



# Cattails

7130 Marshy Point Road, Middle River, MD 21220  
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## The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter March - April - May 2017



## Spring Festival

April 15  
10 am ~ 4 pm

### Speaker Series

#### "The mysterious American Eel"

by Sheila Eyler

March 21, 7:00 p.m.

Join Sheila, a fishery biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and project leader for the Mid-Atlantic Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office to learn about the American eel's interesting migration pattern and why we should care about them being in the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries.



#### "Harmful Algae Booms in Maryland: Effects, Response, Management, Coordination" by Charles Poukish

April 18, 7:00 p.m.

Algae blooms can cause fish kills, dead zones, and dangerous conditions. Maryland Department of the Environment Biologist Charles Poukish will discuss harmful blooms in the Chesapeake Bay.



#### "Earth - Moon - Sun, A Technical Look"

by Steve Knox

May 16, 7:00 p.m.

While not an astronomer, Steve Knox has had an interest in the field and in particular, in the relative motions of the earth, moon and sun. Everything in this presentation has been thoroughly researched and his model of the system should provide a new understanding of these three celestial bodies.



### 7th Annual Spring Wine Festival, May 6th

Please join us & the Katie & Wil Foundation for an evening of food, music, wine and friends at Dejon Vineyards. Wine tasting, dinner and music. Door prizes and raffle auction. Visit: [www.katieandwil.org](http://www.katieandwil.org) to purchase tickets today! Donations help support Marshy Point Nature Center Council.

## A New Year

Cara Urban

The beginning of this year has heralded a lot of changes for many of us. It's a strange time, and many new things will be coming with it... a new number to write down when you date your checks, a new administration, a new director for Marshy Point, and even a new editor of the Cattails newsletter. (That's me!)

I think it is very important to consider the things that will stay the same with all these changes, as well as what positive changes can be made. Something that will never change is all of our love and commitment to a clean, beautiful environment for our future generations to treasure. As we begin 2017, we should all try to strive for positive changes we can make towards that goal.

This is the first Cattails edition that I've edited. It will include both old things we love and treasure, like robins in springtime, and things that are new and strange. I hope that it gives you both things to think about, and things to enjoy.

## Sharks! In the Chesapeake Bay?

Valerie Greenhalgh

After the success of his book and the blockbuster movie, Jaws, Peter Benchley spent the remainder of his life trying to teach people that their fear of sharks was unfounded... but for many that fear still exists. What about you? Do you ever wade into the Chesapeake Bay and wonder if a shark might be eyeing you up for its next meal? Not to worry. The facts and statistics strongly suggest that you should feel free to enjoy our upper Bay waters until your heart's content.



To be sure, sharks often inhabit the Chesapeake Bay – at least 12 species to be exact, with five species common to abundant. The sandbar shark is the most common and can be found in warm weather months, but doesn't get alarmed -- it's a bottom feeder and preys on fish and our own blue crab. The bull shark has been found as far north as the Patuxent River and is considered to be one of the three most aggressive types of sharks. On the other hand, it will choose to dine on fish, turtles, or even its own cousin the sandbar shark rather than you.

The three remaining shark species common to the Bay are the sand tiger, smooth dogfish, and spiny dogfish. The sand tiger shark has rows of jagged teeth and a large size (up to 10' long) which may be frightening in appearance, but it's actually a docile shark, eating a diet of mostly squid and fish. Just like the bull shark, the sand tiger shark enjoys snacking on the sandbar shark, which can't seem to get a break. The smooth dogfish and spiny dogfish sharks prefer the lower Bay, and can be spotted in the summer/fall months and fall/spring months respectively. Good news once again – humans are not on their meal plan.

In the upper and central portions of our Bay, there have been only four recorded unprovoked shark attacks (and one non-fatal provoked attack) in a span of almost 100 years (from 1848 to 1944). Only one of these was fatal, and it was unclear whether he died from the shark attack or from his initial fall overboard.

## Solar Panels at Bargain Prices!

Cara Urban



The end of 2016 was a time of landmark news from the World Economic Forum. In a [report](#) released at the end of December, they found that renewable energy had reached "a tipping point" – in two thirds of all countries worldwide, the next few years will signify the first time that solar and wind power becomes cheaper than electricity generated from fossil fuel, even without government subsidies. Another 27.4 gigawatts of new, non-petroleum based electrical generation went online in 2016 alone, and solar power should fall to half the price of electricity from oil, gas, or coal by 2040. In some places, it's already there.

There's still a lot of investment in solar energy to be done, but over the long haul, prices might just take the day! Getting in on the ground floor with one of the solar programs in Maryland could be a start towards getting even more solar energy generation out in the field – or up on your roof.

## Environmental Vigilance is Required!

Carol Mason

As a new federal administration comes on board, those of us concerned about maintaining a safe, green, stable environment for future generations need to raise our threat awareness level to new heights. Be ready to write letters and emails, make phone calls, attend meetings, and otherwise lobby government leaders responsible for legislation affecting water and air quality, endangered species and climate change. If a law has been in effect for a certain period of time, then the federal government has to hold a [public notice/comment](#) period and address those comments and publish an analysis to support its decision. As interested citizens, we must be prepared to participate in these public comment sessions. However, if a regulation was passed in May, 2016 or later, then Congress can negate it with a simple majority vote. One regulation which may be threatened is:

**The Methane Rule: New Facilities (May 12, 2016)** This regulation requires energy producers to monitor gas leaks and make repairs at new oil and gas industry sites to prevent methane leaks. The EPA calculates that methane leaks from hundreds of thousands of sources added up to 9.8 million metric tons in 2014, an 11 percent increase from four years earlier.

A few of the other laws and regulations in the crosshairs:

**The Clean Power Plan (Aug. 3, 2015)** This is the centerpiece of the Obama administration's action plan on [climate change](#).

**The Waters of the U.S. Rule (Aug. 28, 2015)** One of the fracking industry's top priorities to cut in the coming years is this "WOTUS" rule, the EPA's past attempt to clarify wetlands protection. EPA administrator Gina McCarthy said the rule extended the reach of the Clean Water Act by about 3 percent, to encompass streams and wetlands.

**The Blowout Preventer Rules (April 14, 2016)** After the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, the Interior Department [finalized rules](#) to improve safety in the offshore drilling industry. The rules include new requirements for blowout protection and monitoring.

**Hydraulic Fracturing on Federal Lands (March 20, 2015)** In June, a federal court in Wyoming [struck down](#) the Obama's permitting regulations to improve safety of [hydraulic fracturing on federal lands](#). The rules required disclosure of [fracking](#) chemicals and further monitoring and safeguards. The current administration has appealed the decision; the new administration could drop that appeal.

Without careful monitoring by those who value the Earth and its resources, the drive to prioritize economic development over environmental impact could usher the world into a monotone habitat, lacking in diversity, toxic to life.

Note from the Editor - Cara Urban. That list is a little scary, but there are things you can do to help on both a federal and local level. Remember to [call your representatives](#) and let them know your feelings on environmental protection and other issues.

Another thing you can do with your whole family is support Marshy Point Nature Center! We have a lot of programs in the works – just read the words of our President in his report.

## Robin Facts

Anna Stoll

We have all seen robins hopping across the lawn and cocking their heads before pulling up a worm. Experiments have been done to find out how the robin knows where to find a worm. Most scientists believe robins find worms by sight only, but some think they also might be able to hear the worms in the ground. There are more robins in the United States now than in colonial times, and that's because the colonists imported worms, creating a larger food supply for robins. Robins eat a variety of fruits and berries In addition to their worm diet.

## Maryland Master Naturalist Course

**Maryland Master Naturalist** – Marshy Point Nature Center, Cromwell Valley Park and the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability are teaming up to offer this 60-hour training program this fall. Go to: [www.extension.umd.edu/masternaturalist](http://www.extension.umd.edu/masternaturalist) to register.

## President's Thoughts

Brent Byers

Are you ready for Spring? The Nature Center is! The reduced program activity during the winter gives the staff an opportunity to work on new exhibits and spruce up old ones to get ready for the spring visitors. We plan on having our workboat back and ready for bay programs. A new outdoor bird enclosure was built over the winter. We also anticipate having a kestrel join our family in April. New murals have been added to the classroom; check them out. Some exhibits and tanks were also moved and improved. If you did not get a chance to walk the trails added last fall, you should try them this spring. The Camp schedule has been developed and is ready for registration. Remember, members get priority to register, so renewing your membership or joining Marshy Park is the best way to ensure you get a camp reservation.

Spring school programs are filling fast. We could use volunteers to help with the weekday trips as trail guides. If you have some weekday mornings free, please consider volunteering as an assistant. Trail guide training is being held in March to help prepare people as program assistants. As a program assistant, you get a chance to learn and to share your enthusiasm and love of nature. You don't have to be an expert to help; we only need interest and enthusiasm. I try to personally train new program assistants each year. I always learn something new and it motivates me to assist. I really enjoy wading in the water with the group and sharing their excitement as we discover tadpoles, frogs, or grass shrimp.

Assisting with weekday programs is one of the many ways you can help at the center. We are always looking for volunteers to help at our festivals and other events. You can stay for one to two hours to help set up or take down, work all day at an exhibit, or bake items for the bake sale. We also need volunteers to join our board or a committee to help us plan and prepare for events or programs. Or perhaps you own, know, or work for a local business or group and would like to donate items or time for a project at Marshy Point? For college students, we offer intern positions, and for teens, we have spots in the Marsh Ranger program. If you are looking for opportunities to volunteer, we have many places at Marshy Point. Please consider Marshy Point if you want to help your local community and the environment. You will meet great people from the staff and the community. I am consistently amazed at what I learn from the diverse knowledge of the people I meet at Marshy Point.

By the way, do you know anyone looking for a summer job? Marshy Point is hiring staff to work at Rocky Point Park. Call the office or pick up a flyer at the Nature Center.

Spring is a busy time at the Nature Center and I am very excited about its approach and the increased activities at the Center. I hope you can visit us many times this spring. See you at Marshy Point. Brent Byers, President MPNCC.

## Farewell to Leo

Cara Urban

Leo Rebetsky, our senior naturalist and director of Marshy Point Nature Center, announced his upcoming retirement this last Friday, January 27. We are grateful that Leo's long track record of public service brought him to Marshy Point, where he has lead us in wildlife protection and education and helped so many of our volunteers and staff personally over the last two years.

Leo's role with us was the last of a 39 year career in Baltimore County. Prior to his move to Marshy Point, he spent 16 years as director at Cromwell Valley Park. He has made his presence, energy, and creativity felt in many of the area's nature and recreation centers, and left a lifetime legacy of commitment to preserving the beauty of our home and the Chesapeake Bay. Leo's last day will be March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. We will be confidently relying on our staff naturalist Benjamin Porter to step into his shoes until we find our new director. While Leo's retirement is well deserved, he will be badly missed. Thank you, Leo!

## \* Marshy Point Scholarships \*

The Marshy Point Nature Center awards scholarships are presented yearly to college-bound seniors and undergraduate college students who have shown a high level of commitment to the health of the environment and who plan to continue their studies in environmental sciences or nature education, and who have shown a strong affiliation with Marshy Point Nature Center. Qualified applicants are college-bound seniors from a Baltimore County high school or undergraduate college students who wish to pursue a career in nature education or environmental sciences and have maintained at least a 3.0 GPA. Two scholarships will be awarded in the amount of \$600 for 2017. Applications will be available online ([www.marshypoint.org](http://www.marshypoint.org)) or by calling the Center.

**Marshy Point Nature Center's  
15th Annual  
Spring Festival  
Saturday, April 15, 2017  
10am to 4pm**



**Enjoy live music, food, kids' games and crafts, guided hikes and canoe rides, live critter displays, decoy carvers, & face painting.  
Volunteers needed! For more information, call the center.**

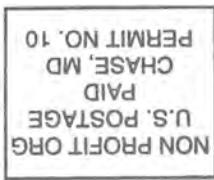
**Rain or Shine**

The Marshy Point Festival Committee invites everyone to enjoy the pristine beauty of Baltimore County's ONLY waterfront Nature Center!



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## Wildlife Corner - Robins in Springtime

Anna Stoll

We generally consider the sight of the first robin to be a sign that spring is nearly here, but some robins stay in our area during winter as well. We simply notice them more as spring approaches because that's when mating season begins and they begin to sing. Robins are very territorial, and it's not unusual to see the males battling for the best nesting areas. Once a territory is established, it's up to the females to protect the area from other females.



Both male and female robins gather materials for a nest, but the females alone are the nest builders. The nests are made from small twigs, grasses, and other fibers, all held together with mud. After the nest is built the female lays her eggs and warms them with her body until they hatch. Since male robins don't feed their mates while they're incubating eggs, the mother must take short breaks each day to find food. Once the eggs hatch both parents will help feed the young.

When young robins are old enough to leave the nest they are called fledglings. Even after fledglings have learned to fly, their parents continue to feed them for a while. You may have seen young robins with speckled breasts following their parents and begging for food. The mother robin will continue to feed the young until she starts incubating her next brood, and the father will continue feeding until the next brood hatches.

### Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

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