



Cattails

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



The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter December 2017 - January - February 2018

Join us for a Holiday Celebration Tuesday, December 19, 7:00 pm

This family friendly event features activities for everyone, including Christmas wreath making with freshly cut greens, decorating trees with popcorn, cranberries, and seed to feed the birds, carols with the staff, and the ever popular pod and cone weird animal ornaments. Please bring a dessert or appetizer to share. Light refreshments will be available. There is no speaker for this meeting, unless you count the guy with a beard in the red suit.



Winter Speaker Series

“The Role of Connection to Nature on Psychological Well-Being and Spirituality”
by Dr. Heidi Schreiber-Pan

January 16, 7:00 p.m.



Dr. Schreiber-Pan is a psycho-therapist in private practice and an affiliate faculty member at Loyola University. She received her PhD in Counseling Psychology, with a specialty in Spiritual Integration. Dr. Schreiber-Pan will discuss how nature impacts human resilience and over-all mental health, and the role of spirituality in this relationship.



“The Amazing Horseshoe Crab”
by Stacy Epperson

February 20, 7:00 p.m.

“The Amazing Horseshoe Crab” by Stacy Epperson. DNR Education specialist Stacy Epperson will discuss the adaptations of these ancient animals and their importance in the environment.

Chesapeake Discovery Nature Play Space



Work on the Chesapeake Discovery Nature Play Space continues. Thanks to the volunteers from Middle River Aircraft Systems for installing the fence and gate around the perimeter. More exciting and interactive features are coming soon but there is plenty to do already.

Gardening - Nature's Way

Garlic

Ben Porter



No matter how cold a winter day, a walk past my garlic bed turns my thoughts to spring. In our area, garlic is planted in the fall and then harvested in late spring or early summer. Although garlic doesn't actively grow through the cold of winter, overwintering is required for the plant to produce bulbs in the spring. The young stems that peek out from beneath their thick layer of insulating straw are a welcome bit of green in the winter landscape. I plant my garlic in late October, allowing it several weeks to grow before winter weather really sets in. Covering the young garlic with a thick layer of straw or other mulch prevents the plants from freezing completely during the winter. When the weather warms in spring the garlic will begin to grow again and is ready to harvest in early summer. While the bulb is the most recognizable part of the plant, garlic scapes (the flower buds that should be removed to encourage bulb growth) are another tasty garlic treat.

Garlic is a member of the onion family has been grown by people for thousands of years. It is native to central Asia and was even used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Chinese. In addition to its culinary value as a flavoring and food garlic has many applications in traditional and folk medicine. Some evidence suggests cardiovascular benefits and anti-cancer properties but these claims are the subject of some debate.

While there may be some debate about the medicinal properties of garlic, I know that it is a delicious, off-season plant that is easy and fun to grow and harvest. This favorite in my garden is certainly worth a spot in yours.

Maryland Wildlife – Hibernation, Torpor and Brumation

Valerie Greenhalgh

When we hear the word "hibernation" most of us think of bears. But bears are not true hibernators. Instead, they enter a light, semi-hibernation state called torpor. Several species of animals experience this lighter state of hibernation, including chipmunks, raccoons and skunks. Their breathing and heart rate slow and they are quite sluggish, but they move around a bit and will sometimes venture out for a snack. If an animal in a state of torpor hears a loud sound or is touched, it will awaken quickly. So, if you stumble upon a bear in a den and you think it's safe to get close, think again. Female bears will even give birth and nurse their young while in torpor.



A hibernating animal also has slowed heart rate and breathing, with a lower body temperature and metabolic rate. But with hibernation, the degree to which the animal's essential body systems slow down is more drastic. In Maryland, our true hibernators are very few and include the big brown bat and the groundhog. The body temperature of a big brown bat during hibernation may drop from a norm of 100 degrees Fahrenheit to 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and the heartrate of a groundhog can drop almost 90%! And unlike animals in torpor, a hibernating animal will not awaken to loud sounds or touch.

Snakes, lizards and frogs also become dormant during chilly months, entering a state called "brumation" -- similar to torpor in mammals. Studies have shown that reptiles respond to natural cues to brumate, including changes in humidity, length of day, and their hormones. It is widely believed that pet reptiles that live indoors show signs of brumation even though their environment is climate controlled.

Nature provided many animals with the ability to become dormant during periods of cold temperatures and scarce food. The bonus is that they also avoid predators, such as owls. Well, at least until the spring, that is.

Ravens

Carol Mason



Looking across the field I see massive figures, black with purple highlights. They are tricky, solve complicated problems, and use hand gestures. While that description is true of our Baltimore Ravens football players, it also describes the awesome birds from which the football team took its name.

Ravens are not found in central or eastern Maryland. They like the pine forests of Garrett, Allegheny, Washington and Frederick counties. They are considered the largest of all songbirds. The Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology states that they are "not just large but massive, with a thick neck, shaggy throat feathers, and a Bowie knife of a beak." These intriguing characters will eat anything, which is one reason they are so adaptable. They have a long lifespan, 17 years in the wild and up to 40 years in captivity. Adult ravens are not very social, usually associating with their lifelong mate unless they are joining a feeding frenzy at a landfill etc. However, juveniles will associate in gangs until they find a mate.

Once a raven finds food, it will often hide part of it under a rock or other likely spot. Often, trying to keep their cache secret from their peers, they will pretend to hide it in one spot, while really putting it someplace else. These avian marvels are considered as smart as dolphins and chimpanzees. They can mimic human speech and solve increasingly more difficult problems when studied in scientific laboratories. Their creativity enters into their playful activities. You can watch them use snowy slopes as well as any skiers and hear them talk at the website: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/53295/10-fascinating-facts-about-ravens>.

One of the most peculiar raven behaviors is called "anting." This is an activity common to many species of songbirds. They will lie on an anthill and roll around, so the ants swarm on them. They may also chew up a mouthful of ants and spit the result on their feathers, massaging it into the skin. There is no consensus about why this activity occurs. Possible explanations are that it repels enemies, relieves irritation from molting, or kills lice and feather mites.

The raven has a long association with mankind and has often been considered an evil omen, or a sign of the wicked souls of the damned. In other cultures, the black bird is part of the mythology. The American Indians considered the raven one of the gods associated with creation and called it a trickster. The Greeks, Tibetans and Vikings considered ravens to be messengers of the gods. In more contemporary times the raven has many roles in fantasy literature, including in the Game of Thrones. At least for Baltimoreans, there is no more important literary description of The Raven, than Edgar Allen Poe's haunting poem, which ends with "Quoth the raven, nevermore."

Winter Months

Marissa Carl

The winter months are my favorite time of year. The holiday season is a fun time to do things together as a family. Since we have kids, making this time of the year memorable is very important. Living so close to Marshy Point Nature Center is a big help in finding things to do together and making memories! The nature center always offers fun and interesting things to help us fill in between holidays in the winter! You can always find all Marshy Point's events at: <http://www.marshypoint.org/programs/event-calendar/>.

When the holidays come around, we also like to have special dinners with a lot of food. My grandparents like to get everyone together for a Thanksgiving feast. The day after Thanksgiving, we hang our stockings and decorate our Christmas tree. There's a long wait between Thanksgiving and Christmas! The weekend after Thanksgiving, we may visit Marshy Point for the Holiday Candy Making program, and Frontier Fire program, to help get in the swing of the season!

On Christmas Eve, my grandparents invite everyone over for a holiday dinner and for us to exchange gifts. Christmas morning arrives, and the kids open presents and we eat cinnamon buns for breakfast! My kids love to play in the snow and drink hot chocolate when it's cold out as well. The great outdoors is never more fun than during the holidays. We love watching holiday movies and baking cookies together. I try to make sure our little family is in the holiday spirit!

Winter is a busy time, but we always make sure to squeeze in trips to Marshy Point! Whether it's making a craft inside with the kids, or going for a walk through the trails as the snow falls, Marshy never disappoints in the winter months. The nature center always has something new to do or learn!



The Yule Log

Anna Stoll

At Christmas, we often envision a log burning in a fireplace with Christmas stockings hanging from the mantel. That cozy scene is a pale imitation of a fire with a traditional yule log. Also known as a yule block or clog, a yule log was part of a tree trunk.



As with many ancient European traditions, the yule log began as a pagan custom to celebrate the winter solstice. The tradition of the yule log became connected to Christmas during the 12th century. Although celebrated as part of a Christian holiday that included prayers and hymns, the yule log remained surrounded by many superstitions. The log had to be lit by someone with clean hands. When lit, it was considered bad luck if it didn't immediately catch fire or if the fire went out quickly. The log was thought to offer protection from evils spirits and witches. It was expected to burn continuously for at least 12 hours or, if possible, for the 12 days of Christmas. The custom was to keep a small piece of the log to start the next year's fire, and in some areas people kept the ashes to protect their home and their health during the year.

The yule log was celebrated in many northern European countries, and each country had its own customs. In England an oak tree was preferred in much of the country, but in Devon and Somerset the people burned a large pile of ash twigs instead of a log. That variation came from a local legend that on Christmas the shepherds burned piles of twigs to warm the holy family. The French preferred a cherry tree, and they sprinkled it with wine so it would smell better when lit. The French also cut the log into smaller pieces and burned one piece each night for the 12 Days of Christmas. People in Scotland preferred a birch tree.

Today, yule logs have passed from Christmas celebrations. How many of us have fireplaces large enough to burn a large piece of a tree trunk? Yule log cakes, however, are still available in bakeries during the Christmas season, and there are also many recipes available to make them at home. They are often called by their French name, *buche de Noel*.

We, Tree Kings

Cara Urban



Everything has to start somewhere, and our family Christmas trees and Yule logs are the same. Have you ever wondered what the life of a tree is like in winter? Think about it for a moment: our own bodies are 60% water, and we keep them from freezing in temperatures below 32 degrees with our toasty winter coats for insulation and our fabulous holiday meals. Trees are around 50% water, but they don't have any of these things. They'll die if the water in their cells freezes, but most trees survive year after year. How?

Trees survive the season because they know chemistry. As the temperatures drop, the membranes of each individual tree cell become more pliable, allowing water to leave the cell. The water that's left the cell might freeze and expand inside each tree trunk, but the cells themselves are safer and can bend away from the pressure of the ice. Next, the trees signal their cells to convert the starch they keep inside themselves to store energy, to sugar instead. Because most of the sugar produced is sucrose, the cell has something in common with the coffee you put sugar in this morning!

As more sugar fills each cell, and more water leaves it, the sugars become super-concentrated. The concentration is so intense that the fluid's chemical structure can't change into ice around the many sugar molecules, and it simply enters a thickened, nearly-solid state that does not kill the cell. It is almost as if the inside of each cell becomes a sugary pudding, waiting for spring to be released.

After a winter of this incredible feat of science, the tree brings the thawed water back inside each cell, and pushes the sugars out into the sap again. As we troop back to the gym to grow our muscles fresh for the new swimsuit season, the sugary sap travels to grow more trees or needles for trees in the spring. This is part of why maple syrup is made in the spring... but that's another story!

President's Report

Brent Byers

I hope you have had a chance to walk the trails this fall. Once again, the view from the Minnow Branch Bridge to Katie and Wil's Trail has been spectacular. A revised map and new signage have been installed to make your visit more pleasurable. Programs at the Center are in full swing. Our Fall Festival had a large turnout and great weather.

I also hope you have been to the Nature Center and seen our many accomplishments this year. We added a children's natural play area in the circle. Two exhibits, a skipjack replica and an Eagle's nest, were added through Eagle Scout projects. The C-hawk boat was placed back into service. New or improved exhibits were added indoors. Thanks to another Eagle Scout project, a new, larger duck cage was installed in the lobby. The new raptor cage was completed and an American kestrel now resides in her new home. New security cameras were purchased and installed. As mentioned, new interpretative signs and maps were installed around the park. We are pleased that program participation and visitation continue to increase.

September marked the start of the Nature Council's new business year. This means membership payments were due, a new board was elected, and the yearly budget was approved. I want to encourage everyone to please renew your membership. Your membership is vital to maintaining a healthy council. Membership entitles you to receive the newsletter and calendar, discounts for programs, early priority for camp registration and discounts for summer camp. Renew now to ensure you will be on the members listing for camp and other program information, as our membership list will be refreshed in early 2018.

The board held a retreat in October to talk about future goals and projects that we would like to see at the Center. Some items on our list this year include a pavilion, new exhibits in the natural play area, another raptor cage, additional security coverage, a compact washer/dryer for laundering animal care towels, and a new printer and computer for council use.

I hope you are able to see the expansion of the center's activities. If you have any recommendations, please let us know either through our Facebook page or by contacting me at president@marshypoint.org. Hope to see you at the Point! - Brent Byers

Summer Camp 2018!

For early registration, renew your family membership today!
www.marshypoint.org/get-involved/become-member/

Marshy Point Executive Board Members Elected for 2017-18

President - Brent Byers
Vice President - Dave Oshman
Treasurer - Angelo Bianca
Recording Secretary - Debbie Musgrave

Directors

Mary Byers Linda Jones
Leeann Whitaker John Coffman
Jay Whitaker Chris Davis

Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

Editor: Cara Urban

Layout and Design: Ginny Elliott

Adopt an Animal

Dave Oshman

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. Hooty, our barred owl; Quacky or Frankie, our mallard ducks. For \$25, you can adopt one of our snakes or one of our diamond-back 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. Please check our website www.marshypoint.org, for an adoption link. Go to "Get Involved" at the top of our home page for the link.



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Have you heard about Amazon Smile? When purchasing your next item from Amazon, sign-in to Amazon Smile, and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the eligible purchase price to your favorite charity, of course it's Marshy Point! Marshy Point's direct link is: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-2279092>.

Winter brings rafts of ducks and geese to Dundee Creek and a time of relative calm and quiet to Marshy Point Nature Center. After a busy fall, winter represents a time to work on new exhibits, develop new programs, and prepare for the busy seasons ahead. But that doesn't mean we've gone into hibernation.

This spring will start a new program here at Marshy Point: The Chesapeake Adventurers Pre-K. Marshy Point and other environmental organizations have an ever more important role in facilitating early and meaningful outdoor experiences that give children a foundational connection to the natural world. I can recall the many hours I spent exploring the shallows of Hawk Cove at Rocky Point and the woods of Northern Baltimore County near Prettyboy. These were experiences that I remember as important in my own childhood development but seem increasingly rare for children today.

Chesapeake Adventurers Pre-K is based on the idea that the "great classroom without walls" is one of the best places to learn and develop. Each day, children ages 3 and 4 will set out with two Marshy Point Adventure Guides to experience nature in all her moods and seasons from March through June. By learning with each other and from the natural world the Adventurers will gain an essential childhood experience while developing respect for the natural world, and each other.

This and the many other programs at Marshy Point provide opportunities for all our visitors no matter their ages, interests, or levels of experience in the outdoors. From pre-k to summer camp to weekend family programs to Sunday birdwalks or maple sugar time, I hope to see you at one of Marshy Point's upcoming programs.

NEW* CHESAPEAKE ADVENTURERS PRE-K

**Registration Opens January 3rd
Spring Semester, March 5th - June 1st
(M/ W/ F) 9:30am - 1:30pm (12 Weeks)**

This is a drop-off program. Ages: 3 & 4
(Must turn 3 by January 1, 2018 and be potty proficient.)
Call the center, Monday through Friday to register.



Fall Festival Fun!



Support Marshy Point & Give a Great Holiday Gift!



**THANK YOU SUPPORTERS OF
MARSHY POINT NATURE CENTER'S 2017 EVENTS**

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DAYS COVE RECLAMATION**



Thanks to Middle River Aircraft Systems for their many outstanding service projects!

**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 IN-KIND SERVICES
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TO OUR SUMMER CAMPS SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN 2017**

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NEW OUTLOOK PIONEERS, LORETTA BARRY**

We are currently accepting donations for our newly implemented college scholarship fund, to benefit our teenage volunteers heading to college. Donations can be made at www.marshypoint.org/donations.

**2018 Trail Guide Training
Coming this March!**

Marshy Point Nature Center and Cromwell Valley Park are looking for volunteers to help teach about nature! Trail guides work with group programs, special events, and animal care. Training will familiarize you with our most popular programs, and the special ecosystems of Baltimore County. March 14, 15, 16, 10am until 1pm.





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



Wildlife Corner - Coyotes

Ben Porter

More often than not when we consider human impacts on the environment it is to look at what we've lost. However, in some cases human actions have had the opposite effect and increased the populations of certain animals. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is the coyote.

At the time of European colonization coyotes were found in their natural historical range: the western US. As human populations grew and people actively hunted wolves off the landscape we created an empty space at the top of the food chain. In the absence of the top predator and in a new anthropogenic (human created and controlled) landscape deer populations soared, and raccoons, fox, and opossums adapted to new habitats. Large predators such as wolves were eliminated entirely, bears were pushed to the least populated areas, and elk are now animals of Maryland's past.



All these changes have created opportunity for the adaptable coyote. Especially since wolves have been removed from all but the most remote parts of North America coyote populations have been expanding. Indeed, coyotes are now found through the entire continental United States and much of Canada. As coyotes moved east they interbred with a few remnant populations of wolves and some domestic dogs. Indeed the coyote's Latin name *Canis latrans* means "barking dog" a reference to their many vocalizations.

Due to their wolf and dog DNA coyotes in Maryland are a bit larger than their western cousins but still weigh under 50 pounds. These predators are very adaptable and opportunistic and although they most commonly prey on rodents and other small mammals they have been known to kill livestock, feral cats, and small dogs. Coyotes have very rarely attacked young children but the small size of coyotes compared to people place us mostly out of danger. Although the presence of coyotes in Maryland is due to human actions, having a large predator at the top of the food chain is a part of nature's balance.