Cattails

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The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter
September - October - November 2016

Fall Festival 2016

Enjoy the first official fall weekend with Marshy Point Nature Center at our 9th Annual Fall Festival! Activities include, kids mini Marsh Mucking mud run, apple cider pressing, animal shows, hikes, face painting & crafts. There will be demonstrations about early American & Native American life, Chesapeake Bay Retriever & Chesapeake Search Dogs demos. Guided canoe trips are offered (weather & tide permitting). Admission & parking are FREE! Join us at Marshy Point on Saturday, September 24, 10am to 4pm for a great day at Fall Fest!

6th Annual Turtle Trek

This year's 5-K walk/run will be held on Saturday, November 12th and will include a "Family Route" for those who would prefer a shorter route. Held on the Katie & Wil's Trail, the run will benefit Marshy Point Nature Center Council. Proceeds will help care for the animal collection, support the many programs and special events offered at Marshy Point.

Katie & Wil's Trail, is a lasting legacy to the memory of a mother and a son. Thank you to Katie & Wil Brady Foundation for raising private donations to complete this trail for visitors to enjoy enhanced access to this scenic waterfront park. Get details at www.eliteracemanagement.com

Free Speaker Series - All are Welcome!

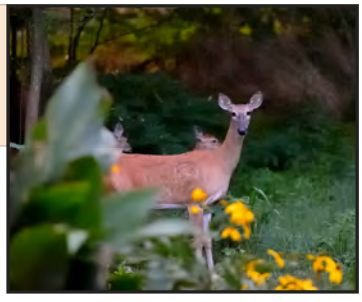
"Chesapeake Search Dogs"
September 20, 7 p.m.

Chesapeake Search Dogs. Learn about the important and potentially lifesaving work of these talented canines and their volunteer handlers. Search demonstration included.

"Marshy Point Ospreys"
By Dave Oshman
October 18, 7 p.m.

Marshy Point Ospreys. Marshy Point's Chief Osprey Officer, Dave Oshman will showcase the Osprey Cam project and share video highlights from the 2016 nesting season.

"Deer Management in Maryland"
By Brian Eyler
November 15, 7 p.m.



The talk will discuss the biology and management of white-tailed deer in Maryland, with an emphasis on how the Department of Natural Resources approaches the management of this often controversial species, and the hurdles that stand in the way of effective future management. Brian Eyler is the Deer Project Leader for the Department of Natural Resources.

Gardening – Nature's Way

The 'Rock' Garden

Deb Hyson

No longer able to bend or kneel for any length of time, I decided to make it easy on myself this year and making use of a raised bed in front of the main entrance to the house, I built a 'rock' garden. Why the single quotes? Because I didn't use regular rocks. My daughter, Denise, has the uncanny ability of looking at a rock's shape and then painting an animal, bird, flower, fairy, or a combination that would best fit that shape. They are so realistic you forget they are rocks: the fur on an animal, be it rabbit or squirrel makes a hard rock look soft.

For several years now, on my birthday, Mother's Day, Christmas, and Easter, I have been the grateful recipient of another painted rock. Having limited surfaces inside the house, it was the perfect solution, combining my love of gardening and Denise's art work. She assured me that the final spray of sealant would protect the paint and recommended that I periodically give them another coating. I chose the short, colorful Zinna angustafolia 'Profusion' and Portulaca for my plants and have tucked fairies, rabbits, and squirrels in amongst the plants; the great-grandchildren have fun pointing them out when they visit. The garden makes a delightful surprise to the entrance of our home and, best of all, its practically maintenance-free!

On another note, last year's MPNC Fall Festival showcased Pam Spencer's project of how to help the Monarch butterfly travel safely from one point to another by creating a Way-Station. Captivated, I decided then and there I wanted to try this project myself! Fast forward to this year, I now have three kinds of healthy milkweed plants growing for the eggs and caterpillars and have Zinna, Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Goldenrod, New England Aster, Joe Pye Weed, and other flowering plants for the adult butterfly's source of nectar, I went to Ikea and bought a mesh cage, and there's a water supply nearby, so I'm all set! And waiting, and waiting, where are the Monarchs? As of this writing (July 17) I haven't seen a single one, and in the past years they have always been here by now. I'm worried.

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH: THE STORY OF ONE OSPREY FAMILY

Valerie Greenhalgh

It was a quiet, late evening on the Middle River this past July when Denise and Dave Bitner heard a loud sound. Rushing outside, they immediately found the source -- a large powerboat had just slammed into Piney Point marker no. 7. The Bitners and their neighbors shouted offers of assistance from the shore, but the captain quickly managed to break the vessel free from the steel pole that had crushed a large portion of the starboard side of the boat. Just a moment later, the engine gunned, and they sped off into the night. The chaos of the prior moments vanished into the warm night air, and all seemed peaceful again. But it wasn't. The marker had supported an osprey nest, and now the skillfully crafted nest was nothing more than sticks floating in the river…along with three fledgling osprey. Nearby, the parents watched helplessly as their young struggled to stay afloat.

Neighbors woke the next morning to the shrill sounds of the parents calling for their babies. It was a sound they would hear for many hours. Amazingly, two of the fledglings were found on the shore alive and transported by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to Kathy Woods at the Phoenix Wildlife Center for evaluation and care. The third baby was also found, but, sadly, had drowned.

But this story truly has a happy ending. Less than 72 hours from the time of the accident, a group of volunteers, under the guidance of Kathy Woods, built a beautiful new osprey nest with materials donated from Home Depot. The structure was then attached to a pier piling at the home of George and Margaret Schneider, within approximately 150' from the original nest, and the babies were carefully renested. Several concerned residents watched and waited for any sign of the parents. Then came the wonderful news – the parents had returned.

With the osprey nesting season winding down, we expected to remove the manmade nest soon and store it for use again next year. But there was just one small problem -- within a week or so of the successful renesting of the two fledglings, another orphaned young osprey was found and taken to the Phoenix Wildlife Center. Maybe, just maybe, the osprey parents who lost one of their babies in the boating accident would adopt this baby? Well, it worked! The osprey family is back to being a family of five once again. *Please "like" The Phoenix Wildlife Center on Facebook or visit www.phoenixwildlife.org.*

Taking A Low Road

Cara Urban

Culvert on Eastern Avenue

With so many pressing habitat restoration projects to address, the role of the humble culvert in the maintenance of our native species is easy to overlook. Modest and ubiquitous, culverts are defined by the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) as roadway structures under 20 feet in length which act as road drainage systems or small bridges.

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science has teamed up with the MSHA to publish a 2011 report on how Maryland wildlife uses culverts. They found that culverts serve a very important function completely unrelated to storm water management – a low road. Some of the most common mammal species observed crossing include old friends like the raccoon and opossum. Dozens of bird species, salamanders, frogs, red foxes, squirrels and chipmunks, beavers, woodchucks, and white-tailed deer use culverts as well – traveling under the road instead of under your tires!

The Inter County Connector has retrofitted over 44 bridges and culverts for improved access by wildlife, creating spaces for aquatic species, deer, amphibians and reptiles like box turtles, and small mammals to cross. In some cases specially designed fencing has been added to the areas around known wildlife crossings to prevent deer from being startled onto the roads when they come to cross the culvert. These adaptations will help direct wildlife into the low road keeping both man and beast a lot safer.

The pictured culvert is located only a mile down the road from Marshy Point on Eastern Avenue, one of many drainage points near the Bird River. It's likely that you've driven over several on your way to visit the Nature Center!

How to Grow Oysters

Judy Floam

What happened to the oysters? At their peak in the 1880's, about 120 million pounds of oysters were harvested from Chesapeake Bay every year. But oyster populations and harvests have dropped to about 1% of those peak years. There are many reasons, including overharvesting, diseases and water pollution. But that's a story for another day. For now, we're looking at how oysters grow.

What, then, is the American oyster, aka Eastern oyster, aka *Crassostrea virginica*? They are bivalves, like clams, with two shells. But unlike clams, they do not burrow. After floating around during a larval stage, a young oyster, or spat, attaches to something hard: a rock, or another oyster shell and stays put for life, growing its own shell. As new oysters are added, they create large, permanent colonies called oyster bars or reefs. Oyster bars are located where the conditions are right: salinity level (10 to 28 parts of salt per thousand), a bottom (substrate) firm enough so the oysters won't sink into it, enough current to bring in a constant flow of nutrients and water deep enough that they won't freeze in the winter. Many of the Bay's oyster bars are found along the shore of the Bay and the banks of its tidal rivers.

Oysters are important to the Bay's ecosystem. They are "filter feeders", cleaning the water by filtering it through their bodies to absorb nutrients. It is estimated that when oyster populations were at their peak, they filtered the entire volume of the water in the Bay every seven days. Oyster bars are also habitat for many other Bay creatures: young fish and crabs that hide among the shells from predators and many kinds of invertebrates that attach to the shells.

For all these reasons, Maryland is trying to help restore the Bay's oyster population. One effort is by creating oyster sanctuaries – oyster bars that are off-limits to harvesting. And that is where *Marylanders Grow Oysters* comes in. The sanctuaries are stocked with young oysters spawned in University of Maryland laboratories and raised in cages for a year by participants in the *Marylanders Grow Oysters* program.

If you live along the bay shore or one of its tidal rivers where the salinity can support oysters (generally, south of the Patapsco), you can babysit several cages of baby oysters on shells for a growing season (September to June). When you get the cages, you just lower them into the water off your pier. During the year, you check to make sure the cages are always underwater, and pull them up occasionally to clean them. Being in the cage minimizes losses to predators during this early growth period. At the end of the growing season, you give the now-larger oysters back to be 'planted' in a sanctuary. And the next season, you start over again with more baby oysters.

Where are all the Bees?

Ben Porter

There are around 400 bee species in Maryland but the most recognizable is undoubtedly the European Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*). As their name suggests, honey bees are not native to the Americas but come from Europe, Asia, and Africa. The first documented arrival of honey bees to North America was in 1622 when English colonists brought them to Virginia. The colonists at Plymouth were accompanied by their hives a few years later as well. Most likely though, it was Spanish settlers to the Caribbean and Central America that brought and introduced honey bees in the 1500s. Some accounts describe honey bees being called "white man's flies" as colonists brought bees most everywhere they went and wild hives became established.

All bees are insects of the order Hymenoptera and related to wasps and ants. They can be further classified by their lifestyle into social, solitary, and parasitic bees. Unlike wasps and ants, bees are vegetarians: social and solitary bees forage for nectar and pollen while parasitic bees take over the nests of other bees. All of these different types of bees play a crucial role in the ecosystem and in the pollination of plants. Indeed, fully 1/3 of the food crops we eat depend on bees for pollination.

Today, however, bees and other pollinators of many different kinds are in trouble. Just how much bee populations have declined is difficult to know as the numbers vary depending on the source and there is no reliable way to track wild bee populations. Most beekeepers in Maryland lost between half and three quarters of their hives last year. This monumental decline can be attributed to several different factors but most detrimental is pesticide use in both agriculture and residentially. A new class of especially toxic chemicals called neonicotinoids render an entire plant toxic and poisonous to bees and other insects when they land to collect nectar and pollen. Although the European Union has taken steps to ban these chemicals, they are widely available in the US.

Knowing the source of the problem will hopefully allow people to solve it by eliminating these chemicals and recognizing bees as the amazing and important insects that they are. Please visit the nature center to watch the busy bees of our observation hive in action.

Summer Report from the Senior Naturalist

Leo Rebetsky

Yes, he's back! "Marsh Man" is back. Never heard of "Marsh Man"? Just ask any of the 180 children registered in Marshy Point's summer nature camps. They can tell you that "Marsh Man" inhabits Marshy Point Park, and is the steward of all the plants and animals that are found here. "Marsh Man" (aka John Lehman, camp director) is a fictional character developed by our camp staff to teach environmental stewardship values to our campers. He advocates for, and helps protect, the natural beauty of the Park for current and future generations.

While having fun exploring the diverse habitats of Marshy Point is the primary emphasis of our camp curriculum, imparting a sense of wonder for, and appreciation of the natural world, and developing a sense of stewardship towards it, is a natural byproduct of the summer camp experience. By the end of the camp week, it is our hope that the camp participants will come away with a better understanding of the nature all around them, as well as how they, too, are an integral part of the environment.

In addition to our summer camps, we offered many other summer programs, activities, and volunteer opportunities to promote appreciation of Marshy Point's unique ecosystems. Staff led field trips for numerous county summer playgrounds and activity centers brought hundreds of children to the Park to explore the forests, meadows, ponds, wetlands, and creeks, in search of the critters found there. New exhibits, such as the horseshoe crab tank and osprey cam brought our visitors up close and personal to animals rarely seen in the wild. And volunteer projects, including signage for, and blazing of, the bluebird trail, construction of a roof over our dugout canoe, and extension of a raised walkway on the greenway trail, enhanced our Park hiker's experience while exploring Marshy Point Park.

All in all, it's been a busy, but productive, summer, and we thank all of our staff and volunteers for their roles in providing nature exploration opportunities to all of the residents of Baltimore County.

Presidents Report

Brent Byers

August marks the end of our membership year at Marshy Point. Membership renewals are due in September. Thus, this is a good time to reflect back on the accomplishments of the Council and Center over the past year, and what a year it has been!

One may think that since Marshy Point Nature Center is a Baltimore County facility, your taxes would suffice as far as financial support is concerned. Unfortunately, this is not the case. While the county provides the facilities and staff, we (Marshy Point council members) provide much of the funding for programs, project / exhibit/ development, exhibit support, and animal care cost. This past year in addition to maintaining and supporting our on-going programs and exhibits, we have been able to add many new enhancements. We bought another storage container to make room for a woodworking exhibit shop and purchased equipment to outfit the shop. This spring we added an Osprey cam system so you could watch our nesting pair and their chick's development and successful fledging. Other new exhibits include the terrapin tank, bird identification panels mounted on the back deck, improvements to the interactive Chesapeake map, the Horseshoe Crab tank, and the start of the Raptor corner where the Osprey cam monitor is displayed. The council board recently approved the construction of another raptor cage near the opossum palace for a new falcon (Kestrel) exhibit. None of the above would have been possible without your continued support and generous donations.

I am very excited about the Center's direction. We have had record breaking attendance at our festivals. Programs are well attended. All summer Camps were waitlisted. Our membership is now over 200 members and visits to the Center continue to increase. Feedback from our visitors is very positive.

To continue the positive direction of Marshy Point we need your membership support. Being a member shows your investment in and support of Marshy Point. In addition, having a viable membership base enhances the Nature Center council's standing with the County Government.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MARSHY POINT MEMBERSHIP NOW. See you at the Point! Brent Byers

Trail Guide Training 2016

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 7th, 8th & 9th.**
- Breakfast, snacks and coffee provided.
- New guides pay a tuition fee of $5 covers all material handouts.
- Call 410-887-2817 to register.

Congratulations to Scholarship Recipients

Sarah Kulis, a graduate of The Catholic High School of Baltimore, and Myra Neely, a graduate of Maryvale Preparatory School received the first two scholarships offered by the Marshy Point Nature Center Council. Sarah will enter the Fish and Wildlife major at West Virginia University, while Myra will be attending at State University of New York Maritime College where she will major in Marine and Environmental Science. They are both Honors graduates. Both girls accrued over 1,000 hours of volunteer time while attending high school. Further, both girls were involved as Marsh Rangers at our Center. They received numerous awards and honors from their schools. It was a pleasure to award each girl $500 to aid in college expenses. It is the intention of the Council to build the scholarship fund to continue to award future, & even larger, amounts. Any tax-free contributions to the scholarship are greatly appreciated.

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!

And please continue to visit us and enjoy our programs!

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Wildlife Corner - Little Brown Bats

Anna Stoll

How often have we heard that we should avoid being near bats because a) they'll get tangled in our hair or b) bite us and give us rabies? Are these stories true or false? The first is false. Experiments were done by a scientist who tried placing bats on peoples' head. He even tried wrapping hair around the bat, but in every case as soon as the bat was released it immediately flew away. Secondly, although it's true that bats can carry rabies less than a half of a percent of them do. You're more likely to get rabies from an unvaccinated cat or dog than from a bat.

The bats in our area are little brown bats, and they are the most common type of bat in this country. Their name suits them well: their body averages about 3" in length and they weigh about ½ ounce, and their bodies are covered with dark brown fur. Each bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitoes in one hour, and they also eat a variety of other insects. They are nocturnal animals that leave their roosts at dusk and return at daybreak. If you've ever seen them swooping erratically through the early evening sky, you've witnessed their use of echo-location. This means that the bat gives out a call and listens for the echo bouncing off of an insect or an object. In this way they locate food and also avoid flying into trees or buildings.

With their diet of insects bats are helpful to humans, but unfortunately their numbers have been dropping due to a disease called white-nose syndrome. The condition is a fungus found on the faces and wings of the bats, and it leads to their death. The disease is thought to have been accidently brought to this country from Europe. Little brown bats, which were once abundant in our area, are now rarely seen. The disease has no cure at this time, and so far the only thing that can be done to help is to not allow people into caves and old mines known as roosting places for bats so that the fragile bats will not be disturbed.

I haven't seen any little brown bats in several years, and it makes me sad to think I might not see them again in my lifetime.