

# Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

People and Wildlife Living in Harmony

## Banshee Reeks: Our Last Best Hope

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By Anne Hocker

*Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy member Anne Hocker wrote the following letter to the editors of local newspapers*

A well-known radical thinker of earlier times noted: "For if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another might be lost, until the whole of things will vanish by piecemeal." This wild-eyed tree-hugger was Thomas Jefferson. For the 18 years I have lived here, I have watched the piecemeal loss of wild and natural places in Loudoun County. Although growth was predicted, and perhaps inevitable, it has nonetheless destroyed many of the features that drew people to its beauty in the first place. It won't be too many years before a farm with woods, marshes, and open fields will be something depicted in a museum. There will be a few holdouts, of course, but their land will not be available for the public to walk on.

We have virtually no public land west of what is known as "eastern Loudoun" to keep intact for us and future generations to enjoy some quiet reflection, walk in the woods, sit by a stream, or wonder at the teeming life of the wetlands.

We have many ballfields, tennis courts, and associated high-intensity lights blazing up into the night sky, but little if any public land to simply enjoy because it is the way it is.

Organized softball, soccer, and other team sports are important for our youth, but they should be placed in the developments and towns where the players live. They should be part of the plan of the neighborhood, which includes schools, shopping, and transportation corridors.

When discussing public land, "active recreation" is the primary consideration. Some of us still consider a walk in the woods to be active recreation, but this quiet and solitude precludes walking around a ball field. Because Banshee Reeks does not include protective easements does not mean that it must be developed. A county administration with vision would plan for both needs, while realizing that the two uses cannot be effectively joined in the same parcel.

There are popular undeveloped parks in the Washington/Baltimore corridor, in which we are now included. Huntley Meadows is an oasis and draws thousands of visitors every year. Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary in Ann Arundel county in Maryland is another. In spite of the number of their visitors, they allow space and privacy without the distractions of yelling crowds, loudspeakers, and mercury vapor lights.

If we don't act now, decisively, the opportunity will never come again to preserve this unique part of Loudoun's legacy. Future acquisitions of land should be sought with ball fields and other public activities as their focus. Allow Banshee Reeks the dignity of remaining a natural place, where wildlife and environmental education can remind of us of a different world.

I would respectfully suggest to the County Supervisors and the Department of Parks and Recreation that the next time you ponder the need for more "active recreational sites," that you take a hike...

into the woods...

with your kids...

*For more wildlife and habitat information and resources, visit us at: [www.loudounwildlife.org](http://www.loudounwildlife.org)*