



Currents....

The quarterly newsletter of the Headwaters SWCD

Where Did That Come From?

by Rich Wood, Education & Outreach Coordinator

My grandfather had a small dairy farm in northeast Pennsylvania. When I was a kid, I spent a few weeks each summer helping to “make hay” with my brothers and uncles. The days were long, and trying to lift those 40-lb bales of hay when you’re 10 years old was really hard work. My grandfather was a man of few words, but one thing I remember him saying each morning on those hot days of early summer was, “Time to get up. **We gotta make hay while the sun shines!**” As I rubbed my tired eyes, I never really gave his “wake-up call” too much thought. But years later when I came across the phrase in a book I was reading, it instantly brought me back to those hayfields on grandpa’s farm, and I wondered where the saying came from. This now famous saying is just one of dozens that I’ve heard over the years and was curious as to what their origins were.



photo by Rich Wood

My grandpa’s reveille was probably one of the more obvious ones. In its broader sense, it simply means that you shouldn’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today. A similar idea can be communicated by the Latin phrase *carpe diem*, which is usually translated as “seize the day.”

However, this expression started in the farming communities of Old England, and was first heard in a dialogue in 1546 by John Heywood. Since any farmer knows hay can be ruined easily if it gets too wet, medieval farmers had to take advantage of hot, dry, sunny weather to cut and gather hay. Thus, “make hay while the sun shines” was just a matter of common sense to them. Hundreds of years ago, it would take many days for farmers to cut, dry and gather hay. Today, it’s much easier to make hay because of our modern machinery and weather forecasting.

Here’s some other phrases, and their origins, that have been used by farmers for hundreds of years.

In this Issue

- Where Did That Come From?
- 2024 Planning Survey
- Education News-Envirothon
- Education News-PLT Workshop-Open
- Critter Corner-The Singing Stream Dancer
- Ag News-Summer Stockpiling Field Day
- Ag News-SV AREC 2024 Field Day
- Coming Events-Join Us
- 2024 VASWCD Photo Contest

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We work with the people who work the land.

“Fences Should Be Horse-High, Bull-Strong, And Pig-Tight.”

GENERAL MEANING: Be Prepared! Sound familiar? Boy Scouts of America!

Having broken down fences or livestock on the loose was a bad reflection on a farmer. Not only did it indicate he was lazy or incapable of maintaining his farm, but also of looking after his livestock. In some areas of the old country, if your livestock damaged someone’s property, they could claim it as their own.

ORIGIN: early 1800’s. The idea was to keep the fences high enough that a horse couldn’t jump over them, strong enough that a bull couldn’t bust them down, and tight enough that pigs couldn’t push through them.



“A hard row to hoe.”

GENERAL MEANING: A person may be in a difficult situation and have many problems to deal with. Most often mistakenly stated a “hard ROAD to hoe,” the phrase means to have a daunting task to perform, and refers to hoeing rows on a farm, not hoeing a road!

ORIGIN: The origin of the expression dates back to 1834, from a passage in the book “*Tour to the North and Down East*,” by frontiersman Davy Crockett, who wrote, “I know it was a hard row to hoe.” But, from all the hundreds of expressions, the ones that refer to livestock are my favorites!

“Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.”

GENERAL MEANING: In a nutshell, this phrase means if someone gives you something for free, don’t question it too closely and just be thankful.

ORIGIN: The first known use of this idiom was in 1549, based on the idea that looking closely at a horse’s teeth could be considered rude, since that would reveal its age. Probably ruder with a person, but you get the idea.

“When pigs fly”

GENERAL MEANING: Used to say that one thinks that something will never happen.



ORIGIN: Why this means what it does seems obvious – your pig will literally never fly – but why pigs, specifically? Why not any other animal flightless animal? The dictionary doesn’t get to the bottom of this, unfortunately, but does find that this idiom used to be quite specific. In writings from 1581, the phrase was “when pigs fly with their tails forward.” We guess technically that would be even less likely than pigs flying in general!

“Like a chicken with its head cut off.”

GENERAL MEANING: Excited and confused

ORIGIN: This saying comes from a more common result of a chicken beheading – if you aim the hatchet too high, the brain will be sliced in a way that the bird can still run around for a few seconds after the kill. In the 1800s, a writer for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* compared a person hopping around excitedly to a floundering headless bird, and an idiom was born!

“Until the cows come home.”

GENERAL MEANING: If you’re waiting on something, it’s going to be a long wait. You might want to settle in for a bit.

ORIGIN: Most likely, this one started in the 16th century, in the Scottish Highlands, where cows are allowed to graze for months at a time before they meander home in the fall. Cows don’t usually get in a hurry to go anywhere unless they’re being chased. They’ll wander back to the same area in the evenings, and will eventually come back “home.”



photo by Rich Wood



We Need Your Feedback!

Headwaters Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is seeking feedback as part of our 2024 strategic planning process. We are interested in hearing from you regarding our current services and programs, as well as what you would like to see offered in the future.

We have developed a brief survey and will be collecting community responses through the end of July.

To take the survey online, scan the QR Code Below!



Thank you for providing your feedback! If you have any questions or would like more information about this process, please contact Rhonda Cline; Operations Manager at rmcline@co.augusta.va.us or 540-248-0148.

Headwaters SWCD is located at the Augusta County Government Center Complex-USDA Building

70 Dick Huff Lane, Verona, VA 24482, (540) 248-0148, <https://headwatersswcd.org/>

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Education News!



Envirothon is Growing!

The annual Envirothon program continues to grow-with another fun, successful event held this past April in Grand Caverns Park! With (4) high schools and (3) middle schools competing over two days, and perfect weather, students concentrated on identifying trees and shrubs, measuring soil horizons, listening to bird calls and presenting oral presentations on renewable energy.

This free, two-day event, sponsored by Dominion Energy and the Virginia Association of Conservation Districts, is open to all public, private, parochial and home schools, as well as scout and 4-H youth groups. It has two competition levels: High School (grades 9-12) and Middle School (grades 6-8). Teams are made up of five students and up to two alternates, and compete as a team in all events. This year's high schools included Wilson Memorial HS, Riverheads HS, Stuarts Draft HS and Fort Defiance HS. The middle schools participating were Stewart MS, Shelburne MS and Stuarts Draft MS.

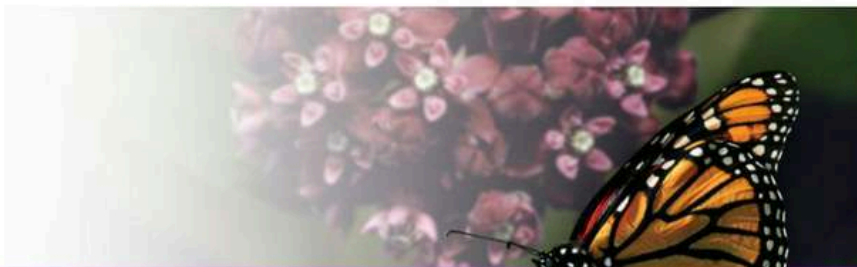
It was an exciting, educational program, and we hope to have even more schools involved in 2025!





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- ◆ Receive PLT's *Explore Your Environment Guide*, correlated to national and state K-8 academic standards

Date: Saturday, September 14, 2024

Time: 9:00 am-3:00 pm

Place: Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU (Harrisonburg)

Cost: \$11 (Includes the *Explore Your Environment K-8 Activity Guide*)

To Register & Pay online, go to: <https://sites.google.com/site/pltvwebsite/>
(click on "Workshops" at top of page)

For more information: rwood@co.augusta.va.us (540) 248-0148 ext. 8



**Focus on
our Headwaters!**

Critter Corner

by Rich Wood, Education & Outreach Coordinator

The Singing Stream Dancer!

I heard the rich, sweet song before I ever saw the bird. “Tur-ree, tur-ree, tur-ree....tur-ritta-ret” The song echoed from along the small stream where I was hiking. I’ve heard this musical call for many years, usually in April or May, but always near water, especially headwater streams. I knew the mystery songster was a Louisiana Waterthrush, one of the largest members of the warbler family.

Louisiana Waterthrushes are bioindicators of good water quality, only living near clean water that provides the two main things they need to survive—food and shelter. They’re almost always found near fast-flowing forested streams or creeks. They depend on riparian ecosystems – that is, rivers, streams and wetlands. On migration they sometimes use the edges of lakes and ponds if there is adequate vegetative cover. Louisiana Waterthrushes perch and forage in vegetation, on the ground, or at the water’s edge. They methodically bob their rear ends as they forage. If you watch them, they look like they should have a set of headphones on, as they dance to the beat of their favorite tune, while walking along the edge of a small waterway looking for food! Males sing mostly from low vegetation, often from a concealed perch.

The Louisiana Waterthrush is a neotropical migratory warbler that links North America, where it breeds, to the Caribbean, where it spends the winter. Clean water is something that is essential to each and every one of us. There is, however, a rising tide of water quality threats facing Neotropical migratory birds – both in their North American breeding grounds and their Caribbean wintering spots. Water pollution and water diversions can wreak havoc on the quality of the water that supports plant, animal and aquatic life. This also negatively impacts the health and welfare of humans who also depend on that water resource.



photos provided by Vic Laubach-Augusta Bird Club

In the last issue of our newsletter, we highlighted the Brook Trout, another species that needs cold, clean water to survive—so does the Louisiana Waterthrush. The common link in this headwaters food chain are aquatic insects, such as mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies—which provide important food for the trout, and important food for the waterthrush. Without good water quality, we have no aquatic insects, and without the aquatic insects we have no Louisiana Waterthrushes or Brook Trout! They’re all connected in the headwaters food web! That’s why it’s critical that we protect and conserve our headwaters! And if we focus our efforts in these headwaters, we can help all critters and humans downstream! We want to make sure that future generations can walk near a woodland stream and hear the musical song of the Louisiana Waterthrush!

Headwaters SWCD can assist landowners who have these types of streams and creeks on their properties, with both technical assistance, and possibly cost-share funding. Give us a call to see how we may be able to help conserve these critical waterways, for ourselves, and for all the critters who depend on them!

Save The Date!

Ag News!

Summer Stockpiling to Extend the Grazing Season and Improve Grassland Bird Habitat

Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Summer Field Day

July 31, 2024

5 pm – 8:30 pm

The Wheatlands

304 Cattleman Road

Swoope, VA 24479

Program Topics

Summer Stockpiling to Extend Grazing Season and Reduce Hay Costs

Summer Stockpile Forage Quality Compared to Hay

- *Matt Booher, VT/NRCS and John Benner VCE*

Benefits of Delayed Hay Cutting and Summer Stockpiling to Grassland Birds

- *Dr. Amy Johnson, VWL Program Director, Smithsonian Institute and Bernadette Rigley, VWL Research Fellow and PhD Candidate, George Mason University*

Overview of Incentive Programs for Summer Stockpiling and Grassland Bird Habitat

Save the Date: 7/31/2024
Registration info coming soon!



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Questions, please email John Benner at benner89@vt.edu



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Smithsonian National Zoological Park Conservation Biology Institute

American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact the Augusta Extension Office at (540-245-5750/TDD*) during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.



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2024 Field Day

Ag
News!



at the
Shenandoah Valley
Agricultural Research and
Extension Center

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

12pm-7pm

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/bdhh8ncb>



The Virginia Tech Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center 2024 Field Day will be held on Wednesday, August 7, 2024. We will feature field tours of ongoing forage, livestock and forestry demonstration research projects. Please consider joining us for this free, in-person tour of the farm. The tour will begin at 1pm, followed by an evening presentation before dinner. The tour will feature recent work on creep-grazing for fall calves, bale grazing, silvopasture, and native warm season grasses and wildflowers, among other topics. If you are planning to attend this event, please register soon as space is limited. For more information or to register, visit our website at:

<https://www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/arec/shenandoah-valley.html>

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We work with the people who work the land.

HERE'S WHERE WE'LL BE IN THE COMING MONTHS!

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Come tour the Underground Classroom!



July 23-27, 2024

Stop by our table and say "Hello" in the main exhibit hall



"Follow me to the Augusta County Fair"



2024 Virginia Association of Conservation Districts (VASWCD) PHOTO CONTEST

Calling All Photographers!

There's still time to enter the 2024 Photo Contest.
The deadline for all entries is August 1, 2024.

The VASWCD is committed to the conservation of natural resources through stewardship and education programs and we want to see it through your eyes. This year's theme is "**Conservation Across the Commonwealth**". Capture those vibrant moments and express what conservation looks like to you!

To learn more about the contest please click here: [Photo Contest Rules](#). You can submit up to 10 photos. All photographs must be taken within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Photographs taken outside the state of Virginia will be disqualified. GOOD LUCK!

Attention All Educators!

Headwaters SWCD is excited to announce that through a grant by the Shenandoah Pure Water Forum, we have purchased a **new Watershed/Non-Point Source Pollution EnviroScape Model!** This model is part of our watershed classroom program for grades 4-12, and is aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). For more information about scheduling a watershed program with the model, please contact Rich Wood, Education & Outreach Coordinator at (540) 248-0148 ext. 8, or email: rwood@co.augusta.va.us. The program is free.



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