



ROCKVILLE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 2255
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January 2026

T. Anderson Editor



President's Message

Greetings 2026! May you have a healthy and prosperous year and may you keep your New Year's resolution to spend more time outdoors! IWLA-Rockville (IWLA-R) can help with that resolution—whether it is hiking, shooting, fishing, wood ducking or just chillaxing by a wood fire. IWLA-R is here for your use in 2026. If you do not come out and enjoy our wonderful activities and property, you are missing one of the best benefits of membership.

Lake water levels are still very low, and as a result, our annual fall trout stocking is still on hold. When we get some water in the lake we will stock for the spring season. A word of caution about winter activities at the lake. The ice may look solid but is too thin to support you, so STAY OFF the ICE. Emergency response is a long way off if you fall through.

There are some activities ongoing in early 2026. Adult air pistol shoots indoors every Tuesday. Junior BB gun and air rifle shoot weekly. If any of those indoor shoot activities interest you, for a nominal fee and a little time, you can have a lot of fun! For the fly-fisherman, another fun indoor activity is fly tying. Our partner organization, Seneca Valley Trout Unlimited, will be conducting fly tying classes starting in late January and continuing bi-weekly until the end of March. It is a great wintertime activity and a lot of fun to create your own flies (info on website).

For the winter hearty, January means it is wood duck nesting box cleaning and repair season. IWLA-R members meet on Sunday starting on January 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to repair, clean and prepare wood duck boxes for the 2026 nesting season. (Watch the google group for information on locations and weather-driven schedule changes.) In 2025 we had 20 volunteers that serviced 64 nesting boxes and recorded nesting activity in 47% of the boxes. A total of 260 eggs were hatched. This is the greatest number of hatched eggs recorded since the program started. One reason for the hatching success is the installation of bluebird boxes along with the wood duck nesting boxes. The bluebird boxes provide a nesting space for prothonotary warblers and help keep them out of the wood duck boxes. In 2026, with enough volunteers, the program will finish installing bluebird boxes at all our locations.

President's Message (continued)

Our January General Membership Meeting will be a week later than normal on January 9. Please join us in person or via Zoom.

Get out and enjoy IWLR!

Tight Lines
Noel Gollehon

Donations Made Report 2025

In addition to providing 4-H cash awards at the Montgomery County Fair and hosting National Hunting and Fishing Day, we have a cooperative agreement with The American Chestnut Foundation and provide labor and land for a small chestnut orchard. We also provide use of our facilities for SVTU, CWA and a few Girl Scout troops and 3 Scouting USA youth groups. Each year we contribute \$100 to the Maryland Division to support the annual Convention. We also give out a campership to the week-long Natural Resources Careers Camp for teens and six \$2,000 scholarships for Montgomery County residents attending college in fields related to conservation or environmental studies.

Our Rockville Chapter also budgets a 'donations made' fund. In 2022 we made a 5-year pledge to donate \$1,000 to the League. This year we have committed \$200 to support the teen natural resources competition program, MD Envirothon, donated \$100 to the Friends of Seneca Creek and Patuxent River State Parks (Bronze level) and \$100 to The American Chestnut Foundation. We continued our commitments to the following organizations with \$100 donations: Owl Moon Raptor Center, Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry, Second Chance Wildlife Center. We added the Montgomery Countryside Alliance to our list. We also made 1-year only donations in 2025 of \$100 to the Spike's K9 Fund which provides assistance with a ballistic vest, protective equipment, medical cost assistance, or top-of-the-line training programs and equipment for working K9s, \$600 matching funds to the Maryland Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation to cover emergency expenses, and \$100 to the Brown County Chapter IWLA in honor of Steve Labs, president of that chapter and husband of former League President Jodi Labs.

~Cindy Stevens~

My Eagle Scout Service Project Experience

This November, I completed my Eagle Scout service project, which is one of the final requirements for earning the rank of Eagle Scout. For anyone who may not be familiar with it, an Eagle project is planned, organized, and led by the scout, and it must provide a meaningful and lasting benefit to the community. Over the past two years, I helped with the annual wood duck box cleanups that occur in January and early February. These cleanups made me really interested in the Wood Duck initiative and opened my eyes to how it supports local wildlife. Because of that, I reached out to Mr. Walther, who leads the Maryland Wood Duck Initiative at the Izaak Walton League Rockville Chapter, and I asked if I could host a project that would contribute to their conservation efforts. Together, we decided that I would build new wood duck boxes and bluebird boxes to replace old and damaged boxes that will be placed throughout Montgomery County.

Our first workday took place on November 1st, which was focused on preparing and cutting up the large 6 plywood boards that I purchased. With the help of scout volunteers, we spent the day measuring, cutting, and shaping all of the individual pieces needed for each box, including the entry holes, angled doors, roofs, and floors. This part of the project required careful planning and accuracy because even the smallest measurement changes could affect how the boxes would fit together later, which we unfortunately learned the hard way. By the end of the day, we had finished all of the components for the 10 wood duck boxes and the 15 bluebird boxes.

The second workday was held on November 15th at the Jim Berrier Lake on IWLAR property. Five scouts and three parents joined me as we assembled all 25 boxes. With everyone working simultaneously and together, the pieces came together smoothly, and we finished within just a few hours. All 25 boxes now sit ready in the chapter house shed, prepared for installation when the next season arrives.



Completing this project taught me a great deal about leadership, effective communications, and staying organized and prepared. Coordinating volunteers, sending tons of emails, managing the workflow, and keeping the group on task help me grow in my own confidence and responsibility.

My Eagle Scout Project (continued)

I am grateful to everyone who supported this project, and I am proud that these boxes will protect wildlife habitats across Montgomery County for years to come.
~Rishab Rakshi~

Wood Duck Conservation in January

January is upon us, so it's time to once again prepare the Chapter's wood duck nest boxes for the spring nesting season. This is a great opportunity to get a jump on your volunteer hours for 2026, contribute to a worthwhile conservation activity, and work alongside some great people in the process. This year's workdays will include January 11th, 18th, 25th, February 1st and 8th. Each Sunday, volunteers will go out in the field to repair and replace boxes, check the predator guards, cut away brush and, most importantly, record nesting success from last spring. It takes many hands to get the job done so please consider joining us for one or more workdays. This is also a great opportunity for middle school and high school students to earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours!

If you are not familiar with the program, the Chapter's Wood Duck Conservation effort has helped maintain nesting boxes and monitor wood duck populations since the 1950's. IWLAR maintains about 75 wood duck nesting boxes in Montgomery County, mostly in McKee Besher's Wildlife Management Area west of Poolesville. Winter is the best time to prepare them for the birds' arrival in late February/early March.

During the past two winters, the wood duck team worked to expand the installation of blue bird boxes on the back side of the wood duck boxes at several sites. The blue bird boxes at the other test sites have demonstrated a mutually beneficial situation for the wood ducks and the prothonotary warbler, encouraging the warbler to nest in the smaller blue bird box and leave the wood duck nesting boxes alone. This year, we plan to finish the installation of blue bird boxes at the Turf Farm site. In addition, we will work to rehabilitate existing boxes with new roofs, shingles, and wire ladders that the ducklings use to climb out of the box.

A few days before each wood duck workday, details about the next workday's meeting location, etc., will be announced via the IWLAR Google Group. Assignment of specific tasks will happen that Sunday morning, on-site. In general, we meet at the designated location at 10:00 a.m. and work is usually done around noon. The boxes are in wooded swamps that require wading in shallow water, so chest waders or hip boots are ideal. For those who do not have their own, the Chapter has loaner pairs available. All tools and repair materials are supplied; you just bring the warm, willing body.

Keep an eye out for the weekly announcements in January on the IWLAR Google Group and sign up when you can. To sign up for any of the workdays contact Joe Walther.

From tree to lumber to ??

We will be harvesting a special tree soon. In 2015 we found an American chestnut in our forest in a location that had protected it from the devastating blight fungus. With a circumference of 42 inches and a height of 74 feet, we estimate it grew for at least 35 years unnoticed before contracting blight. We are looking for a mill. Once ready, we plan to offer the finished lumber for sale, or for a special product made for the Chapter. Experienced tree cutters and wood workers are invited to contact Ron Kuipers and Cindy Stevens.

Next “Stop the Bleed” Class

When: Saturday January 24, 2026

Time: 12:00 pm

Class Length: 90-120 minutes

Where: IWLA-R Chapter House Upper Level

Fee: The price for the class is \$20 per person which has to be paid before you take the class.

To take the class you will have to sign up on the Stop The Bleed Coalition Training Management site at <https://training.stopthebleedcoalition.org/dashboard>

To enroll, follow the steps describe in page 2 of the August 2025 Chapter newsletter. https://iwlar.org/wp-content/uploads/08-2025_IWLAR-Newsletter.pdf, except use the ending date of January 25, 2026.

Enrollees will be contacted about payment instructions by David Schwartzman

We have a winner...



2025 Turkey Shoot MC John Shea with winner Kellen Ober (photo courtesy of Susan Cassell).

New Members Recently Inducted

Carrington Edmunds	Stephens City, VA
Shelton Mooney	Darnestown, MD
James and Alana Sawyer	Laurel, MD
Kim and Brian Skimmons	Gaithersburg, MD
Jack Smith	Rockville, MD
Brooke Tilghman	Germantown, MD
Jackie Sather (Wes Suttle)	Silver Spring, MD
A warm welcome to all!	