



# Cattails



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www.marshypoint.org  
410-887-2817

## The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter June - July - August 2016



### Spring Festival

A sunny Spring day and a crowd over 2,000 added up to another successful Spring Fest. Many thanks to the MPNC staff and the many volunteers who contributed to a great day. Visitors enjoyed critter talks, demonstrations, insect safaris, frog hunts, crafts, games, face painting and live music.



### Osprey Cam

Dave Oshman

Marshy Point Nature Center is always striving to bring new displays to our center that will educate and fascinate all members of our community. Did you know that one of the most recent additions to Marshy Point is available anywhere in the world?

After much research, a generous grant from the Marshy Point Nature Center Council, donations from KDM Security Solutions and Raptor Resource Project, hard work, and some arm-twisting from our county officials, our very own Osprey Cam is streaming on the Internet at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/22314430>.



Installation began on March 6<sup>th</sup> and was completed two weeks later. This site was chosen because ospreys have taken up residence on our nesting platform since 2014. The first year, they produced no offspring. Last year, they fledged two young. Even though we cannot determine this positively, it is likely that this year's osprey pair is the same pair from the previous year, since ospreys usually mate for life and return to the same nest year after year. This year, they were first seen in the area on March 4<sup>th</sup>. The two ospreys that have taken up residence began perching on March 27<sup>th</sup> and began nest building at the beginning of April. On the evening of April 21<sup>st</sup>, which was earlier than expected, the female osprey laid her first egg. If you were one of the few watching at the time, you know how curious the male was when it happened. He could be seen peaking under the female as if he was making certain that he was really going to become a father. The second egg was laid on the morning of April 25<sup>th</sup> and a third some time the morning of April 28<sup>th</sup>. With an incubation period of 36-42 days, we are likely to see the first chick born around Memorial Day weekend. Over the following 40 days, the parents will feed and care for the chicks, which will learn to fly at about 55 days old. Our adults will begin to migrate once the fledglings have become independent. There's a lot happening in that nest! Don't miss out on any of the excitement!

### 16th Annual, Members Fish Fry - Tuesday, June 21, 2016, 6:00-8:00 p.m.



Will Play for Fish

**Entertainment Featuring Traditional Music from "Will Play for Fish" (Tom Reedy, Lisa Roberts, Amy Hopkins & Randy Johnson)**  
Free to Members, Join Now! \$25 (Family) \$15 (Individual) Membership & Dinner  
Please call the office to R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, June 17th  
(Space is Limited, No Walk-ins), 410 887-2817, Bring an appetizer or dessert to Share! Sponsored by Marshy Point Nature Center Council

My New England Aster has a back story that always gives me great pleasure to tell. When my husband and I moved to the bay area, over 30 years ago, we underwent an awakening of great proportion. Public utilities like water and sewerage were wishful thinking, along with dark stretches of roads with no illumination. Our interest in our new surroundings lead us to joining the local community association where we hoped to address some of these problems, but we were immediately caught up to date with issues far more important than utilities. The main subject on the agenda was the discussion of mass development on large portions of the environmentally sensitive Back River Neck peninsula that could destroy the natural beauty of forests and endanger the surrounding waters of the bay.



Photo by Phyllis Clements

Leading the charge against this invasion of big money development was a man, small in stature, quiet in demeanor, but with fire in his heart, Bob Christopher, who many older residents may remember, but for newcomers I would like to introduce. Under Bob's leadership we were able to save hundreds of acres of shoreline on our peninsula including Pottery Farm, who's owner was planning dense development including condominiums, restaurants, and boating facilities, all without thought to the environment. At the same time, many other properties were put into land trusts that would be saved from harsh development. Bob was our mentor, he taught us about preserving nature while still fighting for our much needed infrastructure. Our organization started a yearly event, "Coast Weeks" held at Rocky Point, combining a beach clean-up with a celebratory festival of all that was good about our community.

When approached by Baltimore County Solid Waste Management to open an eastern recycling drop-off center at Kenwood High, Bob encouraged me to take on the job of project manager. Our faithful volunteers manned their posts every Saturday for two years until the county took over with roadside pickup. During this time tons of recyclables were saved from the landfill.

Always cognizant of native versus invasive plant species, Bob chastised BGE for clear cutting all shrubbery that lay beneath the wires on our street and inadvertently destroying all the native Viburnums that for years had graced the area. His effort paid off and small replacement viburnum starts with pink ribbons clearly visible were soon planted. It took years, but we now have fully-grown rows of native viburnums blooming every spring – a tribute to a man who left no stone unturned to right the wrongs against nature.

A few weeks before Bob's death he asked me to come to his property and take some of his beloved plants home to grow on in my garden. Among those chosen was the beautiful New England Aster. Entrusted to me to introduce and pass along to others, this beautiful native plant has since found many new homes, including the Marshy Point Butterfly Garden. It was the first plant I put into place, along with many other natives. Showcased at Marshy Point's fall festival, the plant is at its most beautiful decorated with butterflies and other pollinators; a fitting reminder of an environmental activist who fought for all nature.

## **Thunderstorms**

Anna Stoll

A bright flash of light followed by a loud boom—it's a thunderstorm. What causes the lightning and thunder? When warm, humid air rises quickly upward that movement is called convection. When it rises high enough to meet colder air, cumulonimbus clouds are formed. When the rising air reaches its dew point, water and ice droplets are formed and begin to fall downward through the cloud. The falling water forms a downdraft of cold air, which causes the winds that often accompany a storm. In the cloud the water and ice droplets collide with each other, creating electric charges. Positive charges form at the top of the cloud and negative charges are at the bottom, with the air acting as an insulator. When the strength of the charge in the cloud overcomes the insulating properties of the air, lightning strikes. The lightning bolt creates a hole in the air, and the collapsing of that hole causes thunder. There are a number of different types of lightning, including lightning within a cloud or from one cloud to another. The most dangerous is cloud-to-ground lightning.

If you can hear thunder that means a storm is near enough that you could be struck by lightning. If you're caught outdoors during a thunderstorm try to take shelter in a vehicle or enclosed building. Stay away from tall objects such as trees and metal objects such as bikes and fences. If you can't find safe shelter squat and make yourself as small as possible. Don't lie down because that will make you a bigger target for lightning. If you're indoors, stay away from windows, porches, electrical appliances, electronic devices, and plumbing fixtures. If you need to make a phone call, use a cell phone instead of a landline. Because metal wires or bars are often built into concrete floors and walls don't lie down on a concrete floor or lean against a concrete wall. It's best to stay indoors until 30 minutes after you see the last lightning flash. Thunderstorms can be scary but they can also be beautiful and exciting. Treat them with caution and respect.

## Found an Injured or Orphaned Critter? Who You Gonna Call?

Valerie Greenhalgh

Have you ever encountered an injured bird or an orphaned baby bunny. If so, did you know what to do next? Unless you happen to be an expert on wildlife care, then you just might want to call the Phoenix Wildlife Center. This gem of a resource, founded and operated by Master Wildlife Rehabilitator, Kathy Woods, is located on Manor Road in picturesque Phoenix and has been saving wildlife in Maryland for over twenty years.

The phone rings often at the Center, from sunrise to sunset and well beyond that during the spring and summer. That's okay, though, because caring for wildlife is Kathy's passion -- and it shows. Nearly every day of the year, you will find Kathy at the helm of this ship, assisted by her dedicated husband and wildlife photographer, Hugh Simmons, as well as a small group of specially trained volunteers. A variety of local, caring veterinarians and businesses also play an important role in helping to make the operation a success.

In many cases, a caller simply needs a quick education as to how to assist the animal they have found. But in those instances where a critter needs more specialized care, the PWC is ready to help. Every needy patient, whether it is a slithering reptile, a regal bird, or a sweet baby mammal, is treated with the same expert care and compassion.

I have seen firsthand the loving care given to squirrels, bunnies, turtles, hawks, gulls, foxes, snakes, eagles, owls, and more. It is all done for one purpose: to release a healed, healthy animal back into the wild, ready for its second chance at life. And whether that creature needed care for just a few days or as long as six months, each release is in Kathy's words, "magical." Working there as a volunteer, I couldn't agree more. ***\*Phoenix Wildlife Center is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization, funded solely by private donations. For more info or to donate, please visit [www.phoenixwildlife.org](http://www.phoenixwildlife.org).***



## Insects – Friend or Foe?

Judy Floam

Finally, some warm weather! A sure sign of spring is the first bee coming to inspect the dandelions in our front lawn and a sure sign of summer is the arrival of the fireflies that brighten our evenings on the porch. The answer to the question, "friend or foe?" is, of course, "both". Many Insects are beneficial, some are destructive and many more insect species just go their own way and leave us *homo sapiens* alone. They are everywhere, and there are approximately one million known insect species on the planet. Some scientists estimate that there may be as many as 30 million more species yet to be discovered!

So what, exactly, is an insect? It is a member of the phylum Arthropoda of the animal Kingdom. Arthropods all have six jointed legs and they include crabs, lobsters and spiders. All insects also have three distinct body parts. From front to back they are: the head, the thorax and the abdomen.

Is an "insect" a "bug"? We use the term "bug" loosely to mean insects (although you probably wouldn't refer to a butterfly as a bug). But to an entomologist, a "bug" is a member of certain specific sub-groups of insects that have mouth parts adapted for piercing and sucking. They include bedbugs, stinkbugs and water bugs.

Insects can be social or solitary. Social insects - ants, termites, some bees and some wasps - form colonies and are organized into "castes", each with its own physical characteristics and specialized tasks. Solitary insects do all the same tasks themselves, mainly involving feeding and reproduction.

Insects develop through two or more stages, called metamorphosis. The larva is an earlier stage and the adult is the final stage. For butterflies and moths, the larva is a caterpillar; for flies, a maggot; for beetles, a grub. Some insects spend the larva stage in a different environment from the adult state; dragonfly larva live in water but dragonfly adults spend most of their time in the air.

And of course, insects pollinate our crops and our flowers, not just butterflies and bees, but moths, wasps, flies, ants and beetles. Each is adapted by its body structure and means of locomotion for pollinating specific plants. Ants, for instance, pollinate wild ginger, which grows low to the ground.

So the next time you see a fly on your window, an ant in your kitchen, a butterfly on your flowers, or caterpillars in a tent in your cherry tree, consider that they are members of a vast and varied group of species and an important piece of the incredibly complex web of life on our planet.

Beaches are more than just places to enjoy fun in the summer sun, they are also unique, dynamic, and important habitats. Even the processes that create beaches are fascinating bits of ecology and geology. Across our watery planet the areas where water and land meet are among the most changing, complex, and ecologically fascinating land forms. Shorelines can be anything from a sandy beach to sea cliffs, rocky promontories, marshes, or mudflats. Shoreline type is determined primarily by the amount of energy it is meeting from the adjoining body of water. Ocean beaches and those in the Chesapeake Bay are subject to comparatively high wind and wave energy and tend to exist on one side of broad expanses of water. Sand is created and deposited by this wind and wave energy while other smaller particles of silt and sediment are scoured away. Marshes and muddy areas tend to exist in more sheltered places where these smaller particles settle out. Marshy Point, for example sits in the sheltered waters of Dundee Creek and is well deserving of its Marshy name.

All of these different shorelines however are ecologically important and represent valuable habits that host unique plant and animal communities. All of them are also under constant threat. There is the natural threat of flood and storm but more important are man made threats that these habitats may not be able to survive. On the Upper Chesapeake Bay, development, hardening of the shoreline (installing bulkheads and rip rap), and invasive species throw off the natural ecological processes of our marshes and mudflats. In the Lower Bay and along the Atlantic Coast people are in some ways loving their beaches to death. These beaches are high energy, highly dynamic areas and surprisingly actually depend on storms to reshape and renew their sands. As people build along the beaches and try to maintain them in their present form natural processes are thrown off and the animals that need them are displaced. Beaches in the Chesapeake are home to many nesting shorebirds and south of the Bay are crucial to nesting sea turtles.

People should absolutely visit and enjoy the beach but also respect and appreciate it. We cannot possibly hope to hold in place one of earth's most changing geographical forms, rather we must learn to work with natural processes.

## President's Report

I want to thank everyone for attending the Spring Fest held in April. With the beautiful weather and great activities we had a crowd of around 2000 people. Everyone seemed to be having a good time. I want to thank the staff and volunteers for putting on a great festival. In addition to the normal activities we had two new items. The first was the ability to purchase native plants. The American Native Plant Nursery, now located at the Marshy Point Nursery, provided a selection of native shrubs, trees, and perennials for sale. Offering and using native plants fits our mission of environmental education and improvement.

The second item was the unveiling of our new Osprey Cam system. This Spring the council purchased a solar video camera system for our Osprey platform. A council board member, Dave Oshman, was instrumental in researching and designing the system. The system was purchased using council membership dues and donation, including the donation from the Gajdosik Memorial Fund. The system was then installed in March by a crew of Center staff and Dave Oshman. Dave, Ranger Ben, Captain Jim, Ranger Brina and Ranger Rebecca spent several cold rainy days rushing to get the system installed in time for the Osprey's return. Dave was also able to get some additional equipment and software donated so that we could stream the video to the web. Dave and Linda Derezhinski were able to setup the system and streaming program in time for the Spring Fest. Thanks to the help of councilman Cathy Bevins, we were able to stream the video through the County's IT connection. Thanks to everyone's help and donations, we now have a great learning tool/exhibit for the communities and worldwide use and enjoyment.

This project really affirms the value of having a diverse group of skills, experiences, and ideas working within the council and staff. Perhaps there are other members who are willing to put their skills and knowledge to use for Marshy Point. We have many needs; volunteering at events, baking for bake sales, raising money, grant writing, writing for the Cattails, knowledgeable about a skill or natural area that you are willing to speak about or lead a field trip.

Members are reminded to join us at the Nature center in June for our free annual Members only Fish fry. This is a council member benefit to thank you for your support throughout the year.

The staff has a calendar full of activities for the summer. As usual, there are programs scheduled for the weekends. The camps filled up fast and are wait-listed. The staff also has a list of summer field trips that are

*Presidents report continued*

available for groups to schedule and attend. In addition, the Park is open weekdays daily from 9am to sunset and open weekends from 7am to sunset. The Center is open 9am to 5pm daily.

I sincerely hope everyone gets to visit the Center during the summer season. I wish everyone an enjoyable summer. See you at the Point. Brent Byers - president@marshypoint.org

**Inaugural Scholarship**

The Marshy Point Nature Center Council is pleased to announce a scholarship for Baltimore County High School college-bound seniors and undergraduate college students who are pursuing an education in environmental sciences or nature education. Applicants should show evidence of their commitment to the health of the environment and plan to pursue a relevant major to fulfill this commitment. Two scholarships will be awarded in 2016. Applications can be obtained online, [www.marshypoint.org](http://www.marshypoint.org) or by calling the center at 410-887-2817. All materials should be postmarked by June 15, 2016.

**Support Marshy Point Nature Center**

Your donations allow us to continue making programs and activities at Marshy Point Nature Center that are fun and educational for the whole family! You can make your tax-deductible gift in several ways. \*Donate online by visiting: [www.marshypoint.org](http://www.marshypoint.org) and click on the "Donate" tab in the upper right of the screen. \*Adopt an animal link to help us maintain our animal habitats, click on "Get Involved" at the top of our home page, and then click on "Adopt an Animal". \*Donate by mail by sending your gift payable to: MPNCC to the center: 7130 Marshy Point Road, Middle River, MD 21220.



**Trail Guide Training**

**Marshy Point Nature Center is looking for volunteers** interested in learning about nature to teach children about nature! The staff of the Center will program you for success by teaching you about the environment around Marshy Point. Each day features new subjects & new techniques for enjoying the great outdoors. All training sessions are 10am-1pm., Sept. 7th, 8th & 9th. Breakfast, snacks and coffee provided. New guides pay a tuition fee of \$5 that covers all material handouts. Call 410-887-2817 to register.

**Marshy Point Newsletter Staff**  
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**Save the Date - 2016**  
**Fall Festival! September 24**

**Wish List for the Center**

- **Healthy, kid friendly snacks, 100% fruit juice, 5oz. paper cups.**
- **Kids nature related books, puzzles.**
- **New hip waders for kids.**
- **New unused bug spray and sunscreen.**
- **Child & adult, new, like new hats.**
- **Zebco Rods, small size for kids.**



**Marshy Point Nature Center  
7130 Marshy Point Road  
Baltimore, MD 21220**



## **Wildlife Corner - Carolina Chickadee**

**Brent Byers**

Most people can recognize the Carolina Chickadee. It is a small grayish bird with a black cap and bib and white cheeks, not to be confused with the Black-Capped Chickadee which is a more northern species found in the Allegheny mountains of Maryland and across Pennsylvania. They look very similar. The Black-Capped is slightly larger and has more white in the wings. The songs are similar with the Carolina having a slightly higher pitched and faster chick a-dee-dee-dee. The Chickadee is a year-round resident and a common bird at our feeders. They love black oil sunflower seeds. They often grab one seed from the feeder, then fly off to a nearby branch to open the seed. They may frequent feeders less often once more nutritious food like insects are available in the spring through the fall. They are one of my favorite birds. This little bird is very bold and sassy. They often scold you from the feeder as you fill it or are the first birds to try to scare off a snake or a predator.



They are early nesters and may have two broods during the summer. They nest in natural cavities or may use bird nest boxes. This year by the first of May we had four nesting pairs using Marshy Point's Bluebird nest boxes. The nests are made of mostly moss, lined with small feathers or fur. Both parents help build the nest. The female lays 5-8 white reddish brown speckled eggs about the size of jelly beans. Both parents will incubate the eggs for 11-12 days. The altricial (born naked and helpless) young are fed insects or insect larvae by both parents. It is amazing how fast they develop. They remain in the nest for only 13-17 days. During this time they develop their complete feathered pattern and emerge as almost full size adults able to fly. They may continue to stick close to the nest or follow the parents. You may see them sitting on a branch, fluttering their wings as they still beg to be fed into late summer. Watch for the Chickadees at the center and in your neighborhood to see if you can observe any evidence of nesting behavior like carrying food or the presence of birds begging.