



Cattails



7130 Marshy Point Road, Middle River, MD 21220
www.marshypoint.org, 410-887-2817

The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter December 2015 - January - February 2016

Join us for a Holiday Celebration

Tuesday, December 15
7:00 pm

A blazing fire, hot cider, the aroma of evergreens and the fellowship of other friends of nature. This family friendly event features activities for everyone, including Christmas wreath making from freshly cut greens, Carols with the staff, popcorn stringing, and the ever popular pod and cone weird animal ornaments. Refreshments will be available. Please bring a dessert to share. There is no speaker for this meeting, unless you count the guy with a beard in the red suit. HO HO HO!



Winter Speaker Series

"The Do's & Don'ts of Rescuing Wildlife" by Kathy Woods
January 19, 7:00 p.m.

Master rehabilitator and Director of the Phoenix Wildlife Center, Kathy Woods has considerable training and experience in the rescue, rehabilitation, & release of wild animals. Kathy will share her knowledge & the reality of rescuing wildlife.



"Digital Nature Photography" by Steve McDaniel
February 16, 7:00 p.m.



A freelance photographer since 1975, Stephen McDaniel treasures nature in all its forms, from inspiring scenic vistas to close-ups of an insect's face. In his photography, he attempts to convey emotions as well as information. Steve will share his photos and the techniques for taking them.

Gardening - Nature's Way

Redesigning Dreams

Debby Hyson

When it comes time to write my gardening column, the winter issue is always a challenge. The perennials are doing their big sleep and the annuals, sans seed heads, are buried in the compost pile. And that's about it for what's happening outside. Any gardening that I do for the next three months will all be inside my head for this is the time that I plan and design my "Dream Gardens". It doesn't matter how frivolous, how grandiose, how extravagant, how impractical they are. All I have to do is get comfortable in my recliner with my constant companion sharing the bottom half, my plant catalogs, a pen and notebook, and maybe a cup of something hot, and I'm off to dreamland.



"Cash", my companion -
BARCS rescue 6/12/2015

At least that has always been my pattern. But as I take stock of the past season's gardens, I have to admit that aside from the tomatoes not being up to par, a far more worrying problem has suddenly jarred me awake, and it has to be addressed. Even though my annuals, over 100 of them, started from seed in March, displayed beautifully all summer long, I had just let the weeds get ahead of me. So the first project on my dream list is to downsize my gardens in the spring.

This is a defining moment for me – a moment I imagine a lot of gardeners face when they realize that gardening has become less about fun and more about pain. So I find myself dreaming of a new kind of garden, smaller and raised – easier on my back. A rock garden! With Moss Rose (Portulaca) planted in between. Bigger isn't always better, and now I can't wait for spring to get started.

My companion yawns, stretches out his long legs, and promptly curls up to resume his winter nap. I wonder what he's dreaming about?

Trees in Winter

Judy Floam

One of winter's pleasures is a walk in the woods on a clear, cold, crisp day. To add interest to your walk, you can try and identify trees, which is harder when they have no leaves, no flowers and no fruit. But there are clues in a tree's shape, its bark, its twigs and sometimes in dried leaves or acorns on the ground nearby. Here are some ways to identify a few of the common trees you might find in our part of Maryland. First look at the way the twigs or leaf buds branch on a stem. If they branch directly opposite one another and the tree is large, it is probably a maple or an ash. If you can find dried leaves on the ground around it, maple leaves have a very characteristic shape (think the Canadian flag, which features a sugar maple leaf). A tulip tree has a different shape; it has a tall straight trunk, with branches starting near the top. A small tree with opposite branching stems or leaf buds may be a dogwood.

If the twigs or leaf buds are alternating along a branch, it could be an oak, or a beech, or a tulip tree. If it is an oak, you may find acorns on the ground and maybe some dried leaves. Oak leaves with rounded lobes are typically white oaks; if the lobes are sharply pointed lobes, they are usually black or red oaks. A beech tree is best identified by its bark, which is smooth and gray (people are prone to carve their initials on beech trees, but please don't). Beeches also have an unusual winter feature: "persistent" leaves, dried leaves, light tan in color, which remain on the trees into the winter.

Identifying a tree by its bark can be tricky – the differences between species can be very subtle. But there are a few trees whose bark is a clear clue to its identity. One is the beech. Another is the shagbark hickory, whose shaggy bark looks like it had a bad haircut. The black cherry tree has smooth bark with prominent horizontal lines, called lenticels. The hornbeam has smooth gray twisted bark, sometimes described as "muscular".

These are just a few of the many features that help identify trees in winter. To get further into tree ID, you should get yourself a book. One that I recommend is 'The Tree Identification Book' by George W. D. Symonds. Happy winter walking!



I grew up on the lovely, quiet inlet of Sue Creek, just off of Middle River. During the lazy, carefree days of our summer breaks from school, I could be found hanging out with my neighbor, catching frogs and turtles (and poison ivy!) in marshy bogs deep in the woods, or swimming in the creek until our fingers and toes were pruned. You would think that with all of that nature around me, combined with my love of wildlife, I would have understood at a young age that one should not interfere with Mother Nature.

Fast forward about three decades. My sister and I decided to take an early summer vacation to Ocean City along with my two young children. We were on a 2-lane highway passing by Berlin/Ocean Pines when I saw something in the road. It was a huge snapping turtle, about the size of a hubcap. Yikes. I had learned in my childhood that you should not get close to a large snapping turtle; otherwise, you risked losing body parts. At the same time, if the animal did not get off of that highway, it would probably be crushed. So, I pulled the SUV onto the shoulder and tried to figure out what to do.

The vehicle was loaded down with all the usual summertime gear – suitcases, bags of groceries, beach towels, and of course, beach chairs. This was not exactly a treasure trove of equipment in which to remove an aggressive turtle from a road. Undeterred, I wrestled one of the beach chairs from the back of the vehicle and proceeded to try to “coax” our new friend back to the side of the road from which he came. Well, he was not happy to say the least, hissing and lunging at me with each gentle nudge of the chair. In the meantime, my support group remained safely in the SUV, laughing hysterically.

Several minutes passed, and the turtle and I remained at a standoff. Finally, a man in a pick-up truck pulled over and asked if I needed help. Great! Someone was going to help me save this turtle! I quickly explained that I was trying to get this turtle off of the road. He stared at me for a few seconds, then silently turned, walked back to his truck, and drove away. Hey buddy, I am not crazy...really!

Eventually, the turtle had enough of the beach chair battle, and he finally turned and headed back in the direction from which he had come. I now know that his acceptance of defeat was most likely just a ruse. He probably stuck his prehistoric head out of his shell, confirmed that the coast was clear and then proceeded to turn around and resume his journey across the noisy, busy highway. It did not matter that the risk was high -- his natural instincts were guiding him to get over to the woods on the other side of that road, and nothing short of death was going to stop him.

The moral of this story? I think you figured it out: Do not turn a turtle around when it is trying to cross the road. The reason? Amazing Mother Nature has programmed these wonderful creatures with a mission -- everything from mating, seeking food, claiming territory, nesting, hibernation, and so on.

Turtle populations are in jeopardy, and too often it is because they meet an early demise when crossing roads. This is where you can help. If you see a turtle trying to cross a road, you can certainly help it get to the other side of the road safely by gently and firmly picking it up and taking it to its destination, preferably walking it several feet off the road. If it is a snapping turtle, do not pick it up. Instead, find a blunt object of some sort and gently nudge it in the direction in which it is heading. (Beach chairs work, but you have to get the direction of the turtle correct!) In all cases, always put your own safety first, of course. And resist the temptation to take the turtle with you to live happily ever after in your own back yard or even in the veritable turtle paradise on the grounds of Marshy Point. You may be well-meaning, but the turtle will most likely travel miles trying to find its home territory, and if it does not die in that endeavor, it may simply stop eating and wither away.

I am not sure if we will every truly know why the chicken crossed the road, but at least we know why the turtle did! Let’s help him get there safely.

Purchase the perfect holiday gift for someone special, and help us maintain our animal habitats. For \$40, you can adopt one of our resident animals: Mr. Hootie, our barred owl; Quackie, our mallard duck; or Pocket, our Virginia opossum. For \$25, you can adopt Drumstick, Gravy, or Stuffing, one of our turkeys, or one of our snakes (milk snake, corn snake, black rat snake, or copperhead); or one of our diamondback terrapins, which happen to be Maryland's state reptile.



Each adoptee will receive a personalized package containing a Certificate of Adoption and profile and photograph of the animal. In 2016 Marshy Point will be hosting an Adopters Event exclusively for those families who have generously adopted one of our animals. Please check our website www.marshypoint.org, for an adoption link. Click on "Get Involved" at the top of our home page, and then click on "Adopt an Animal. Orders placed before December 18th will ensure your package arrives before the holidays.

Visiting Poland and Prague

Carol Mason



I recently returned from a trip to Warsaw and Krakow, Poland and Prague in the Czech Republic. Traveling in other countries is such a magnificent learning experience and deepens one's appreciation for home: your bed, your bath, your house, your country.

We walked a lot, much more than we do here. I have a step counter on my phone and we found our busiest day included 17,500 steps. There were many other days that fell between 11,000 and 15,000. While we were walking through castles, palaces, and museums, the average East European walks much more than we do here. They walk to the bus, tram or subway, which often means steps up and down. Mass transit is a mainstay of the life over there. The streets are narrow and clogged with small cars, so

without the cheap, clean, fairly easy-to-use transit systems I don't think anyone would be able to move.

I didn't drink the tap water, as I have a sensitive digestive system, but my friend did. Restaurants don't serve tap water. You have to order still (no bubbles) or mineral water to drink, if you are passing up the wonderful beer for which they are known. The hotels often provide bottles of water in your room, always in glass bottles, which they can recycle for a deposit.

Recycling has become an important issue in Poland only in the last five years. They now have programs which promote the re-use of materials and organized government programs to promote it. The Czech Republic has a longer recycling track record and the nation ranks fifth in all of Europe for its electronic waste recycling efforts last year. This is an area where they outpace America. **Project Clean Prague** (www.cistapraha.cz) has engaged most of Prague's city districts in regularly scheduled and free pick-up services for e-waste (electrical waste), by the non-profit organization known as **Elektrowin**, which states that its purpose is to properly collect and sort e-waste and electronic equipment, and is the first such registered company in the Czech Republic. For regular recycling Prague offers its inhabitants over 3,000 recycling containers (for glass, plastic, paper and beverage containers), 14 collecting yards, and 280 electronic stores that accept electronic waste. Unlike Baltimore County, they are not into single stream recycling. One needs the different colored provided containers for paper, plastic, glass, and beverage containers.

We didn't have an opportunity to travel outside of the cities, but Poland does have several National Parks and one of them, Bialowieza National Park is the last remaining true primordial forest in Europe. Visitors here will see what all of Europe looked like 10,000 years ago. There are still Wisent (European Bison) roaming around, animals first described in literature by Aristotle. There are 3500 of this endangered species remaining.

In Bialowieza the forest deadwood has never been cleared. This contributes to an incredible abundance of plant and animal life. Unfortunately, here like the rest of the world, it is a struggle to keep the forestry industry and other commercial operations from eating away at the forest.

Traveling by train from Warsaw to Krakow I noticed that they have no fences dividing their fields on the farms. No fences between the road and fields and only low rows of plant growth between the fields. Such a practice would encourage animals and birds to nest there. Perhaps this strategy is partly responsible for the fact that Poland is still home to many species which are rare or have become extinct in many West European areas. No matter where you journey there are lessons to learn and to share.

Fun Times at the Fall Fest



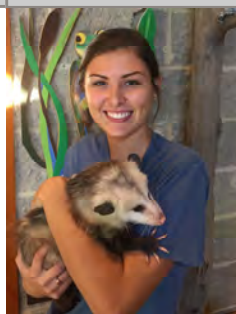
Gunpowder Valley Conservancy Award Marshy Point Volunteers Recognized

Intern Spotlight: Courtney



The annual Gunpowder Valley Conservancy Annual Celebration was held at Marshy Point Nature Center on September 12. Two of our wonderful Marshy Point

volunteers were recognized at this event for their years of service. Joyce Riley and Ruth Tucker were awarded Certificates of Honor by the Marshy Point Nature Center Council and Gunpowder Valley Conservancy in recognition of their exceptional service to the Marshy Point Nature Center Pre-K Drop-in Program. As president of the Nature Center Council, I was honored to be a part of the recognition to two of our unsung heroes. It is volunteers such as these that make the Marshy Point Nature Center a great place to visit. We could not run this program without such dedicated volunteers. Thanks Joyce and Ruth for all you do for Marshy Point. Brent Byers



If you visit Marshy Point on a Tuesday or Thursday this school year you'll likely encounter Naturalist Intern Courtney hustling around the Nature Center, feeding animals, greeting visitors, and taking care of anything else that needs to be done. Interns do a wide variety of jobs around Marshy Point, often to test out or gain experience

working in this kind of job. Courtney enjoys the variety of different kinds of work at Marshy Point, likes getting to know our visitors, and counts Pocket the 'Possum as her favorite member of the center's animal collection. As a senior at Sparrows Point High School, Courtney plans to study Environmental Science next year in college and hopes to eventually work as a field and wildlife biologist. She has already learned a great deal working here at Marshy Point and brings a cheerful disposition, interest, motivation, and strong work ethic to her internship. Coming to work as a Naturalist Intern wasn't Courtney's first visit to Marshy Point, she recalls visiting on school field trips and with her family to the Spring and Fall Festivals. If you are interested in the Naturalist Internship or know someone that is, contact the Nature Center.

Marshy Point Executive Board Members Elected for 2015-16

President - Brent Byers
Vice President - John Coffman
Treasurer - Angelo Bianca
Recording Secretary - Debbie Musgrave
Corresponding Secretary - Sharyn Rhodes
Past President - Werner Dirla

Directors

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Harry Weiskittel | Leeann Whitaker | Dave Oshman |
| Ray Reiner | Jay Whitaker | |
| Mary Byers | Linda Jones | |

Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

Editor: Debby Hyson Managing Editor: Ray Reiner
Layout and Design: Ginny Elliott



**THANK YOU SUPPORTERS OF
MARSHY POINT NATURE CENTER'S
2015 EVENTS**

SPONSORS

**KOHL'S DEPARTMENT STORES
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DAYS COVE RECLAMATION**

Many "Thanks" to Jad's Caddyshack of Back River Neck Road in Essex for sponsoring Marshy Point's Members Fish Fry once again this year. They have been a long-time sponsor for this event. Show your appreciation by visiting Jad's and trying out their great menu!

**DONORS OF MONEY, IN-KIND SERVICES
GIFT CERTIFICATES, AND RAFFLE ITEMS, ETC.**

**AVENUE NEWS
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**MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED
TO OUR SUMMER CAMPS SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN 2015**

**HOLLY NECK CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, INC.
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BOWERMAN LORELEY BEACH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC.
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PERRY HALL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION**

MANY THANKS TO ALL OUR DEVOTED "VOLUNTEERS", WITHOUT WHOM WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ENJOY AND PROFIT FROM OUR SPECIAL EVENTS.

Few things give the Marshy Point naturalist staff more satisfaction than seeing a young child's face light up the first time that they catch a frog in a net, pet Lovey the duck, or hold a wriggling snake in their tiny hands. These first experiences with nature are truly special. And we encourage all parents to give their children the opportunity to explore the wonders of nature early and often.

But, what about the grownups? Don't they deserve the chance to enjoy nature experiences, as well? We think that the answer is a resounding "YES"! In our increasingly fast-paced world, the chance to connect with nature can be a tonic for the pressures and stresses of everyday life.

Here at Marshy Point, we strive to offer programs and recreational opportunities to persons of all ages not just for kids.

So, what's here for the adults?

Need a little exercise? We have miles of blazed trails that wind through the forest and along the shorelines to allow exploration of the Park grounds. We'll be happy to supply you with a trail map.

Own a canoe or a kayak? We provide public water access to launch and paddle the nearby creeks, with their abundant wildlife and stunning scenery.

Just need to decompress? Choose one of the benches on the Nature Center deck, or along one of our trails, and read a good nature book.

The Park grounds are open 365 days a year, from sunrise to sunset for your enjoyment.

Would you prefer a more structured activity? Great! We offer weekly public programs that are appropriate for adults. During the winter months, there are a number of activities designed with adults in mind.

Want to decorate your home for the holidays? You can make your own unique wreaths and natural ornaments at our upcoming wreath making program.

Entertaining this holiday season? Impress your guests with some homemade chocolate confections that you learned to make at the Nature Center.

Do you like real maple syrup on your pancakes and waffles? We can teach you how and when to tap a tree and turn the clear sap into a golden sweet syrup, right in your own kitchen!

Ever wanted to learn to sketch nature? We have a naturalist who can help you hone your artistic skills.

Would you like to photograph nature? A professional photographer will share tips and techniques so that you can memorialize your outdoor observations.

Information on all of these programs, and many more, can be found in our seasonal calendar of events. So, reward yourself with a little "me" time. Reserve your space now for a rewarding experience in nature.

President's Report

As I am writing this the leaves are turning and beginning to drop from the trees. I hope you have had a chance to walk the trails this Fall and see the foliage. The view from the Minnow Branch bridge to the Katie and Wil trail has been spectacular. Programs at the center are in full swing. Our Fall Festival had a large turnout and great weather. Over 1500 people attended the festival. The mini mud-mucker appeared to be a great success except with the lack of rain the course was drier than normal.

In addition to running programs, the staff is busy enhancing and adding exhibits at the center. Soon the terrapins will be in their new home and we will have a separate tank to display Horseshoe Crabs. The Vernal Pond Loop Trail was recently improved with a boardwalk to make it drier. It is now walkable without wading! A new trail is being planned beyond the bluebird trail.

Our new membership year has begun. If you have not renewed your dues, please do so. Your membership dues are an important part of the support for programs and exhibits. Please consider checking the online only box and becoming paperless. Getting your Center information online helps to reduce our printing and postage costs. Do you have a few hours to spare? We are always in the need of volunteers. We have a great group of volunteers to help with festivals, pre-K programs and outdoor programs but we could use more help. Our needs are varied: from supplying refreshments for meetings, helping to manage our gift store, managing our membership and email lists, soliciting donations, helping with publicity, maintaining our library, setting up for special events or many other things. You don't have to be an expert on nature to contribute; just have a few hours a month to spare for Marshy Point. We can use everyone's help with publicity. Tell your friends, neighbors, fellow workers and family members what is happening at Marshy Point and how pleasant it is to walk our trails and visit our exhibits. See you at the Point. Brent Byers



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



Wildlife Corner - Foxes

Anna Stoll

When the leaves are off the trees my husband and I have a better chance of seeing the red foxes that roam through our neighborhood. I have occasionally seen a fox trotting down our street, but usually we see them in the woods behind our house. They are omnivorous, eating a wide variety of foods. When my husband put out some stale peanuts for the birds and squirrels we were surprised to see a fox gobbling them up. Foxes will also eat fruit, seeds, insects and small animals such as mice and rabbits. We have a number of feral cats in our neighborhood, but the foxes seem to leave them alone. I was amused one day to see a staring match between a cat sitting on the fence and a fox sitting on the ground below. I was surprised that the cat was the first to turn away.

Although red foxes are common in many areas of the U.S. they are not native to this country, but instead they were brought here from England in the mid-1800s by people who enjoyed fox hunting. Although considered as pests by some farmers who raise chickens, generally foxes are not dangerous to people. They are cautious animals that will disappear quickly when approached by a human. A fox will only kill animals smaller than itself, which means it might go after a very small dog. It's unlikely a fox will go after a full-grown cat armed with a full set of claws. If you've seen foxes in your neighborhood it would be a good idea to not leave out dog food or to allow your small dog out during dawn or dusk when foxes are most active.

I find it exciting and interesting to have the opportunity to observe foxes. They are beautiful, graceful animals, and if you have any in your neighborhood I hope you enjoy them as well.