



Cattails

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The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter September - October - November 2018

Fall Festival 2018



Enjoy the first official fall weekend at our 11th Annual Fall Festival! Activities include, kids mini Marsh Mucker mud run, hay rides, animal shows, & crafts. There will be early American & Native American life demonstrations, Chesapeake Bay Retriever demos, canoe & boat trips (weather & tide permitting). Admission & parking are FREE! Join us Saturday, September 22, 10am-4pm for a great day!

Free Speaker Series - All are Welcome!

"The Most Important Fish in the Sea" by Loren Lustig, September 18, 7 p.m.



This magnificent creature (menhaden) not only forms the critical food base for many valued marine predators, but also provides amazing "filter feeding" benefits that have the power to significantly improve the water quality in the Bay. Mr. Lustig, who serves as a Commissioner on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, will give a view of the critical decisions being made that have the potential to encourage recovery of this essential species.



"The Pre-Colonial and Post-Colonial Chesapeake Bay" by Professor Grace Brush , October 16, 7 p.m.

A paleoecologist and Ecology Professor Emerita in the Dept. of Environmental Health and Engineering at the JHU, Grace Brush will discuss how studies show that the transformation of the watershed from forest to agricultural fields beginning with European colonization has resulted in a change in the estuarine system, from a benthic (bottom dwelling) system to one that is pelagic (open water).

"Brook Trout Management in Maryland" by Matthew Sell, November 20, 7 p.m.

Maryland's DNR brook trout specialist Matthew Sell, will discuss the research projects conducted over the last decade, results of monitoring, current status, and conclude with the conservation measures needed to protect our native trout.



Osprey Update

Dave Oshman, Chief Osprey Officer

The year was uneventful except for the day we realized an egg was missing. Feverishly going through video footage allowed us to determine that the female had removed the egg from the nest, as most birds will do when they realize that an egg is nonviable. At the time of writing this article, both of our osprey chicks have fledged. Currently, the parents are beginning to teach the young how to fish. By the time this issue of Cattails is published, the parents are likely to be getting the urge to head south, where they will spend the winter apart. The young will hang around for a month or so (they were seen as late as October last year), before they too follow their instincts and head to South America to overwinter.

From a technical standpoint, we are very satisfied with our modifications to the mounting of the camera this past spring. This has allowed us a much wider range of camera angles to catch more of the "action." Once the osprey no longer spend time in the nest, we'll change the camera angle to watching the mouth of Dundee Creek where we get some beautiful sunrises.

Gardening - Nature's Way

Chrysanthemums: Autumn's Common Beauties

Bev Wall

"A chrysanthemum by any other name would be easier to spell." -Wm. J. Johnson



As our gardens transition from summer to winter, we're sad to see our beautiful hot weather annuals and perennials whither and die. We anticipate, and even dread, the ice and cold that winter surely promises. Perhaps the antidote is to bring home a mum, something to help us gently transition from warmer days to cooler, a bit of seasonal cheer. Because they are so common and plentiful, mums are often taken for granted; yet, their bright colors and delicate petals can lift our spirits before the onset of the winter doldrums.

As our days shorten and our evenings cool, as the creatures begin to burrow deep in the earth and the birds migrate south, mums steadfastly remain to propel us gently into the fall season. They go beautifully with other fall favorites, like pumpkins and gourds, and they make great additions to our containers or gardens. They are inexpensive, and are fairly easy to care for. They are every gardener's answer to a drab patio or empty garden space.

People often buy mums for the fall season and then discard them once the blooms fade. But mums are hardy, and if properly cared for, they will bloom annually for three to four years. Here's something to try, even if your mum has seen better days: Dig a hole deep enough to bury your mum, pot and all. (Leaving the mum in the pot helps to keep the roots warm during the long winter months.) Cut the dead foliage to the edge of the pot and cover with a layer of mulch. In the spring, when you see tiny green shoots emerge, dig up the pot, remove the pot and replant. After a few weeks, you'll find yourself with a beautiful, blooming mum. If you want your mum to bloom in the fall instead of the spring, cut it back when it starts to bloom.

"Every year, in November, at the season that follows the hour of the dead, the crowning and majestic hours of autumn, I go to visit the chrysanthemums ... They are indeed, the most universal, the most diverse of flowers."

Redbud Trees

Anna Stoll

Most people are familiar with the rosy flowers of the redbud trees in the spring, but we tend not to notice their brown seedpods in the fall. The eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) is a small tree that is native to the eastern United States. They bloom early, so it's easy to spot them in wooded areas where the other trees are still bare. The leaves are large and heart-shaped, and their wide canopy provides good shade.

Bees love the flowers because they appear at a time when not many other sources of nectar are available. If you have ever closely examined redbud blossoms, you may have noticed that they resemble pea or bean blossoms. That's because redbuds are in the legume family, which in addition to beans and peas, also includes plants such as clover, mimosa trees, and wisteria. The redbud seedpods make it more obvious that the redbud is in the legume family because they look like flattened bean- or peapods.

In the past, American Indians used the inner bark and roots of redbuds to treat a variety of ailments. Deer will eat the foliage and small twigs in the spring, and squirrels will sometimes eat the flower buds, bark, and twigs. Some birds will eat the seeds but only if a more favorable food source isn't available.



Because of the beauty of its flowers, redbuds have been cultivated and new varieties developed, including a weeping redbud and one with variegated foliage. Redbuds self-sow easily, leading to additional trees, which can be a nuisance when those trees appear where they aren't wanted.

Trees and Their Yearly Routine

Dejan Ernestl

Trees are an important part of our ecosystem. They filter the carbon particles out of the air and return oxygen back to the atmosphere; they cool the earth's surface; they provide shelter and food to numerous insects and animals; they filter groundwater; they slow down soil erosion; they produce breathtaking flowers and delicious fruit; and the list goes on.

Every tree has a name—oak, maple, hickory, magnolia, chestnut, pine, spruce—but the way we tell them apart is by their leaves. Evergreen trees, as the name would suggest, are always green, retaining the majority of their leaves year-round. Deciduous trees drop their leaves in fall and grow new leaves in spring. It takes a lot of energy for a tree to drop its leaves and produce a new crop of leaves.

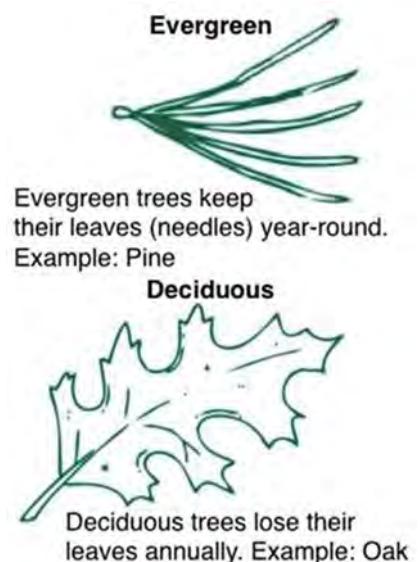
The question is why do trees shed their leaves? Why don't they just keep them on? Trees in colder climates, where there are four seasons, drop their leaves just before winter, and trees in warmer climates, where the temperatures does not dip below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius), keep their leaves all year long. Why do trees in cooler climates behave differently than those in warmer climates? The short answer is survival.

Trees have evolved strategies to survive harsh weather conditions. By shedding leaves, deciduous trees need less water and fewer nutrients, which are in short supply from the frozen ground. Their broad, thin leaves contain fluids that are susceptible to freezing, so without leaves, deciduous trees avoid damage to their delicate leaves from cold weather.

To illustrate this, let's look at when trees grow their leaves and flower. Maple trees flower in March or April, and oaks flower in May; both maples and oaks produce flowers before their leaves unfold. Chestnuts and magnolias first grow their leaves, usually in May, and then flower in June and July. What that difference in timing means is that maples and oaks are more at risk of losing their flowers to cold temperatures in early spring, getting “nipped in the bud,” and losing branches from spring snowstorms. If you've lived long enough, you've probably witnessed snowstorms in spring, when some deciduous trees are already leafed out. Oaks flower later in spring, thus making their survival rate higher. And chestnuts and magnolias have an even better chance of survival; they bloom months after maples. These trees seem to have figured out a safer time to flower and make new leaves.

What about evergreens? It would be difficult to survive the cold, when there is a lot of snow, being *ever green*; after all, these trees keep their leaves year around. Like deciduous trees, evergreens have also evolved, but they took another approach. Many types of evergreens, for example, pines, have narrowed their leaves into needles. By doing so, not only do they need less water and fewer nutrients, the thin needles prevent large amounts of snow from accumulating before it slides off. Evergreens with shorter, densely arranged needles, such as spruce, have developed a pyramidal-type canopy, which also prevents snow from accumulating on their branches.

It took thousand of years for trees to adapt to the environment they live in, and they are still learning and perfecting their life cycle of growing and dropping their leaves.



Do You Know What's in Your Backyard?

Michelle Oshman

Most Baltimore County residents know that Marshy Point is part of the Chesapeake Bay marine system. But did you know that the Chesapeake Bay is an estuary and, in fact, is the largest estuary in North America?

An estuary is a body of water, including the surrounding coastal habitats, where rivers meet the sea. It is a mix of fresh river water and salty water from the sea. The Chesapeake Bay estuary was formed when the Susquehanna River valley was flooded by the rising of the north Atlantic Ocean after the end of the last ice age, around 10,000 years ago. Over 150 rivers and streams flow into the Bay. Marshy Point Nature Center is located along Dundee Creek and Saltpeter Creek.

Overall, the Chesapeake Bay estuary is shallow and averages twenty-one feet in depth. The water in the Chesapeake Bay system is typical for estuary environments and falls into three basic types—saltwater, fresh water and brackish water—which is a combination of fresh and salty. While some people may find brackish water unpleasant, many who live around the Bay enjoy its briny character and, at times, its brownish color.

Estuaries create a biologically diverse and rich environment. Some birds, fish, and other animals live in estuaries year-round, while others spend part of the year there to breed or as part of their migratory route. Many types of habitats can be found in estuaries around the world, including oyster beds, coral reefs, aquatic vegetation beds, marshes and other wetlands, and mangrove swamps. These habitats are home to numerous mammals, shellfish, fish, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Aquatic residents of the Chesapeake Bay estuary include blue crabs, oysters, shad, menhaden, bluefish, flounder, spot, smallmouth bass, striped bass (also called rockfish), sturgeon, sandbar sharks, and cownose rays. Birds found along the Bay include many types of ducks, Canada geese, tundra swans, common loons, bald eagles, cormorants and osprey. The Chesapeake Bay is actually home to one of the world's largest populations of ospreys! You can watch them nest and raise their chicks in the late spring and early summer on the Marsh Point osprey cam. <http://www.marshypoint.org/new-osprey-cam/>

Other animals in the Chesapeake Bay estuary environment include white-tailed deer, river otters, rabbits, bobcats, muskrats and red foxes, and many types of snakes and turtles. You can learn about many of these creatures at Marshy Point.

Membership Renewal Now Due

August marks the end of the Marshy Point Nature Center Council Membership year. All Council membership renewals are due in September.

Through our modest membership dues, income from events, and generous donations, the Council will continue to provide much of the funding for summer camp, programs, project / exhibit development, exhibit support, and animal care cost. Membership is now over 300 members and visits to the Center continue to increase. Included elsewhere in the Cattails is information on how you can renew your membership, or join the council.

To continue the positive direction of Marshy Point we need your membership support. Having a strong membership base is vital to our success here at Marshy point. Please renew your marshy point membership NOW. Thank You, Brent Byers, Outgoing President MPNCC

CHESAPEAKE ADVENTURERS PRE-K

Registration Now Open!

September 5th – November 30th

Mon/Wed/Fri, 9:30am-1:30pm

AGES: 3, 4, & 5

Must turn 3 by Aug 1, 2018 & be potty proficient.

\$100/week \$90/week MPNC Members.

Alongside we will explore vernal ponds, play in meadows and climb trees. Along the way, we will discover the flora and fauna that surround us, allowing each child to make their own special connections with nature.

Trail Guide Training 2018



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 and new techniques for enjoying the great outdoors.

- **All training sessions are 10am - 1pm, September 12, 13, 14.**
- Breakfast, snacks and coffee provided.
- New guides pay a tuition fee of \$5 covers all material handouts.
- Call 410-887-2817 to register.

Presidents Report

Dave Oshman

I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new president of the MPNC Council and to thank my good friend Brent Byers for all his years of hard work as president. His love of nature and Marshy Point are evident in everything does within the Nature Center and without.

I have been VP of the Council for the past two years. My active involvement with the Center began in 2014 when I took the Maryland Master Naturalist training there and at Cromwell Valley Park. That introduced me to a young ranger named Ben Porter, who has come to be a good friend.

My biggest contribution to the center has been installation and maintenance of the Osprey Cam, but I was also the brainchild behind our Pokémon' GO nights, which continue to build community and help raise funds for the Council. Over this next year, I hope to build on the hard work of my predecessors and continue to make certain that Marshy Point remains the best Nature Center in the state of Maryland.

Dave Oshman, President Elect (president@marshypoint.org)

Summer Report from the Senior Naturalist

Ben Porter

As I write this article, we've just harvested and extracted honey from our bee hives: a sure sign that summer is winding down. As this remarkably quick summer gives way to fall once again, Marshy Point remains an exciting and busy place. Over the course of the summer, hundreds of kids experienced the outdoors and got up close and personal with the Chesapeake and its wildlife. In addition to summer camps, the season offered canoe and boat trips and many opportunities to explore independently. The freshwater wetlands saw the emergence of frogs, toads, and salamanders while several pairs of wood ducks used the nest boxes around the park. It was also a busy season on the two bluebird trails with dozens of chicks successfully fledging. On the osprey platform two chicks fledged and will be headed south by the end of September. In Dundee Creek, submerged aquatic vegetation abounded and sheltered the many fish and crabs that call the waters home.

Fall is also an exciting time around Marshy Point. The waterfowl that spend the winter on the bay will be arriving soon as the nature center looks forward to a season full of school trips and the 11th annual fall festival. This year's festival is scheduled for Saturday, September 22 and will include all of our usual activities plus hayrides in the meadow. Fall also means a new semester of Chesapeake Adventurer's Nature Pre-K. After a very successful spring session our adventure guides are excited to share nature discoveries with another group of preschoolers. With all these programs and more, Marshy Point offers something for everyone in the fall.

Congratulations Marshy Point Scholarship Recipient!

This year, the Marshy Point Nature Center Council is excited to announce they have awarded a scholarship! Recipient James Duffy, is a sophomore attending Christopher Newport University in Virginia. Good luck this year!

The Council is currently building the scholarship fund and welcomes contributions to help with this endeavor.

Support Marshy Point Nature Center!

Donations from (the local community), or (individuals, families, businesses, and organizations) enable Marshy Point Nature Center Council to provide educational and fun activities at Baltimore County's only waterfront Nature Center.

Please give and help continue the Council's mission to furnish the kind of family-friendly activities that allow everyone to share in learning about nature while having fun, too!

Ways you can make your tax-deductible gift:

* Donate **online** by visiting: www.marshypoint.org.

Click on the donate tab in the upper right of the screen.

* Donate by **mail** by sending your gift payable to: Marshy Point Nature Center Council
7130 Marshy Point Road, Baltimore, MD 21220.

Every gift makes a difference!



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Wildlife Corner - Life on the River

Valerie Greenhalgh

Middle River is one of the busiest waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, and it also provides a healthy habitat for many beautiful and fascinating birds. Having a front-row seat on this river provides the perfect spot to witness all the action.

Take the osprey for instance. If you live on the river, you do not need an alarm clock. Around 5 am each day during the summer, the deep silence of the morning is pierced by the loud, shrill calls of the many osprey fishing and tending to their fledglings. The bald eagle also makes its presence known. One early morning, I walked to the window just in time to witness an eagle plucking a gull right out of the water next to my pier. That was a sight I could have done without! The circle of life abounds on the river and reveals itself often. I have found on more than one occasion the feathers of gulls and mourning doves; the circular pattern of the feathers left behind are the calling card of a cooper's hawk.



Great Blue Heron

My all-time favorite local visitor is the great blue heron, with its impressive size, elegant flight, prehistoric look and signature call. I had the pleasure of having one land a mere fifteen feet from me when I was fishing from my pier. He was obviously looking for an easy meal. And let's not forget the familiar spring and summer treat of seeing proud parents with their precious ducklings and goslings.

Birds aren't the only ones enjoying the river. On any given warm day, the river is a playground for people on jet skis, kayaks, paddleboards, boats, and floats. Loud laughter and loud music are welcome here, but be aware of the watchful law enforcement, who are also guarding their flock and keeping us safe. For many, the day is not complete without stopping for dinner at one of the many laid-back waterfront restaurants on the river—just one more reason I cannot begin to think about winter.