

December 2019

Vol. 49, Issue 8

Kings Park West Civic Association

Happy Holidays!

The Board and I extend our sincere thanks to the many volunteers who gave of their time and talents to the community these past couple of months. We certainly have been busy!

Our 2020 membership drive commenced in October. Many volunteers work diligently on this campaign – thank you to our block captains, who administer the door to door appeal, to the membership committee, who maintain the Association database, to Jim Mays, our Treasurer, who maintains our banking record deposits, and to our membership chair, Cherylyn LeBon, who oversees everything. Many thanks for an awesome job! Your KPWCA membership helps with the sponsorship of many great community initiatives. If you have not yet joined the Civic Association, please consider doing so.

Community Calendar	
Braddock District Council.....	Dec 11
KPWCA Board Meeting.....	Dec 17
Winter Begins.....	Dec 21
Christmas Day.....	Dec 25
New Year's Eve.....	Dec 31
New Year's Day.....	Jan 1
Citizen Advisory Council.....	Jan 7
Herald Deadline.....	Jan 8
Braddock District Council.....	Jan 8
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.....	Jan 20
KPWCA Board Meeting.....	Jan 21
Herald Delivery.....	Jan 25
Citizen Advisory Council.....	Feb 4
Braddock District Council.....	Feb 12

Regrettably, the annual KPWCA Halloween Festival and Parade did not happen this year. We had the misfortune of two back-to-back rainy Sundays on October 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. However, we appreciate the many volunteers who were willing to participate and help, including the volunteer road marshals, Burke Fire Department, Supervisor Cook, the Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts and many more. Many thanks to Keith Jodoin who did a fabulous job coordinating this event again this year with great enthusiasm and creativity!

Fall Dumpster Days, which is open to Association members, was held on November 9<sup>th</sup> at the Lakeview parking lot. We had many folks show up to discard unwanted household items. We appreciate the efforts of Barbara Murillo, Mary Hovland, Cathy DeLoach, and Lakeview Swim Club for the use of their parking lot.

*Continued on Page 3*

***In this Issue:***

- Looking for a family-friendly activity this weekend? Check out Page 14 for ideas!
- Interested in becoming an IMA site leader? Flip to Page 16 for more information.

# KINGS PARK WEST CIVIC ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 7114, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7114

[www.kpwca.org](http://www.kpwca.org)

## OFFICERS

President	Jeanmarie Roberson	703-425-1286
Vice-President	Mike Stonkey	703-509-9725
Secretary	Frank Cumberland	703-426-2868
Treasurer	Jim Mays	703-978-0317
Members-At-Large	Adrienne Barna	703-323-0518
	Mary Crowder	703-239-2581
	Jonathan Reiser	571-423-8030

## COMMITTEES

Common Grounds Maintenance

	Laura Hall	703-978-6641
	Linda Reamy	703-978-1564

## Community Support Services

Consumer Affairs	Mary Hovland	703-946-1775
Dumpster Day	Mary Hovland	703-946-1775
GMU Student Liaison	<b>Vacant</b>	
Neighbor Assist	Bruce Wallachy	703-401-0275
Welcoming	Melissa Morgan:	<a href="mailto:welcome@kpwca.org">welcome@kpwca.org</a>

## Communications

Herald Newsletter:

Content Editor	Leah Larson-Taylor	703-283-0208
Communications Editor	Sara Rezk	571-277-0782

Herald Advertising and Classifieds

	Gayle Ostrom	<a href="mailto:classified@kpwca.org">classified@kpwca.org</a>
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Signboards

	Adrienne Barna	703-323-0518
--	----------------	--------------

Web Admin

	Kathy Shifflett	<a href="mailto:website@kpwca.org">website@kpwca.org</a>
--	-----------------	--

Membership

	Cherylyn LeBon	<a href="mailto:membership@kpwca.org">membership@kpwca.org</a>
--	----------------	--

Parks & Lakes	Sarah Lennon	703-978-5608
Invasive Species	Greg Sykes	703-426-8246

## Special Activities

Spring Egg Hunt		Pack 1967
Halloween Festival	Keith Jodoin	<a href="mailto:kjodoin@gmail.com">kjodoin@gmail.com</a>
Scholarships	Gayle Ostrom	703-323-0206

## How Do I Join the Kings Park West Civic Association?

Send your name, address, and phone number, along with a check for \$25.00, to KPWCA, P.O. Box 7114, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7114. Members receive the Community Directory and support from community programs such as Neighborhood Watch, Scholarship Awards, community social activities, Parks & Lakes Clean-up, and a free subscription to The Herald. Alternatively, go to [www.kpwca.org](http://www.kpwca.org) and pay using PayPal.

## Email Addresses for KPWCA Inc.

### OFFICERS

President	<a href="mailto:President@kpwca.org">President@kpwca.org</a>
Treasurer	<a href="mailto:Treasurer@kpwca.org">Treasurer@kpwca.org</a>

### COMMITTEES

Membership	<a href="mailto:Membership@kpwca.org">Membership@kpwca.org</a>
Welcome Coordinator	<a href="mailto&gt;Welcome@kpwca.org">Welcome@kpwca.org</a>
Consumer Affairs	<a href="mailto:Consumer@kpwca.org">Consumer@kpwca.org</a>
Common Grounds Maintenance	<a href="mailto:BAGG@kpwca.org">BAGG@kpwca.org</a>
Parks & Lakes	<a href="mailto:Parks@kpwca.org">Parks@kpwca.org</a>
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Classifieds	<a href="mailto:Classified@kpwca.org">Classified@kpwca.org</a>
Advertising	<a href="mailto:Classified@kpwca.org">Classified@kpwca.org</a>

### General Information Community Association

<a href="mailto:Info@kpwca.org">Info@kpwca.org</a>
<a href="mailto:KPWHO@yaho.com">KPWHO@yaho.com</a>

## How Do I Advertise in The Herald?

**CLASSIFIEDS:** KPWCA Newsletter classified advertisements for the January issue must be received no later than January 8th by Gayle Ostrom, 4912 Gainsborough Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032, or email [classified@kpwca.org](mailto:classified@kpwca.org). Please print clearly, and include payment to KPWCA. Provide your name, address, and phone number. Rates: \$5 per issue for 35 words. \$40 per year (8 issues/35-word ad). Found items listed free.

**ADVERTISEMENTS:** KPWCA Newsletter Advertisements are received by Gayle Ostrom; please email [classified@kpwca.org](mailto:classified@kpwca.org) for rates.

## How Do I Get My News in The Herald?

The easiest way to get your news items in The Herald is to e-mail the editor at [editor@kpwca.org](mailto:editor@kpwca.org). We invite items on neighborhood schools, churches, organizations, and other noteworthy neighborhood news. News items and letters will be published if deemed suitable and as space permits. We reserve the right to edit any item submitted to The Herald. Acceptance of news items does not constitute endorsement by KPWCA.

## The Herald

Published eight times yearly by the KPWCA.  
NEXT DEADLINE is January 8, 2020  
for delivery on January 25, 2020

Note: Acceptance of articles and advertising does not constitute endorsement by KPWCA, nor liability for products or services advertised in its publications.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** If you are moving out of the neighborhood and want to keep in touch with community news, get a subscription. Send \$25 per year to:  
KINGS PARK WEST CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 7114, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7114.

### Volunteer Opportunities

**Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) Trail Maintenance Volunteers:** Every three months, the FORL organizes a morning when neighborhood volunteers work to improve problem areas on the trails around Royal Lake. The next such time will begin at 9 am on November 16 (see article on Page 15).

**KPWCA Sign Posting:** *30 minutes per month.* KPWCA maintains three signs that serve to keep KPW residents informed of community activities. We have a team for each sign and would like to add a member to each team. Responsibility is to post announcements provided by the KWPCA Board periodically throughout the year.

**Parks & Lakes Committee:** We are looking for 3-5 motivated members to help plan and organize twice-a-year park/lake clean-ups. *A few hours per month in the months leading up to the April and October clean-ups.* Please contact Sarah Lennon at [parks@kpwca.org](mailto:parks@kpwca.org) and/or [sarahjlennon@gmail.com](mailto:sarahjlennon@gmail.com).

**Neighbor Assist Volunteers:** *As needed.* Looking for friendly callers (a great way to volunteer without having to leave your home), computer experts to provide IT assistance, and handyman volunteers. Contact Bruce Wallachy at [wallbdc@gmail.com](mailto:wallbdc@gmail.com) or call 703-401-0275.

**Road Raiders:** *1/2 hour each month.* Performs common area clean-up around neighborhood once per month early Saturday mornings. Please contact Tom McCook at [trmccook@gmail.com](mailto:trmccook@gmail.com) or call 703-839-5205.

**Invasive Management Area:** *3 hours a few times per year.* Details at [www.grsykes.com/main.php?page=32](http://www.grsykes.com/main.php?page=32). Send an e-mail to [greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com) and ask to be on the volunteer distribution list.

*Continued from Page 1*

Our community is fortunate to have been the recipient of several recently completed Eagle Scout projects.

Cole Luther installed three new flowerbeds around the KPWCA sign boards. He was assisted by three Boy Scout troops and one Girl Scout troop for the successful completion of the project. Clifton Contracting made significant donations of supplies and labor.

Jagger Larson, of Troop 1508, completed his Eagle Scout project on a new segment of the Lakeside Park trail. The Fairfax County Park Authority and many volunteers helped with this effort.

Scott McDonald completed his Eagle Scout project for the Invasive Management Area program near Royal Lake. Scott and eleven volunteers filled twenty-four bags with invasive weeds along the Shanes Creek trail that leads to Royal Lake.

As a follow-up to the fall membership meeting discussion and motion, I contacted Supervisor Cook's staff requesting consideration of Children-at-Play / Slow Down signage along Gainsborough Drive near Robinson Secondary School. We will keep the community updated as we hear back on this request.

Remember – the Holiday Decorating Committee will be judging the house decorating contest during the weekend of December 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Please light up your displays.

Enjoy the Holiday Season!  
Jeanmarie Roberson ([president@KPWCA.org](mailto:president@KPWCA.org))



## Girl Scout News – Service Unit 54-15

This fall, KPW Girl Scouts got busy and got outdoors!

Troop 1456, Laurel Ridge fifth graders, learned about archery and went camping at Camp Crowell. The girls cooked over an open fire and enjoyed learning new songs. The troop also had a dog sledding adventure in Maryland where they learned how to care for the dogs, how packs are formed, and the different positions of the sled team.



Troop 1356, Laurel Ridge fourth graders, went camping in Pennsylvania and spent the day at Hershey Park. It was a sweet surprise when every girl in the troop found the courage to ride a roller coaster at least once!

Troop 5790, Robinson seventh, eighth, and ninth graders, hosted a Juliette Gordon Low birthday party inviting Daisies and Brownies to celebrate the founder of Girl Scouts, Mousketeer-style!



Do you have a child interested in joining Girl Scouts, or are you interested in volunteering with us? Please visit our website at [www.gscnc.org](http://www.gscnc.org) for more information.



Girl Scout Troop 54051 is collecting 500 lbs. of film plastic as part of the TREX Recycling Program to earn a bench for Laurel Ridge Elementary School.

# We need your FILM PLASTIC!

Lets keep our plastic film waste from becoming pollution and turn it into something our teachers and students can use!

Donation drop boxes located at:  
 Front porch, 5346 Guinea Rd., Fairfax  
 Front lobby, Laurel Ridge Elementary School  
 Contact: Troop54051@gmail.com

## Recycle **clean, dry** plastic bags and film packaging

Include these materials



### DO NOT include with bags and film

- NO Prewashed Salad Mix Bags
- NO Paper
- NO Rigid Plastic:
  - Plastic Food Containers
  - Plastic Bottles
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- NO Rigid Foam or Peanuts
- NO Candy Bags





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"What good is the warmth of summer,  
without the cold of winter  
to give it sweetness."

John Steinbeck

**REAL ESTATE CORNER**  
by Mary and Cathy



**Low Inventory, Desperate Buyers**

Kings Park West is experiencing a dearth of available homes for sale. Local experts cite a couple of major factors. The primary explanation is a trend for homeowners to stay in their homes longer. The current average is nine to 10 years, up from an average of five to six years (source: NVAR).

Another interesting variable is what is now being referred to as "The Amazon Effect." Homeowners are gambling that home values will increase in anticipation of the construction and staffing of Amazon's HQ2.

This doesn't mean it is a complete sellers' market, however. Despite the limited inventory, buyers are still price and presentation sensitive meaning that they will bypass a poorly priced or maintained home. Sellers still need to be mindful about putting time and attention into thoughtful presentation, marketing and pricing to entice these savvy buyers.

*-excerpted from NVAR*

**Recent Sales and Active Listings**

Model	Status	Address	List Price	Sold Price	DOM
Baron	SOLD!	5222 Nottinghill Ln	\$715,000	\$710,000	6
Baron	Under Contract	5304 Kaywood Ct	\$650,000		150
Baron	Under Contract	10432 Stallworth Ct	\$715,000		6
Duke	For Sale	5241 Richardson Dr	\$585,000		6
Duke	SOLD!	9885 Becket Ct	\$499,900	\$500,000	2
King	For Sale	5017 Gainsborough Dr	\$600,000		35
Prince	Under Contract	5366 Gainsborough Dr	\$580,000		6
Queen	For Sale	9708 Commonwealth Blvd	\$589,500		104
Exp Regent	SOLD!	5120 Thackery Ct	\$699,990	\$699,990	15
Regent	For Sale	10169 Bessmer Ln	\$609,900		91
Regent	Under Contract	5118 Gainsborough Dr	\$599,990		129
Regent	Under Contract	5313 Gainsborough Dr	\$609,900		33

**YTD KPW Homes Sold: 71**  
**Average List Price: \$607,618**  
**Average Sold Price: \$607,618**

## Let's Look at Foxes: Part 2

By Greg Sykes ([greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com))

The red fox's success owes to being extremely adept at living amongst human activity. Besides the previously mentioned land clearances in Part 1 of this series, they walk along roadsides usually without getting hit by vehicles. While strolling on paths and sidewalks, they leave scat in the most conspicuous places as territorial markings; these deposits are often mistakenly blamed on small dogs and negligent owners. When pursued by predators, foxes run through creeks to mask their odor.

Some red foxes lack the shyness associated with other wildlife, even denning in urban backyards. When folks spot unwanted denning activity, persistently chasing off the fox with loud noises usually does the trick. Plan B is to place ammonia-soaked rags around the site. Never use mothballs or other poisons since they have detrimental impacts to many other organisms including small children.

Questions always turn to how people should behave around foxes. Popular videos show people playing with wild foxes, but these were mostly filmed in either the United Kingdom (UK), where rabies was eradicated, or Russia, where foxes on fur farms were bred for easy handling and near domestication. Although some videos may show foxes behaving like pets, first and foremost is that people should never handle or corner wild animals. Folks wanting to be an animal rehabilitator must go through the training and licensing process. Rehabilitators working with foxes, skunks, raccoons, bats, and other critters at high rabies risk take initial rabies vaccinations. Getting the full rabies vaccination series after being bitten by a potentially rabid animal can cost thousands of dollars. Any animal having a mind altered by an advanced rabies infection will act abnormally, obliterating any preconceptions on temperament or behavior.

Tips to avoid human-fox conflicts include always removing any extra food – especially pet food – from the outdoors. Keep household trash for curbside pickup in hard containers; leaving food and kitchen waste outside only in plastic bags invites foxes, raccoons, and other scavengers to rip in, chow down, spew trash, and later come back for more. If a fox frequently tears into a garden, sprinkle pepper-based deterrents and/or lay chicken wire fencing (with smaller openings



**Figure 1.** This photograph shows a red fox by a fence dividing developed private property and natural parkland. It symbolizes the fox's story: a species that utilizes open urban areas while sheltering in woodlands.



**Figure 2.** Several decades ago, a now former KPW resident thought he/she was doing wildlife a favor by feeding them and opening the house to critters. Rather than living a Disney fantasy, various scavengers made a huge mess of the property, which required restoration. The adjoining parkland needed bulldozer excavation to dig out the massive rat colony. Though overgrown, the earth-mover's trenches (in the foreground) still scar the land.



than the paw to prevent possible entanglement) flat over the ground across that area, which usually takes a month or two to break the habit. Healthy foxes unconditioned to humans usually pose no threat to people or pets that are larger than a rabbit. Animals that associate people with free meals could become problematic and demand food. Never lure foxes with food for a photograph; many reputable wildlife publications clamp down on this baited photography technique and will not publish the images. Once foxes find a food source, they tend to return and can become a nuisance animal. One person might want foxes within close range whereas a neighbor could have other feelings, but a fox conditioned to humans will not know the difference. When pest controllers capture any animal, including foxes, it is euthanized and not relocated or released into a captive facility without special permits. Relocated animals sometimes find their way back, can spread disease, cause over-crowding at the release site, and strain resources. Even in the UK, a caught nuisance fox is dispatched. As the saying goes, "Fed wildlife is dead wildlife."



**Figure 3. One of the highest compliments a wild animal can give to a backyard habitat is snoozing in it. Without any food bribing it into the yard, this healthy fox settled for a nap before going on its way.**

Whereas the cuteness factor influences many people's opinions, giving preferential treatment to the adorable red fox is unfair to the endearing rabbits, noble turkeys, or potentially unseen wildlife that a large fox population annihilates. The best policy for people and foxes living in harmony is to leave the foxes alone, keep a safe distance, and let nature take its course. Respect the fox for the charismatic, clever, majestic, cool, and wild animal that it is.

Further reading:

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/naturalcultural/stewardship%20brochures/foxcard.pdf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/naturalcultural/stewardship%20brochures/foxcard.pdf)  
[www.humanesociety.org/resources/what-do-about-foxes](http://www.humanesociety.org/resources/what-do-about-foxes)  
[blog.nwf.org/2018/04/what-to-do-when-foxes-move-in/](http://blog.nwf.org/2018/04/what-to-do-when-foxes-move-in/)  
[www.foxesworlds.com/foxes-and-humans/](http://www.foxesworlds.com/foxes-and-humans/)  
[www.wildlife-removal.com/foxdangerous.html](http://www.wildlife-removal.com/foxdangerous.html)  
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[www.howmuchisit.org/human-rabies-shot/](http://www.howmuchisit.org/human-rabies-shot/)

For further reading and links to additional resources, see the full article by scanning the QR code with your smart phone or go to:  
[www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/95a\\_2019-12.pdf](http://www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/95a_2019-12.pdf)



\* \* \* \* \*

# The Herald's List

by Mary Hovland and Cathy DeLoach

## Christmas Tree Safety

Choose a fresh tree (not dry). The fresher the tree, the less likely it will pose a fire hazard. Look for flexible needles that don't break, and a trunk with sap.

**Keep the water coming.** The tree stand should contain a continuous source of water and be sturdy enough to resist toppling by kids or pets.

**Assure cord safety.** Attach only three maximum strings of lights to any one extension cord, then place cords along walls to prevent a tripping hazard. Never run them under rugs or carpets.

**Trees don't need warmth.** Keep the tree away from heat sources such as fireplaces, candles and even a TV.

**Use low energy, safe lighting** that's been certified by a safety testing lab. Don't use damaged or frayed cords.

**Turn off lights at night.**

**Don't keep a dry tree around.** Dispose of it properly. Don't even keep it in the garage.

**Artificial tree safety awareness.** Artificial trees should be flame resistant and have a seal for an approved safety testing laboratory if the tree contains a built-in lighting set.

**Death by artificial tree.** If the tree is metal, never use electric lights, as they can charge the tree and lead to electrocution.

**Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.** Make sure everyone knows its location and how to use it.



**The Kings Park West Herald's List Facebook Page** is an interactive community resource for KPW residents. Requests and recommendations come in daily, and offers searchability and immediate access to recommendations. Post your own requests or recommendations.

[www.facebook.com/groups/HeraldsList](http://www.facebook.com/groups/HeraldsList)



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- and much more!



## When the Most Common Native Plants Become No Longer Common in Our Wild Areas

*By Lisa Bright, Earth Sangha*

In my line of work, I engage in extensive, if casual, surveying of native flora in the wild areas of Northern Virginia. For nearly twenty years, I've made it my job to check on the general conditions of our region's wild areas, or rather the remnants of once wild areas, in every season. My kind of survey is a non-scientific activity. Just a visual survey with the understanding of a hobby-naturalist.

Yet, you get to learn a lot from these repeated observations over the same areas. I take the trouble to visit all the nooks and crannies of our public and non-public lands where native plants are growing. I've noticed how the topography changes over time and how plants interact with both natural and artificial physical changes. The overall picture I've gotten from my observations is not that pretty. Here is one fact that I cannot ignore: in our increasingly urbanized and suburbanized region, driven largely by human convenience and immediate economic returns, the native plants are the ones who are losing ground. Literally, that is.

I am sad to note that once common native plant species such as White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) and Blue-stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) and Cornel-leaf Whitetop Aster (*Doellingeria infirma*), to just name a few, have become harder and harder to find in our woodlands. They are still there but not in any sizable quantities. They barely hang on. I name these species because of the simple fact that they are the foundation species in healthy woodlands that were once widely represented. Even ten short years ago, they were commonly found in any woodlands nearby. They are now in serious decline. Their habitats are degraded, and in many instances, they lost outright the entire habitats by development.

This comes at a time when our wild areas and native flora are finally getting the recognition they deserve from the general public. There are a growing number of people and organizations who band together to protect the wild habitats for native flora and fauna. I believe that if we work together, harder and smarter, we can reverse the trend. It's not too late. The habitats once lost are gone forever. You can't recreate natural areas. Our hope then lies in rehabilitating the habitats in decline. I'm no expert on this, but I think there are several immediate and specific issues that can be addressed:

**1. An issue of poor management.** The land owners, public or private, rely too much on the judgment or discretion of hired contractors who do not understand wild habitats or plants in general. They were told to kill trees that might interfere with the power lines, and they do. I've witnessed countless times how these contractors steadily shrink the forest edges by chopping off indiscriminately any living woody plants. In their wake, a long line of dead Mountain Laurels (*Kalmia latifolia*) along the forest edges. These contractors need the qualified and quantified instructions and tighter supervision by the land owners.

An example is the four-acre plot of narrow but long neighborhood woodlands (presumably belonging to a nearby HOA community) in Centerville. A contractor hired by either the VDOT or a power company chopped off trees on the edges of Route 29, and dumped all the tree trunks and branches unceremoniously into the woodlands across the trail. The contractors did this every time, and nobody raised an issue. It's a forgotten place. The forest floor once featured one of the better habitats for White Wood Aster and Blue-stemmed Goldenrod in this acidic Oak-Hickory forest remnant. Now I cannot find a single Aster or Goldenrod. Those numerous Pinxter Bloom Azaleas along the edge are also long gone. In their place, invasive *Alianthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven) and Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) have appeared. This is just one example which repeats itself everywhere.

**2. An issue of excessive mowing and untimely mowing.** When it comes to open meadow areas, mowing is a necessary tool for managing the habitat. The problem is that the heavy tractor mowers with low deck not only cut the plants but they cut into the ground, thereby making it easy for weedy invasive plants to enter. I've noticed that the Manassas Battlefield National Park contractors do a better job at cutting the plants without necessarily



disturbing the ground, compared to power line easement meadows. One reason is that at Manassas Battlefield the contractors are harvesting hay, and the best way to continue harvesting good-quality hay is not to disturb the ground. On the other hand, the main reason for mowing in the power line meadow is to destroy plants. That is one reason why the quality of flora is widely different from one power line easement to the next. And from one year to the next.

Still, the best native herbaceous vegetation in our region can be found under these power lines because we've essentially lost our edge-of-wood meadows to various human activities and development. It would be better if we let the plants complete its life cycle. If seeds are allowed to form and be dropped and eaten by animals, mowing can be a useful management tool.

**3. Let's limit the recreational use of wild habitats.** It is hard to believe that at this critical juncture where the environmental degradation threatens these systems, we regard public parks only as recreational resources. There are some parks that I no longer visit because there is nothing left to discover. These parks are known for deluxe parking lots and luxurious trails, after killing off a group of healthy and mature canopy trees. These parks have become a sad place botanically.

It is high time we view our natural habitats as what they are. It's a living organism who plays a critical role in the natural ecosystems. Simply put, we are facing an ecological crisis where a lack of healthy native plant communities creates all kinds of problems. Just look at all the damage from stormwater runoff. Only healthy forests could absorb, hold, filter, and regulate the rainfall and rain flow. We've effectively destroyed that natural system. There aren't enough forests in our region to handle all the water and air pollution.

**4. Controlling invasive plants and early detection of such invasion.** Eradicating invasive plants may be impractical given the pervasiveness of the problem. But we can manage to control them by focusing on protecting the best areas first and increase the presence of native plants in targeted spots and then to expand their holdings. I've seen many successfully managed habitats where conscientious park managers diligently work and where Master Naturalists adopt certain sites and maintain them.

In large public parks, we need some sharp-eyed and knowledgeable naturalist-volunteers to detect a new appearance of invasive plants early on to immediately eradicate them. A season or two later, they take hold and become expensive to control. We need more trained Master Naturalists to help our over-strained park managers. If you are retired or retiring and looking to do something worthwhile, please be a Master Naturalist!

**5. Our parks are seriously underfunded and under-staffed.** Many people are wondering why park systems and park managers seem to ignore the problems of invasive plants in their neighborhood parks. The park managers are not ignoring them. The Natural Resource Protection teams have been doing extensive work to develop natural resource management plans, but they don't have the necessary funding to implement these plans. The sad truth is that they are borrowing money to do even the basic maintenance work. If you want the Natural Resource Protection department to have more funding so that they can implement their visions, please call your District Supervisors. They are elected officials and have the power to influence the distribution of the County's general fund.

**6. Raising concerns and communication.** Let us become the voice of natural habitats and plant communities. They struggle and quietly suffer. Some nature-loving people tend to be solitary types and don't always raise their concerns out loud. I think, however, it is changing. We witness now more concerted efforts to protect the wild habitats among different citizen groups. We see more lively debates on best methods, more activism in general. There is also more scientific data available, and people are busy sharing the information and pressuring the elected officials. This is hugely encouraging. I'd like to think it is not too late to reverse the trend. We can save our forests and improve their qualities.

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## Cub Scout Pack 1967

With the fall upon us, that means it is time for Pack 1967 to go camping and hiking! In October, the Pack traveled to Camp Snyder in Haymarket for the Cub Scout Expo and campout. As part of the Expo, Scouts learned archery, how to safely fire BB guns and sling shots, and do other activities like leather crafting and climbing the rock wall. The Pack is already looking forward to the spring campout next year. In November, some of our older Scouts set out to hike Old Rag Mountain. The hike is a very strenuous one (for kids and adults), is approximately ten miles, and has an elevation gain of nearly 2,300 feet. If that was not enough, near the top, the path turns into a rock scramble where hikers must squeeze between and climb over boulders. All of the Scouts (and their parents) completed the hike! Congratulations to all on that accomplishment!



Pack 1967's year of service continues as well. On October 27th, members of our Bear Den (third graders) and their parents volunteered supporting ARISE Against Hunger, helping to prepare 40,000 meals to fight hunger. On November 2nd, our Wolf Den (second graders) and other Scouts in the Pack applied new labels to 191 storm drains throughout Kings Park West. These labels are intended to educate our community that whatever goes into our storm drains goes into our creeks and lake. Please keep our waters clean by ensuring that only rainwater goes down the drains! Our year of service will continue in November by supporting the Scouting for Food drive and helping out at the second annual Run, Walk and Roll at Robinson Secondary School on November 16th.



If your son or daughter is interested in Cub Scouts, come on out to join us for dinner and learn a little more about what we do. If you have any questions or want to contact a Den Leader, we can be contacted at [CubScout.Pack.1967@gmail.com](mailto:CubScout.Pack.1967@gmail.com).



### Get Off the Couch

*A roundup of family friendly weekend events around the region...*

#### **November 8 to January 5, 2020**

##### **Winter Walk of Lights at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens**

9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court, Vienna. Every year between Thanksgiving until just after New Year's Day, the garden is transformed into a half-mile, animated light show. 5:30-10 pm, time tickets required. Tickets/Info: [www.novaparks.com/events/winter-walk-of-lights](http://www.novaparks.com/events/winter-walk-of-lights)

#### **November 22 to January 5, 2020**

##### **Bull Run Festival of Lights**

Experience 2.5 miles of illuminated by holiday light displays. After viewing the lights, bring your family and friends to the holiday village to enjoy rides and refreshments. Cost: \$20-25. Monday-Thursday, 5:30-9:30 pm; Friday-Sunday and holidays, 5:30-10 pm. [www.novaparks.com/events/bull-run-festival-of-lights](http://www.novaparks.com/events/bull-run-festival-of-lights)

#### **November 29 to January 1, 2020**

##### **Zoo Lights at The National Zoo**

More than half a million lights illuminate the National Zoo during this very popular annual event. Stroll around and check out nocturnal residents, take a carousel ride, or take a slide down the tubing hill. Admission to the zoo is \*FREE\*, but there is a charge for activities. 5-9 pm (excludes Dec. 24, 25 and 31) [nationalzoo.si.edu/events/zoolights](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/events/zoolights)

#### **December 13-15**

##### **Christmas Illumination at Mount Vernon Estate**

Enjoy an evening of holiday-themed fireworks and special programs, watch colonial artisans make chocolate, meet reenactors from the First Virginia Regiment, enjoy cider by a bonfire, and learn 18th century dance moves from costumed guides. Friday and Saturday. 5:30-9 pm. [www.mountvernon.org/](http://www.mountvernon.org/)

#### **Bethlehem Walk**

This popular annual Christmastime live Nativity takes visitors back in time. After returning to the 21st century, you are invited for refreshments and crafts. Saturday and Sunday. 3-7 pm. Parkwood Baptist Church, 8726 Braddock Road. [www.parkwood.org/content.cfm?id=9000](http://www.parkwood.org/content.cfm?id=9000)

#### **December 22**

##### **Chanukah on Ice**

Pentagon Row Ice Rink, 6-8:30 pm, skate with family and friends! Lighting of a giant 6-ft menorah. Hot latkes, kosher hot dogs and other refreshments. Tickets \$10-13. [www.chabadalexandria.org/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/447952/jewish/Chanukah-On-Ice.htm](http://www.chabadalexandria.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/447952/jewish/Chanukah-On-Ice.htm)

#### **December 24**

##### **The Waterskiing Santa**

Old Town Alexandria. This unusual annual event features a water-skiing Santa, flying elves, the Jet-skiing Grinch, and Frosty the Snowman performing on the Potomac River. 1 pm. [www.tripsavvy.com/water-skiing-santa-washington-dc-1038629](http://www.tripsavvy.com/water-skiing-santa-washington-dc-1038629)

#### **December 27-29**

##### **VA Ballet Company & School Presents: "The Nutcracker"**

A magical holiday experience and tradition since 1950. This wonderful production features many dancers who are KPW residents. Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center, NVCC, Annandale. Order tickets \$20-30 online at: [vaballet.org/nutcracker/](http://vaballet.org/nutcracker/)

#### **Chanukah Celebration**

Join the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia as we light the menorah, sing songs, feast on sufganiyot (donuts), spin the dreidel and more! Strawberry Park, Mosaic District, Fairfax. 4:30-6 pm. [mosaicdistrict.com/events/event/chanukah-festival/](http://mosaicdistrict.com/events/event/chanukah-festival/)

#### **December 31**

First Nights and family-friendly events celebrating the New Year are held in: Alexandria, Falls Church, Winchester, Fredericksburg. Enjoy live music and entertainment by a wide variety of local performers and fireworks at some of the events. For all the details: [www.tripsavvy.com/washington-dc-family-friendly-new-years-eve-events-1039051](http://www.tripsavvy.com/washington-dc-family-friendly-new-years-eve-events-1039051)

#### **January 2020**

January is a great time of year to visit the many outdoor ice-skating rinks in the area. Here are a few options, check venue websites for more information:

Sculpture Garden Ice Rink - Perhaps the oldest and most popular rink in the area. Admission \$6-7, skate rental \$3.

Tyson's Corner Center Ice Rink - New to the scene, right outside the Tyson Corner mall. Admission \$9-10, skate rental \$6.

Harris Pavilion - This is a covered rink located near the Manassas VRE station. Admission \$7-8, skate rental \$5, all day open skate.

Georgetown's Washington Harbor - Skate along the Potomac on DC's largest outdoor rink. Admission \$9-10, skate rental \$6.

Reston Town Center Ice Rink, [www.restontowncenter.com/amenities/ice-skating/](http://www.restontowncenter.com/amenities/ice-skating/)

Pentagon Row Ice Rink, [www.pentagonrowskating.com/](http://www.pentagonrowskating.com/)

#### **Family-Friendly Activities Happening at Mason:**

Patriot Center: [www.eaglebankarena.com/](http://www.eaglebankarena.com/)

Men's and Women's Basketball: [gomason.com](http://gomason.com)

Center for the Arts [www.cfa.gmu.edu](http://www.cfa.gmu.edu)



## Royal Lake Circuit Trail New Section Added: A Community Effort

*By Paul Gross*

A new segment of the Royal Lake Circuit trail was recently added to reduce foot traffic in the Lakeside Park parking lot. Previously, the circuit trail routed walkers and runners through the parking lot, which was deemed a potential safety hazard. The new route that responds to this community need allows individuals to walk or run adjacent to the parking lot.

This community project came about due to the initiative and collaboration of the Fairfax County Parks Authority (FCPA), Friends of Royal Lake (FORL), KPWCA, and most importantly, Eagle Scout candidate Jagger Larson and his fellow Scouts.

Last year, Ed Richardson, The FCPA Area Four Maintenance Manager, asked the FORL leadership team if it would support the addition of a new trail segment. FORL agreed and added the proposed project to the master list of trail and park improvements for possible work this fall.

Eagle Scout candidate Jagger Larson, a KPW resident, was looking for a significant project as the final step in his effort to achieve the Eagle Scout award. He approached FORL for a potential project that would improve our community park. FORL provided Jagger an extensive list of projects, and he picked one of the hardest: a new trail segment.

Jagger worked with FCPA and FORL to develop a plan, obtain authorization, and recruit volunteers. On October 12th, fifty volunteers, along with FCPA staff, created the new trail segment that required tons of gravel. Thank you to everyone involved, and enjoy the trail!



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## IMA Site Leader for Rabbit Branch Park

By Greg Sykes ([greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com))

In 2013, the Fairfax County Park Authority opened Rabbit Branch Park off of Tapestry Drive. Rising like a phoenix from the ashes, this park is the former site of a defunct swimming pool. It was transformed into a native meadow, featuring plants like *Coreopsis*, common milkweed, butterfly weed, goldenrod, and little bluestem grass. Near the edges, oaks, American hollies, American sycamores, sweet gums, and other native trees were added to eventually create a woodland. Since an underground pipeline runs through this park, that easement will always remain a meadow because the utility companies want it free from tree roots. During these past six years, folks marveled at the natural beauty this little park offers.

Unfortunately, invasive species threaten Rabbit Branch Park, with Bradford pears, Amur honeysuckles, and winged burning bush being especially problematic. Some of these weeds germinated from the existing seed bank within the soil. Others spread from the neighboring HOA grounds and residential properties. Now is a critical time for someone to step up and become an Invasive Management Area (IMA) site leader for this park. Hitting these weeds at this stage, before they become bigger and churn out even more invasive seeds, will make all of the difference. IMA site leaders receive an easy training and permitting process before

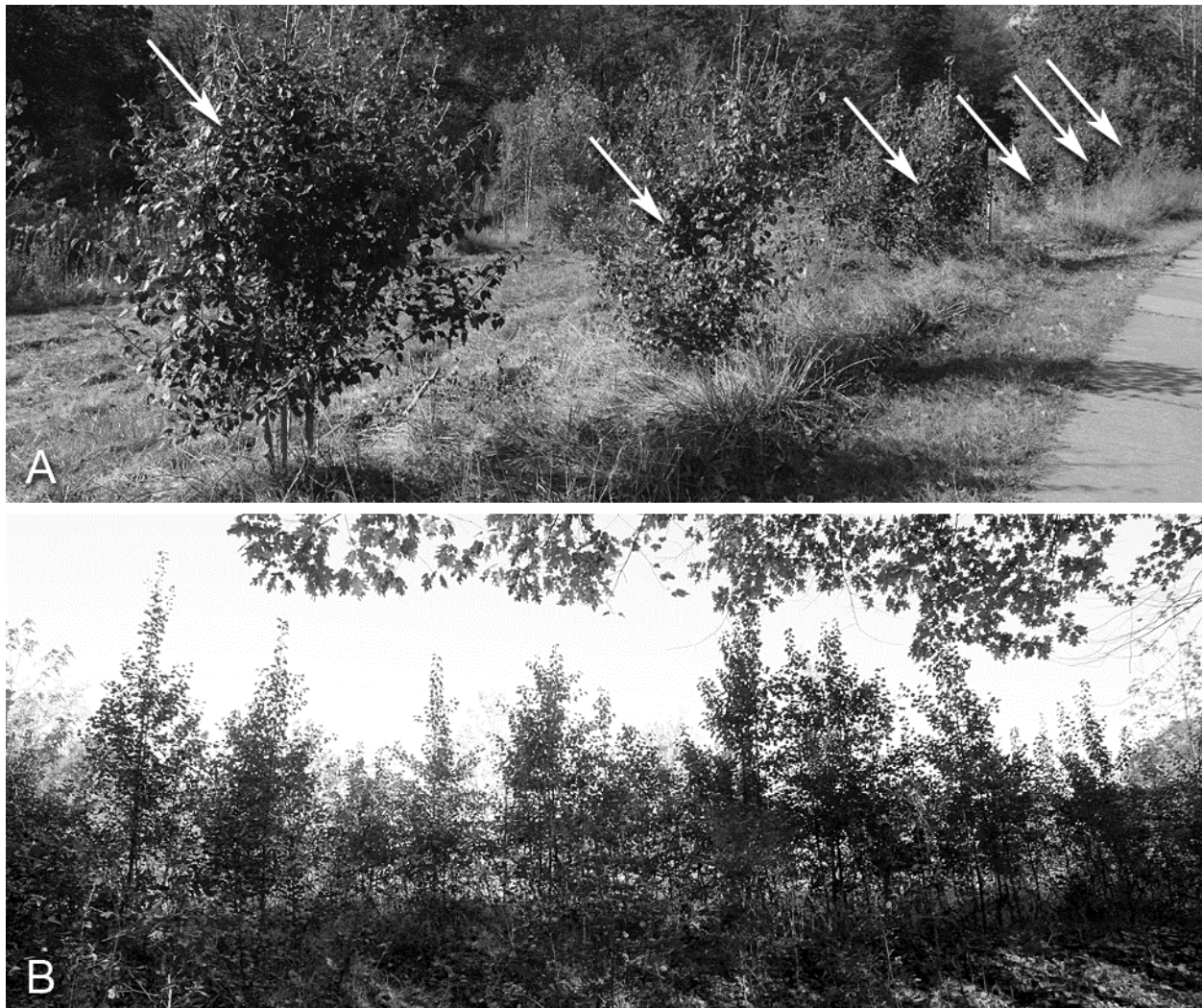
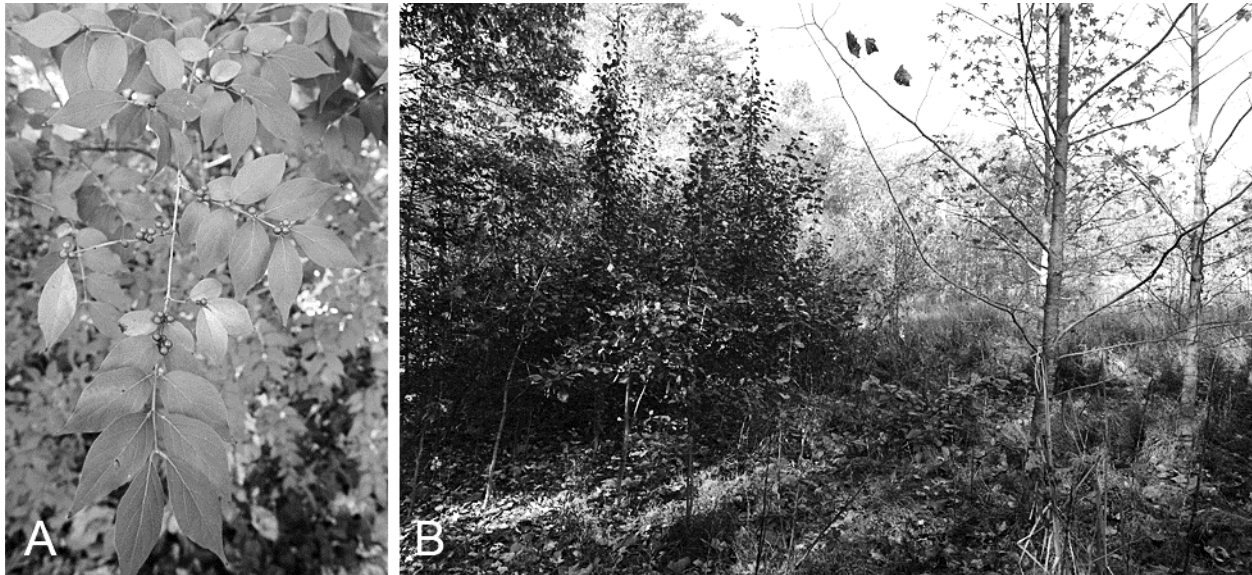


Figure 1. Bradford pear saplings (*Pyrus calleryana*) line both the front (A, indicated with arrows) and back (B) of Rabbit Branch Park.



committing to at least three workdays at this site per year. Volunteers need to be 18 years old or better, in good health, and ready to learn! This job is for anyone who cares about the local ecology, wants to help the community, is concerned about the broader environment, and/or would love a meaningful workout without gym fees. If you would like to become an IMA site leader or have further questions, please contact me at [greg@grsykes.com](mailto:greg@grsykes.com). Remember, the “thanks” you hear from me is unimportant; the unheard gratitude from the wildlife and future generations matter most.



**Figure 2.** Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), a bush honeysuckle (A), is one of the major invasive plants threatening Rabbit Branch Park. This specimen has ripened berries that provide insufficient nutrition to native birds. Most native animals, such as insects, cannot digest its leaves. The dark green foliage in the bottom right background is English ivy (*Hedera helix*), another invasive menace. The line between invasive weeds, including Bradford pear saplings (B), and native habitat is especially stark in November after most natives lose their leaves. An advantage exploited by these weeds is keeping leaves late into autumn and sprouting new foliage in early spring, thereby enabling a longer photosynthetic period. Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), the vining honeysuckle with which many people are familiar, is another noxious weed that keeps its foliage late into the year (C). The red berries belong to multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), an IMA target that already lost most of its leaves. Each rosehip contains approximately 10 viable seeds capable of lasting at least 20 years in the soil before germinating.



For further reading and links to additional resources, see the full article by scanning the QR code with your smart phone or go to: [www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/95b\\_2019-12.pdf](http://www.grsykes.com/pdf/eco-articles/95b_2019-12.pdf)



\* \* \* \* \*

## Pack 1968

Pack 1968 Cub Scouts started this year with a Bike Rodeo and Raingutter Regatta, and participated in the September Royal Lake Cleanup, where the Scouts hunted down and collected trash throughout the park.



In October, Pack 1968 spent a beautiful weekend camping in Riverbend Park on the Potomac River. The boys enjoyed a hike down the river to Great Falls Park to view the falls, and then hiked back to their campsite for den activities, dinner, and a campfire.



In November, our Cub Scouts joined other Packs and Troops in the local area to collect food donations for Scouting for Food, which helps to stock food pantries throughout the region.

Pack 1968 Cub Scouts are hard at work on their badges and community service, and are looking forward to their Pinewood Derby in January followed by the Blue and Gold banquet in February.

Pack 1968 always welcomes new members and encourages you and your child to get involved in this wonderful organization that boosts confidence, teaches life skills and teamwork, and promotes qualities expressed in the Scout Oath – being trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. If you want more information, please send an email to our Cubmaster, Ed Ryan, at [cubmaster.pack1968@gmail.com](mailto:cubmaster.pack1968@gmail.com).





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