow days to stay indoors, working on reports, grant applications, and program planning for the rest of the year.

I am pleased to share that the White House historic rehabilitation project is still on track to be completed this summer. This project represents an enormous investment in preserving the Shenandoah Valley's history, and I am excited to see its continued progress. To see this quarter's complete update, check out the article on page 3.

This winter, we also expanded our staff team. Our new Seasonal Field Technician role will support Park Manager Nick Davis in maintaining Leopold's Preserve, freeing up his time to work on more data analysis, reporting, and support for our partners. You can read more about our new hire in the article on page 2.

I hope to see you out on the trails as the weather continues to warm!

- Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



Volunteers constructing their Wood Duck Nest Boxes.

### WHAT WOULD A WOOD DUCK DO IF A WOOD DUCK HAD A NEW NEST BOX?

On the first Saturday of March, an unusual sound could be heard near the big pond in Leopold's Preserve: drill noises!

For the second year in a row, we partnered with Virginia Ducks Unlimited (DU) in support of their Greenwing Program focused on youth involvement in conservation. For this partnership, we host annual youth volunteer events where children get hands-on experience constructing nest boxes to benefit native waterfowl in the Preserve.

Wood, screws, and spray paint came together to create ten new wood duck nest boxes, each with its own camouflaged predator guard. The boxes were installed later that afternoon by Park Manager Nick Davis and DU volunteers. Nine new mallard tubes were also installed.



Spray painting predator guards.



A freshly constructed nest box.



Park Manager Nick Davis with DU volunteers.

“TRAILS CLOSED” signs went up at the Preserve.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

## Updates from the Preserve in Haymarket

### “Snow-crete”

This year started off... snow. The extreme weather event over the weekend of January 24<sup>th</sup> cast an icy three-week halt to Leopold's Preserve happenings (for us humans, anyway).

Our wildlife was as out and about as ever during this period, frequently captured on our trail cams. Most notably, we observed a bobcat crossing our wetlands just after the storm! The snow-turned-ice on our trails also preserved a variety of wildlife tracks, including raccoon and white-tailed deer.



Drone footage of the frozen wetlands.

### Marvelous March Mayhem!

From listening in on lectures to catching critters, we made up for the snowy season with an event-filled first week of March.

Our final Winter Lecture Series was a captivating look into the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust's (NVCT) work, presented by Matt Gerhart. That same evening, folks journeyed to a vernal pool on the north side of Leopold's Preserve for an Amphibians of Spring Naturalist Walk. Not only did we observe a spotted salamander, but frogs and some marbled salamander larvae also made an appearance!

The following evening, a crowd gathered at Leopold's Preserve for a chance to see the unique woodcock mating ritual. After patiently waiting for half an hour or so, the woodcocks' "peents" echoed across the Meadow Loop. Patience paid off, and the visitors got to see their Skydance in action.



### Tree Rescues

New in 2026, the team has started to track the number of native trees that we and our volunteers have saved from invasive vines. In the first quarter of this year, 42 trees were saved at the Preserve. 83% of these trees were saved from Japanese honeysuckle, with Oriental bittersweet comprising the other 17%. The team is excited to see this number grow as the weather warms and staff and volunteers are out in the field more often.



### Seasonal Observations

- North American beaver
- Northern Shoveler
- Red fox
- Crane-fly Orchid

## NEW STAFF MEMBER: ABBY MARINO

We have once again expanded our staff team! Abby Marino has joined the White House Farm Foundation as our new Seasonal Field Technician at Leopold's Preserve. You may remember Abby from last summer, when she worked as our field conservation intern. In this role, she supported conservation and ecological management throughout Leopold's Preserve. Since last summer, Abby graduated summa cum laude from Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment with a B.S. in Fish and Wildlife Conservation (Human Dimensions) and a minor in Forestry. Her coursework and field experience provided her with a solid foundation in plant identification, forest ecology, and land management, along with considerable outdoor work experience. We're excited to have her on the team and look forward to the expertise and energy she will bring to our work. Abby will be based at the Preserve, so stop by and say hi!



# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE FARM

Updates from the White House Farm in Luray

## White House Rehabilitation Progress

Now that the majority of the exterior rehabilitation has been completed, efforts at the White House have been focused on repairs and restoration of interior elements.

Contractors have been applying new coats of plaster to the walls and ceilings throughout the house, providing a smooth surface for future painting. Sections of lath (wood strips supporting the plaster) were also replaced where they had deteriorated or been removed for structural repairs.

The Plein Family extended their contract with Maeve Woolley-Delph, an experienced paint conservator, to provide conservation services for the many areas of well-preserved paint in the White House. Her work has already revealed a unique feather-and-dot design in the east stairwell! She is also working to determine color matches for deteriorated paint on the window trim and for the walls and ceilings of the two ground-floor parlors.

This spring, the team will continue making progress on the plaster, paint, and floors inside the White House. We're also excited to be welcoming back the Archaeological Society of Virginia in mid-March to continue analyzing soils that were removed from around the cellar stairwell. Keep an eye out for regular updates shared to our Facebook and Instagram pages!



## APPLY NOW!

### The Plein Environmental Scholarship

The Plein Environmental Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to benefit students in need of financial assistance who are pursuing an undergraduate degree at a community college or public university in Virginia.



### Eligibility

- set to attend or currently attending a public Virginia University
- pursuing a degree in an environmental field of study.

### To Apply...

- [Click here to review application and eligibility details.](#)
- **Submit your application no later than FRIDAY, APRIL 24th!**

## COMING SOON...



We have been hard at work on the White House Farm Foundation's 2025 Annual Report. 2025 was a big year for the Foundation, and we are so excited to share this look into what we accomplished. Make sure to keep an eye out for the report in the next few weeks, you won't want to miss this read!

### What you can look forward to:

- A deep dive into the White House rehabilitation project
  - How persistent effort can drastically change a trail system
  - A look back on our second annual Fall Festival
  - An overview of the dedication of our volunteers and the wonderful work they do
  - New and returning projects and partnerships
- & so much more!**

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: NORTHERN VIRGINIA BIRD ALLIANCE

In February, WHFF staff attended the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance's (NVBA) 2026 Symposium: **Protecting Birds & Urban Nature in Northern Virginia – Local Actions for Healthier Habitats and Thriving Wildlife!** In addition to the symposium, we enjoy working with NVBA on programs like guided bird walks and our winter lecture series at Leopold's Preserve. NVBA also generously sponsored a bench on Wood Duck Way, which was installed along the accessible path in 2023.

The mission of NVBA is to engage all northern Virginia communities in enjoying, conserving, and restoring nature for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people. They advance their mission through educational programs, citizen science, conservation initiatives, and advocacy initiatives. To learn more about NVBA's important work and how to get involved, please visit their website: [www.nvbirdalliance.org](http://www.nvbirdalliance.org).

In the photo (left to right): Ryan McDaniel-Neff (Communications & Outreach Coordinator, WHFF), McKenzie Ingram (Community Engagement Coordinator, NVBA), Amanda Robinson (Executive Director, NVBA), Marie Pinto (Executive Director, WHFF)



## JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

### Saturday Volunteer Day

Saturday, March 21, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM  
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

Help us remove invasive vines from native trees to keep track of how many native trees we save! Suitable for ages 13 and up.

### Restoring the Wild

Saturday, March 21, 1 PM - 2:30 PM  
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

Join Park Manager Nick Davis for an inspiring guided walk through Leopold's Preserve and discover the story of its remarkable landscape.

### Hike With a Naturalist

Wednesday, April 1, 10 AM - 12 PM  
Leopold's Preserve, Haymarket

Join a professional naturalist and discover the flora and fauna on Leopold's Preserve. Free; all are welcome.



### Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History, by Dan Flores

Flores takes a deep dive into the storied history of coyotes in this enjoyable read. In addition to natural history aspects like their expanding range, adaptability, and diet, Flores also details the importance of coyotes to Indigenous peoples and their enduring influence on American culture.

### What We've Been Reading



@WHFarmFoundation  
[www.whfarmfoundation.org](http://www.whfarmfoundation.org)



@LeopoldsPreserve  
[www.leopoldspreserve.com](http://www.leopoldspreserve.com)

Join our [mailing list](#) to get updates and newsletters sent right to your email inbox!

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