



# Cattails

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



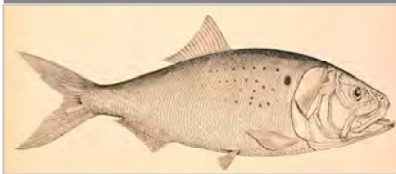
## The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter March - April - May 2018



## Spring Festival

April 21  
10 am - 4 pm

### Speaker Series

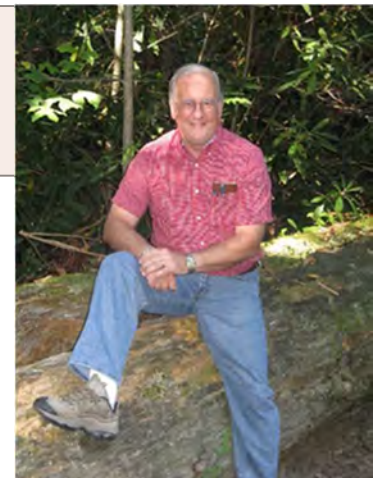


**“The Most Important Fish in the Sea”**  
by Loren Lustig  
March 20, 7:00 p.m.

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, especially when combined with oyster restoration, to significantly improve the water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. Mr. Lustig who serves as a Commissioner on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, will give program participants an "inside view" of the critical decisions that are currently being made that have the potential to encourage recovery of this essential species.

**“Mysteries and Magic of Clams”**  
by Anthony Fredericks  
April 17, 7:00 p.m.

Come join award-winning science author Anthony D. Fredericks for an evening filled with humor, current research, fascinating individuals (scientists and laypeople alike), and the awe of a fellow explorer on a journey of wonder and adventure. Along with an appreciation for oceanic creatures, this is a presentation for armchair marine biologists everywhere who seek amazing discoveries in concert with compelling information.



**“The World of the Dragonfly”**  
by Susan Minor  
May 15, 7:00 p.m.



Dragonflies and their damselfly cousins are important predators in both their adult and larval aquatic stages. Maryland Master Naturalist Susan Minor will discuss the adaptations and importance of these often misunderstood insects.

## Violets

Anna Stoll

Lovely wildflower or annoying weed? The violet is either, depending on your viewpoint. *Viola sororia*, or the common blue violet, is native to eastern North America. It's a perennial plant that spreads abundantly, which is why many people consider it a weed. Since it blooms early in the spring and provides some welcome color to the landscape, it's also considered a beloved wildflower. Although generally purple-blue in color, some violets are also white or bi-colored. The common blue violet is the state flower of Illinois, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.



The common blue violet is cleistogamous, which means that the seeds are formed in self-pollinating, unopened flowers. These flowers are at the base of the plants beneath the leaves, and they appear during the summer after the larger open flowers, with which we are more familiar, have finished blooming. Although the larger flowers are occasionally visited by insects, insects usually find only stray pollen and therefore rarely pollinate those flowers. The cleistogamous flowers produce seeds that are flung out by mechanical ejection. They are also carried by ants, which are attracted to a substance attached to the seeds. In addition to spreading by seed, violets also spread by underground rhizomes. The caterpillars of many fritillary butterflies feed on the foliage of violets, and some birds and small mammals eat the seeds.

Historically, the leaves and flowers of the violet plant were used by the Cherokees as medicine for various ailments, and herbalists still consider them to have medicinal properties. Candied violet flowers can be purchased and used as decorations on cakes and other desserts. A small bouquet of violets is a nice way to enjoy the flowers indoors. Whether you look with horror or delight at a lawn full of violets, hopefully you will have a new appreciation for them.

## Rain Gardens and Wildlife

Valerie Greenhalgh



Have you ever heard of a rain garden? Before last year, I never had, but I soon learned that it is a type of garden that is designed to help improve the quality of the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay. I was also excited to learn of the many benefits these gardens provide for wildlife.

The native plants and trees used in a rain garden develop long roots that absorb water much more effectively than your lawn or plants with shorter roots. This is important because the long roots act as a filter to eliminate the pollution often contained in storm water runoff. Sediment is also filtered from the runoff, resulting in cleaner, clearer water—a benefit to birds like osprey, who depend on their eyesight to hunt. If the toxins are not prevented from entering our waterways, fish and aquatic wildlife absorb the toxins and die, and animals such as birds that eat the sick or dead aquatic life can become sick and die, too.

Native trees, such as post oak and persimmon, and shrubs, such as red chokeberry and blueberry, provide food and habitat for our wildlife, including mammals, birds, insects, and butterflies. Rain gardens typically contain milkweed, which is the only plant upon which a female monarch will lay her eggs, and it is the only plant that a monarch caterpillar will consume as a necessary part of its development into a butterfly.

After having learned about the many benefits of a rain garden, my husband and I decided last summer to have one installed. Within only a matter of hours, the wildlife had discovered the new oasis. Watching the playful bunnies and fluttering butterflies while listening to the happy songs of the many bird species that our new garden attracts calls to mind scenes from a Disney fairy-tale. Best of all, we know that we are helping wildlife on land, water, and air thrive. If you would like to know more about rain gardens, please visit [www.clearcreeks.org](http://www.clearcreeks.org).

## A Seat to Inspire Generations of Nature Lovers

Gerry Oshman

Raising seven kids on a bricklayer's salary was no easy feat. Our dad worked long hours and lots of over-time at Sparrows Point for thirty-nine years. Maybe because he was tired from working so much, or maybe because he had a house with five daughters and my mom in it, he was a quiet man. He didn't talk a whole lot, but you could tell he was enjoying himself by his gentle smile. Dad's happiness came from watching his family's happiness.

When our dad took his precious vacation time, he spent as much of it as he could outdoors. As kids, we'd watch with excitement as the camper top was raised, the beds pulled out, and the storage areas restocked with blankets, newspaper, marshmallows, and everything else we'd need to spend a week or more in some of the most majestic forests on the east coast. One of my favorite places was Westmoreland State Park. It still is. I remember riding on Dad's shoulders, holding onto his ears, as we hiked down Big Meadow Trail to the cliffs, where we'd comb the beach for sharks' teeth, which would end up back at home in the clear candy jars on the shelf with the hundreds, if not thousands, of others.

On September 28 of last year, our dad, Joe Oshman, passed away at 86. Not only did Dad love camping and being outdoors, he loved being with his children and especially his sixteen grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He spent a lot of time with a kid in his lap.

There's a new bench at the Center, memorializing our dad, thanks to the efforts of Marshy Point Nature Center Council's very own vice-president, who is also my brother, Dave Oshman, and the generosity of his boss. I like to think that seeing all the fathers and grandfathers, sitting in that bench with their children and grandchildren, would have put a smile on our dad's face.

## It's Easter *and* It's April Fools!

Carol Mason

This year, for the first time since 1945, that is a true statement. Easter is on April 1, which can make for a wide variety of April Fools scenarios.

What is it with Easter anyway? Why is it on different days? It would be much simpler if it was always on the third Sunday of March or the second Sunday of April. All other holidays have a specific day assigned to them. Why is Easter so contrary?

The answer lies in both ancient Jewish history and the phases of the moon. According to the Old Testament, fleeing the slavery of Egypt, the Israelites prepared a rushed last meal as the first-born sons of Egypt were going to be killed on order of the king. The Israelites painted a mark of lamb's blood over their doors, indicating that the soldiers should "pass over" their homes. After that, Passover was celebrated on the fifteenth day of Nissan, the first month of the Jewish calendar. The fifteenth was the time of the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This became known as the *paschal moon*, paschal referring to the sacrifice of the lamb. The Torah commands that Jews, "guard the month of spring and make the Passover offering." The Jewish calendar is based on lunar months, making it 354 days long. Without an adjustment, Passover would occur in the middle of summer or even winter. Therefore, every few years, Jewish leaders add an extra month, making it a leap year. Already, the waters are muddied as to when Passover would be, let alone Easter.

Some of the early Christians celebrated Easter during Passover, but others decided to observe it the Sunday after. In 325CE, the Council of Nicaea, seeking some bit of consistency, determined that the date of the vernal equinox for church purposes would be March 21. It was then decided that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox. Should the full moon be on a Sunday, then Easter would be the following Sunday. This is why Easter is never before March 22 or after April 25.

Now, as if that's not enough to comprehend, take into account that the ecclesiastical lunar months and the astronomical ones do not correspond precisely. Church leaders wanted to know when Easter would be, years into the future, so they developed complicated algorithms to determine when it will occur up until 2299. They based these dates on a nineteen-year cycle. For all you mathematical geeks, the formula, called "the golden number" is  $GN = Y \bmod 19 + 1$ . Work that one out! It's April Fools, indeed!

## 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 so that they are ready for spring visitors. If you did not get a chance to walk the trails recently, you should try to walk them this spring. The Summer Camp schedule has been developed and is ready for registration. Remember, members get to register first- and get a discount, so renewing or joining is the best way to ensure you get can reserve your place a for camp reservation.

Spring is a busy time at Marshy Point. With the number of increased activities, we can use your help. Spring school programs are filling fast. We could use volunteers to help with the weekday trips as trail guides. If you have a weekday morning free, please consider volunteering as an assistant. Trail-guide training will be held in March to help prepare program assistants. As a program assistant, you get a chance to learn about and to share your love of nature. You don't have to be an expert to help—just have an interest and enthusiasm! I try to take the training each year, and I always learn something new, and this motivates me to assist. For example, I really enjoy wading in the water with the group and sharing their excitement as we discover the wildlife there, such as tadpoles, frogs, and grass shrimp.

Assisting with weekday programs is only one of the many ways you can help at the Center. We also can use volunteers to help at our festivals. Our Spring Festival is right around the corner, April 21. You can help set up on Thursday and Friday, or you can help on festival day for one or two hours by assisting with the final setup, assisting with clean up , working at an exhibit for the day, or baking items for the bake sale.

We are always looking for volunteers to join our board or a committee to help us plan and prepare for events or programs. Perhaps you own, know of, or work for a local business or group that would like to donate items or time for a project at Marshy Point.

We also have intern positions for college students and Marsh Ranger spots for teens. 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, 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 for more information.

Spring is a busy time at the Nature Center and I am very excited about its approach and the increased activities at the Center. Join us! I hope to see you at Marshy Point!

### \* 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 Baltimore County 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 2018. Applications will be available online ([www.marshypoint.org](http://www.marshypoint.org)) or by calling the Center.

### Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

Editor: Gerry Oshman, Layout and Design: Ginny Elliott



## Director's Report

Ben Porter



Nature depends on cycles: whether it is the twice daily ebb and flow of the tide through the Chesapeake or the annual cycle of the seasons. In the natural world, winter is in many ways a time of renewal and preparation for the frenzy of activity that accompanies spring. Things in the nature center at Marshy Point are not so different from the natural world in this way. Spring marks the departure of the waterfowl that wintered on the Chesapeake and the explosive emergence of amphibians into freshwater wetlands. A similar explosion occurs in programs and visitation to the park and nature center.

This spring the new Chesapeake Adventurer's Nature Pre-K is in full swing. Each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday a class of 3, 4, and 5 year olds explores Marshy Point with two Adventure Guides. Nature is a great teacher but not just for the very young. Every weekday schools visit Marshy Point for animal encounters and habitat exploration. On the weekends family programs range from canoeing to sketching and photography to building bluebird boxes. Homeschool families can visit the marsh on Tuesdays for Homeschool Nature Meetup. Independent visitors can play in the Chesapeake Discovery Nature Play Space, visit the animals, or take a hike.

Even with spring in full swing, summer is just around the corner; and summer means summer nature camps and even more to do. Marshy Point couldn't be the special place that it is without our volunteer, members, sponsors, and staff. I encourage everyone reading this to make a spring visit to Marshy Point: there is sure to be something here for you. If you do already visit and enjoy this place please consider supporting Marshy Point as a member or volunteer.

*16th Annual*

# *Spring Festival*

**April 21, 10am to 4pm**

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

## *Native Plant Sale*

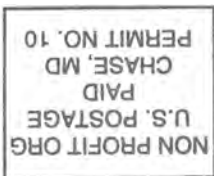
*to Benefit Programs and Animal Care*

**Order your plants by April 27**

**Pick-up on May 19 & 20, 10am to 3pm**

**\*Order form available for complete list of flowers and trees.**





## Wildlife Corner - Where Do Our Osprey Go in the Winter?

Dave Oshman, Chief Osprey Officer



Our Osprey Cam has become a very popular feature at Marshy Point. Families love to watch as a new nest gets built in the spring, followed by egg-laying and the interminable wait until the young osprey hatch.

This past year, our two chicks fledged approximately seven weeks after hatching. Then we rarely saw them on our webcam, as they were flying around Dundee Creek learning to be better hunters, until nature let them know it was time to migrate.

The mature parents are the first to leave around the end of August. They will fly to Central and South America, where they will spend the winter. Once there, they spend a few months “recharging” and preparing for their spring migration. The juveniles, however, tend to tarry a bit longer around Marshy Point, and this past year, one of the osprey juveniles was seen as late as the second weekend of October by Boy Scouts camping at the park. The juveniles, too, will head south but will often take a circuitous route to Central and South America, as if they aren’t really certain where to go. While their parents will begin heading north in early March, the juveniles will stay south for another twelve months until they, too, will return to the area of their birth, where they will try to find a place to nest and a mate to continue the cycle.