



Fall 2024 Newsletter

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community.” - Aldo Leopold

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

This summer was packed with programs, but we have plenty more to come in the fall. I hope to see many of you at our Fall Festival on September 21st, which will showcase the diversity of environmental groups in our region. This program was born from a joint effort between the White House Farm Foundation and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, one of our longest-standing partnerships.

I also want to highlight our support of two organizations that I have been deeply involved with. I am proud that the White House Farm Foundation is sponsoring fundraising events for both the Potomac Riverkeeper Network and the American Horticultural Society this month. These nonprofit groups intersect with WHFF's mission in different ways. The Potomac Riverkeeper Network is crucial to protecting clean water in our region. The American Horticultural Society fosters a love of nature through gardening, and they have championed sustainable practices.

I hope you get a chance to enjoy this beautiful season out at Leopold's Preserve!

- Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



The White House sits in a 4-acre field in the shadow of the Massanutten Mountain.

NEW MEADOW AT THE WHITE HOUSE FARM

Our Foundation is named after the “White House Farm”, a working farm in Luray, Virginia. That farm, in turn, is named for the “White House”, a historic building located on the property which dates back to the 1760s! This iconic piece of Page County history is visible from Route 211 and sits adjacent to the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. For several years, the 4-acre field around the historic White House has been managed for hay. Recently, we decided to move forward with plans to convert this field into a native wildflower meadow.

It's exciting to be taking on a new restoration project, especially one in such a highly visible area. We hope that the finished meadow will provide ample habitat for pollinators and wildlife, while still contributing to the historic and rural character of the White House Farm landscape.

We are honored to have received input on this project from our friends at the Clifton Institute and Virginia Working Landscapes. Their insights into the baseline plant community, restoration techniques, and seed mixes have shaped this project, even in this early stage. We plan to seed the field this winter - keep an eye on our social media pages to see our progress!

THOROUGHFARE MEADOW RESTORATION

Guest article by Nick Davis, Leopold's Preserve Land Manager



In June 2023, Thoroughfare Meadow was overrun with honeysuckle and other invasives.

For several years, we have been working to restore the nine-acre Thoroughfare Meadow, located between Leopold's Loop and Thoroughfare Road. Invasive vines and shrubs had degraded this former cattle field, but we hoped to create a diverse native wildflower meadow. Meadows are crucial pieces of our ecosystems because they provide wildlife habitat, support pollinators, control erosion, and sequester carbon.

Equipped with brush cutters and chainsaws, our dedicated volunteers targeted several invasive species last summer, including Japanese honeysuckle and fescue grass which had choked out native forbs for decades. After several weeks of cutting brush, mowing, and tilling, the field was finally ready for planting. However, due to an unusually wet winter, conditions for planting didn't align with our schedule and native seeds were not planted.

Despite no seed being sown, Thoroughfare Meadow has been transformed into a hive of activity, with numerous native wildflowers blooming and hundreds of pollinators feasting on the nectar. So, where did all these flowers come from? Many plants store future generations just a few inches below ground in seed banks, a reserve of dormant seeds, roots, buds, and bulbs built up over the years. Some seeds can survive for decades. The tall fescue grass and Japanese honeysuckle had formed a dense carpet over the ground, preventing the vast majority of native seeds in the seed bank from germinating. When we removed this carpet, the seeds were stimulated to grow.



In September 2024, the meadow is blanketed with wildflowers that sprung from the dormant seed bank.



A large stand of milkweed bloomed here in the summer of 2024.

Meadows are restored for various purposes, with success measured based on restoration goals. At Leopold's Preserve, our goal is to restore high-quality, biologically diverse meadow habitats. We use specific metrics, including the number of native plant species, density of invasive species, habitat coverage, and wildlife surveys. We follow an adaptive management strategy, which allows us to adjust our approach based on the data we collect.

Though we are seeing exciting signs of progress, it's important to note that restoration projects can take 5 or more years to complete. As a result, the data we collect will only offer an early glimpse of the project's success. Ongoing site management is essential to ensure continual improvement in ecosystem development. The ultimate aim of our restoration efforts is to establish a self-sustaining ecosystem that is resilient to disturbances while requiring minimal maintenance.

There is a significant debate on determining the success of a restoration project. Our role in evaluating restoration success is not just about achieving our set goals but also about paving the way for future restoration projects. The expertise and dedication of our team are pivotal to the success of our meadow restoration projects, inspiring hope for future endeavors.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

Updates from the Preserve

Summer Field Trips

It was so much fun to work with the Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation this summer! We hosted a “nature adventure” field trip for students in their Silver Lake summer camp. Despite the scorching heat, we managed to find a cool morning to show the students around Leopold’s Preserve. Our Field Conservation Intern, Ariel, designed an engaging dichotomous key activity that introduced students to leaf shapes, while Park Manager Nick led a listening activity that helped students connect with the environment around them. What a fun day! We are excited to be continuing our partnership with PWC Parks this month, when they will host an outreach booth at the Fall Festival.

We also enjoyed hosting students from the Alternative Paths Training School for a volunteer event. The students enthusiastically helped us to water young trees which were planted in the spring as part of our Berry Woods restoration project. It was a challenge to keep these trees healthy during the summer drought, so we really appreciated the help of these student volunteers.



Students from Silver Lake’s summer camp posed for a group photo with our entrance sign.



It was a fun and productive workday with the help of students from Alternative Paths Training School!

New Benches Installed

Thanks to Eagle Scout Charles Bonanno, we have two new benches on the south side of Leopold’s Preserve! Located on the southern portion of Leopold’s Loop and on Pinkard’s Loop, these benches provide resting places for visitors who hike some of the more “remote” sections of our trail system. We greatly appreciate the support of local Scouts, who have helped expand our trail accessibility over the past three years. If you know a Scout in need of a service project, please contact us!



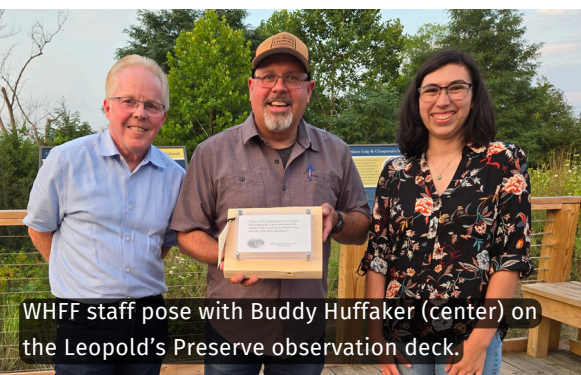
Charles Bonanno (second from right) stands alongside WHFF staff and members of his Scout Troop after installing this new bench.

Aldo Leopold Foundation Partnership

Leopold’s Preserve is named in honor of Aldo Leopold, an influential figure in the early 20th century wilderness conservation movement. His philosophy, known as the “land ethic”, outlines how humans and the environment can coexist through a balanced, caring relationship.

The Aldo Leopold Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering Aldo Leopold’s legacy through education and stewardship. They are based in Baraboo, Wisconsin, on a property once owned by Aldo Leopold which inspired many of his works. Despite the geographic distance between our organizations, we hosted our first joint program at Leopold’s Preserve in July!

The Aldo Leopold Foundation’s Executive Director, Buddy Huffaker, visited the DC area and was able to stop by Leopold’s Preserve. He gave an engaging and informative lecture touching on Aldo Leopold’s life, achievements, and legacy. He focused our discussion through the lens of celebrating the 75th anniversary of Leopold’s essay collection, "A Sand County Almanac". We look forward to discovering creative ways to continue this new partnership!



WHFF staff pose with Buddy Huffaker (center) on the Leopold’s Preserve observation deck.



Seasonal Observations

- Cardinal Flower
- Ironweed
- Pawpaw
- Blue Grosbeak
- Groundhog

Cardinal Flower

PLEIN ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIP - 2024 AWARDEES

We were thrilled to receive fifteen applications for our scholarship this spring! After much deliberation, our Scholarship Committee selected the following three students to receive \$5,000 in aid towards their undergraduate degrees.



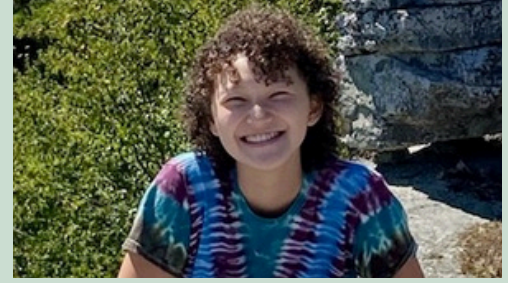
Kenley Eisenmenger
University of Virginia's College at Wise
Major: Environmental Science

"The Plein Environmental Scholarship will allow me to further pursue my career in Speleology and Karstology studies by providing me with funds to travel abroad to cave sites. I hope to share my passion of karst education on a global scale, and this award will assist in my efforts to do so!"



Cierra Telleen
College of William & Mary
Major: Finance, with a minor in Environment & Sustainability

Cierra has a deep appreciation for the environment and a passion for protecting our planet for future generations. She hopes to enter a career in promoting green banking and facilitating investments in sustainable business solutions.



Nora Waide
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Major: Environmental Resource Management

Nora has turned a lifelong love of nature into a passion for furthering environmental sustainability. She is excited to be pursuing a degree in Environmental Resource Management and would like to be a Sustainability Coordinator for businesses or a forester.

JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Festival

Saturday, September 21, 11 AM - 3 PM
Leopold's Preserve

This free event will showcase the work of environmental groups in our area. Stop by to enjoy plant sales, face painting, cotton candy, and more!

Hike with a Naturalist

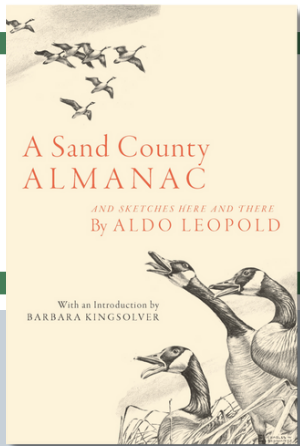
Wednesday, October 2, 10 AM - 12 PM
Leopold's Preserve

A professional naturalist will teach you about local flora and fauna. Presented in partnership with the Bull Run Mountains Conservancy.

Halloween Safari

Friday, October 18, 7 PM - 8 PM
Friday, October 25, 7 PM - 8 PM
Leopold's Preserve

This non-scary night hike is an excellent way for children to connect with nature. Fee of \$10 per person.



A Sand County Almanac, by Aldo Leopold

2024 marks the 75th anniversary of this foundational work of conservation literature. These iconic essays are filled with flowing descriptions of the natural world, thoughtful philosophical musings, and lessons on natural history. They are always worth a re-read!

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**.*