



Cattails



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The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter
December 2019 - January - February 2020

Fall Festival Fun!



Winter Speaker Series

"The History of Duck Hunting"

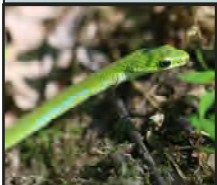
by John Sullivan, Tuesday, January 21, 7 pm

US Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground, Edgewood Arsenal, Marshy Point and Carroll Island were once the site of many Ducking Clubs. John Sullivan will discuss what was there, and how land owners enjoyed the great sport of duck hunting from before 1854 and into the future.



"For Goodness' Snakes"

By Kerry Wixted, Tuesday, February 18, 7 pm



Snakes are fascinating yet highly misunderstood creatures. Kerry Wixted, Maryland DNR, Wildlife and Heritage Service specialist will discuss the basics about snake biology, why we should care about snakes, and information on several of the species that call Maryland home. From the secretive and colorful rainbow snake to the social timber rattlesnake, Maryland's snake species are highly diverse.

"SONG OF SOLSTICE"

Featuring: OCEAN Celtic Quartet
Saturday, December 21, 7 pm

The Quartet will transport you to the Yuletide celebrations of yore in a program featuring traditional carols, foot-stomping Irish and Scottish fiddle tunes, 19th century broadside songs, and original seasonal compositions. With their soaring Celtic vocals and high-energy instrumentals, OCEAN is known for marrying lighthearted exuberance with great spiritual depth. Come in good voice, as you'll be invited to sing along!



Long-Tailed Weasels: What's That Smell?

Michelle Oshman

Various species of small mammals are in the *Mustelidae* family; this includes otters, skunks, badgers, minks, wolverines, martens, and weasels. Even though these mammals are small, many of the *Mustelidae* family are hunted for their fur, used to stitch together warm, bulky coats found luxurious by some humans.

The most commonly found weasel in Maryland is the long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*). Long-tailed weasels, similar to other weasels, are generally long, slender and low-to-the ground, quick and nimble, with dense, soft fur. They are active and inquisitive, and can move quickly when hunting their prey. Long-tailed weasels are found throughout Maryland, although they are not often seen by humans as they tend to be more active at night. They do come out during the day when it suits them.



Long-tailed weasels inhabit marshlands, woodlands, grasslands, and rocky outcrops throughout Maryland. They spend most of their waking hours on the ground, although they skillfully climb trees and swim. Their homes consist of former burrows from other animals, but they will also nest under wood or in rock piles when available.

Male long-tailed weasels are larger than their female counterparts. Both have long bodies, and males are generally between 11 to 17 inches in length. They weigh between 5 and 16 ounces. Both genders have brown fur with light, yellowy-beige on their bellies and the undersides of their necks. Their long tails have a black tip.

Interestingly, long-tailed weasels in more northern climes molt their brown fur as the weather chills, and their fur is white when it grows back. The long-tailed weasel remains white until they molt again in the spring, when their fur grows in brown again. Our Maryland long-tailed weasels keep their brown fur all year long.

These solitary animals have flattened heads and long, sharp canine teeth in their snouts, which are framed by large whiskers. Beady eyes and short rounded ears complete the long-tailed weasel's look. They make an array of noises, including shrieks, squeals, purrs and trills.

Long-tailed weasels have a keen sense of smell, sight and hearing, making them a ferocious predator. Their diet consists mainly of rodents and other small mammals but they will eat birds and fish when available.

Finally, long-tailed weasels can be smelly. They have an anal gland that can release a scent often described as "strong" and "musky." To release the pungent smell, the long-tailed weasel drags its body over the ground or other flat surfaces. It uses this ability when it is frightened, seeks a mate, marks its territory, or wants to discourage predators. With a talent like that, it may be lucky that humans and long-tailed weasels don't spend a lot of time together!

How Do Fish Survive Winter?

Anna Stoll

Did you ever wonder what happens to fish when ponds, streams, and rivers freeze during the winter months? As the water gets colder and ice begins to form, the warmer water sinks. The ice on top of the water serves as an insulator, so the water below the ice will remain warmer than the cold air above. That first layer of ice will form quickly, but since the water below is warmer, it will take longer for the ice to get thicker and unfrozen water will remain beneath it.

Fish are cold-blooded, and as water gets colder, their metabolism slows down. They need less oxygen and food and their hearts beat slower, so they don't move around much and remain at the bottom of the pond, stream, or river until warmer weather returns. Some fish species gather in groups to spend the winter together. Some, such as koi, burrow in the sediment below the water and go dormant just as frogs do.

What about saltwater fish? Some of them swim farther south for the winter, but since saltwater rarely freezes, most fish spend the winter in the warmer water closer to the bottom. Fish in polar regions have a protein in their blood that acts like a natural antifreeze and keeps them from freezing in icy water.

Frogs In Winter

Bev Wall

Can we agree right now that frogs are loud, yet musical; elusive, yet predictable; and certainly, beady-eyed and warty, yet adorable? OK, I'm glad we've established that! But did you know that frogs are masters at surviving the frigid winter temperatures?

A common misconception is that frogs spend the winter deep in the mud at the bottom of the pond or stream. That couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, frogs would surely suffocate if they did that! Turtles can do this with no problem; their metabolism slows down so dramatically that they can get by on the small amount of oxygen that the mud provides. Frogs, however, need way more oxygen than that.

Frogs in Maryland hibernate on land, only slightly burrowed into the soil; in deep cracks and crevices in logs or rocks; or as far as they can get into a pile of leaves. Because a frog's hibernaculum is not well protected from winter weather, one would think that frogs would surely freeze, yet they don't. Why?

Frog antifreeze! As ice crystals form inside the body of a frog, in their bladder and under their skin, a high concentration of glucose in their vital organs prevents them from totally freezing. If a frog becomes partially frozen, they stop breathing, their heart slows or even stops, and they appear quite dead. But there's no need to worry. This phenomenon is known as *estivation*. Estivation is a dormant state an animal assumes in response to adverse environmental conditions. In the spring, as the hibernacula warms up and the frog begins to thaw, its organs resume their normal activity. A.ma.zing. Right???

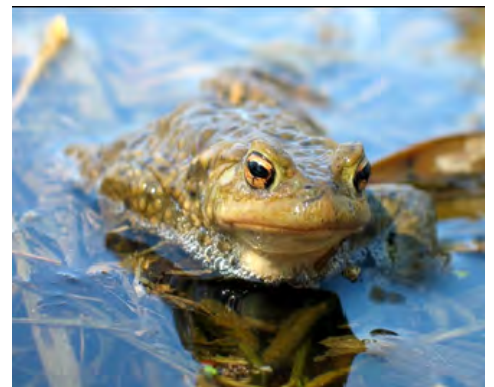
Now that you know this, I am quite sure you'll want to provide a safe hibernaculum for your favorite frog. Here are some things you can do to help our cold-blooded amphibian friends survive the long, cold winter:

Provide access to cracks and crevices in rocks or logs.

Leave a compost of soil and leaves near the pond so they can burrow.

Dig a small hole (approximately 3-feet deep and 3-feet square); fill it with loose, dry sand; cover with leaves or other natural debris.

Don't clean your pond. Frogs will likely avoid it because it won't provide the natural debris they need to survive a deep freeze.



What Is Geocaching?

Dave Oshman

Did you know that Marshy Point has many geocaches scattered around the grounds? More importantly, do you know what geocaching is? While geocaching is significantly better known today, there are still a lot of people that haven't heard of it. Basically, it's an outdoor activity where participants use the Global Positioning System (GPS) either on a handheld receiver, or more commonly on your phone, to locate hidden containers throughout the world. You start by downloading the free geocaching app, or going to geocaching.com, and signing up for a free account. Then you simply locate the nearest geocache and follow the directions. Once you find it, you sign the physical log that is in every container, and then log in online to record your experience.

Geocaching is what originally brought me to Marshy Point Nature Center. Not only does it get you out of the house and into nature, it's also a fun thing to do with your family. Some geocaches are easy to find and get to, and may even be handicap-friendly, while others are more difficult. Some are so well hidden that I've spent many hours over several days with friends searching for them. Others are so difficult that they have required 12-mile hikes and include rappelling down cliffs and climbing into caves. Whatever sort of challenge you're looking for, there are geocaches out there waiting for you to find.

We've all seen the humble morning glory wending its way across fields and up fence posts. We may have even battled it in our garden, with little success. The trumpet-shaped flowers, while attached to a stubborn vine-like plant, charm us with their short-lived beauty, opening their showy flowers for only a single day.

Next time you stop to admire a morning-glory vine—or pull it from your flowerbed—observe its ivy-shaped leaves, as well as the flowers. Notice how much the morning glory looks like a sweet potato plant. That's because the sweet potato (*Ipomoea Batatas*) is part of the morning glory or bindweed family. Not exactly a misnomer, the sweet potato is only vaguely related to the Irish potato and does not belong to the nightshade family. The sweet potato we eat originated in Central or South America and was domesticated at least 5,000 years ago by Incan and pre-Incan races. In most places in Latin America, the sweet potato is called "camote," but the Incans called it "batata" and this is apparently the origin of the English word "potato."

The tuber spread across Polynesia and New Zealand, most likely brought there in the form of a vine cutting by a traveler; it has been radiocarbon-dated in the Cook Islands to 1400 CE. About a hundred years after that, sweet potatoes were introduced in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. From there, via Luzon, the sweet potato was introduced to Fujian province in China, in response to a major crop failure. In the 1600s the Portuguese introduced sweet potatoes to Okinawa, Japan, where it became a staple in Japanese cooking, preventing famine on more than one occasion when rice harvests were poor.

From Portugal, the sweet potato was carried to Spain and then to Italy, from where it spread to Austria, Germany, Belgium, and English before the first Irish potatoes arrived. It took the English two centuries to accept Irish potatoes as being fit for human food, but they immediately labeled the sweet potato a rare and expensive delicacy.

Outside the tropics, sweet potatoes thrive only in warmer climates and like a loose, sandy, well-drained soil. In northern climates, new plants are grown by cutting or planting roots. Once they are established, sweet potatoes require little moisture and are relatively pest-resistant. This is probably why sweet potatoes produce more pounds of food per acre than any other cultivated plant, including corn and the Irish potato.

Sweet potatoes are more nourishing than Irish potatoes as they contain more sugars and fats, and as well are higher in fiber. Of the 200 or more varieties, there are two main sweet potatoes we consume. The Jersey and related varieties have drier flesh, while what many, especially in the South, call "yams," are more watery, softer when cooked, and richer in sugar. The true yam, however, is starchier and tastes more like a yucca, as it is related to it. Yams are believed to have originated in Africa at least 50,000 years ago and are related to lilies. One theory holds that West African slaves used their native word "nyami," which means "to eat" when fed the tubers; sweet potatoes were the most common food fed to enslaved Africans on ships traveling to the Americas. This is quite possibly why we use interchangeably "yam" and "sweet potato."

Sweet potatoes are versatile and can be used in place of any recipe made with potatoes. They can also stand on their own as an entrée. Check out the recipes!



Just a Few Reasons to Try a Plant-Based Holiday Dinner

Josie Oshman

"It's the most wonderful time of the year!" It really is, Andy Williams! And with the upcoming season, many of you may be thinking about what your holiday dinner is going to look like. How about going plant-based this year? Here are three reasons for giving it a try!

When eating a plant-based diet, you gain nutrition, lower your blood pressure, and have better cardiovascular health. You get protein from nuts and fiber from whole grains; plus plant-based foods are packed with vitamins and minerals. Vegetables are high in fiber, and we all now know how good fiber is for us.

Another reason for going on a plant-based diet is that is beneficial for the environment. Studies have now concluded that cattle account for 18 percent of greenhouse gases that cause global warming, more than cars, planes, and all other forms of transport put together. According to researchers at Oxford, the one act of cutting animal products out of your diet could reduce your carbon footprint by up to 73%.

Last but far from least, is animal welfare. Over 72 billion land animals are killed for food every year. That's more than 200 million land animals—every day. Including wild-caught and farmed fish, the daily total is closer to 3 billion animals killed. And the conditions the animals live in are inhumane and not only unhealthy for them, it's unhealthy for us consumers.

Now, are you ready to try a plant-based holiday dinner? Here are some recipes to get you started.

For the main course, how about stuffed squash? Squash, like pumpkin and butternut, are high in fiber, vitamins A, B6, and C, folate, magnesium, riboflavin, phosphorus, and potassium. That's a serious nutritional power-packed veggie. They are delicious, easy to prepare, and affordable.

Plant-based Recipes Continued.

Plant-based Recipes

Stuffing

Ingredients:

6 cups of various breads, cubed and toasted in the oven out to dry (I like whole wheat and ones with nuts as well as traditional white.)

3 tablespoons plant-based butter or olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

2-3 stalks of celery, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 cups mixed nuts, chopped, and seeds

1/2 cup raisins, currants, dried cranberries, and/or dried apricots (chopped)

up to 2 cups vegetable broth

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Place cubed bread in the biggest bowl you have!

Fry onion and celery in oil for about five minutes. Add garlic. Fry for another minute.

Add nuts and fry for another few minutes.

Add mixture to cubed bread.

Add enough vegetable broth to moisten.

Stuff into prepared squash halves or spread into an oiled casserole dish and cover with foil.

Bake at 350 for 20-30 minutes, removing the foil for the last 10 minutes.

Serve your stuffed squash with a vegetable-broth gravy.

Now, what about the greens?

There are so many to choose from, but my favorite is caramelized Brussels sprouts.

Ingredients:

4 cups Brussels sprouts, washed, trimmed, and halved

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 red onion, thinly sliced

2-3 garlic cloves, minced

1 teaspoon dried rosemary

salt and pepper, to taste

1/3 cup hazelnuts, roasted and chopped

maple balsamic glaze

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoon maple syrup

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

Toss Brussels sprouts with oil, onions, garlic, rosemary, salt, and pepper. Spread onto a baking sheet in a single layer and bake for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned on the outside and tender on the inside.

Stir together maple balsamic glaze and set aside.

Remove from oven and toss with hazelnuts and maple balsamic glaze.

Serve warm.

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One of our family's favorite vegetables is the sweet potato.

Try this stuffed sweet potato recipe to give your holiday dinner a healthy and spicy kick!

Ingredients:

4 medium sweet potatoes

1 cup canned or cooked black beans

1 cup canned corn kernels

2 tomatoes, chopped

1/2 red onion, chopped

fresh parsley and cilantro to taste, chopped

tahini dressing (1/4 cup water, 1/4 cup tahini, 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder, salt to taste)*

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Wash sweet potatoes and prick each with a fork to allow steam to escape.

Bake them in a lined baking sheet for 50-60 minutes until tender.

While sweet potatoes are baking, warm black beans and corn.

Prepare tahini dressing by placing all ingredients in a bowl and combine well with fork. (*You can prepare the dressing ahead of time.)

Remove sweet potatoes from oven and cut in half, lengthwise.

Top with black beans, corn, parsley, cilantro, and tahini dressing.

No holiday table would be complete without dessert!

Better make a double batch of these delectable pecan bars - they'll go fast!

Ingredients:

For the crust:

3/4 cup whole wheat flour

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

1/3 cup brown sugar (firmly packed)

1/4 teaspoon fine grain sea salt

1/2 cup olive oil

For the filling:

6 tablespoons olive oil

1/3 cup maple syrup

2/3 cup brown sugar (firmly packed)

1/3 cup coconut cream or coconut milk

2 cups chopped pecans

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9 x 9-inch baking pan with parchment paper and then grease the paper lining. Set aside.

In a large bowl, stir together the whole wheat flour, all-purpose flour, brown sugar, salt, and olive oil. Stir until everything starts to come together into a dough.

Transfer the dough to the lined and greased pan. Press into the bottom of the pan in an even layer.

Bake for 15-17 minutes, until crust is firm when touched.

While the crust is baking, prepare the filling. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the olive oil, maple syrup, and brown sugar. Stir the mixture together until combined and sugar is dissolved. Keep over heat until the mixture comes to a boil, then boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat after boiling and stir in the coconut cream and pecans. Stir together until the cream has dissolved and pecans are mixed in.

Pour the filling over the crust and spread it evenly and all the way to the edges.

Bake until filling is bubbling and set, about 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely, about an hour, before cutting.

Happy Holidays!

As the seasons cycle once again along the Chesapeake, the creeks around Marshy Point are alive with winter waterfowl. Although the Ospreys of summer have migrated far away, owls and eagles begin their breeding season in winter. This time of the year presents great opportunities to see and hear these active winter birds around Marshy Point. Indeed, winter is full of wonder in the natural world and at Marshy Point. From looking for animal tracks in the snow to the possibility of cross country skiing and observing winter wildlife there is much excitement beneath the apparent calm of winter in the natural world. It is also an exciting time at the nature center.

Some of the highlights of nature center programs this season include our holiday open house on December 8, the Chesapeake Adventurers Nature Pre-K, and maple sugar time at the end of February.

The center remains open every day from 9am to 5pm and our wood stove is a great place to warm up after a winter hike. On a walk around Marshy Point there are always new exhibits and improvements to see and the winter is an especially productive time for park projects. New animal habitats, exhibits, and improved trails are possible thanks to the many volunteers and donors who support Marshy Point. This winter please stop by, consider volunteering, or give a tax exempt gift to this place that has so much to offer in all its seasons.



President's Message

Dave Oshman

I hope everyone had a wonderful autumn and that you had time to enjoy the changing of the leaves and the wonderful programs at Marshy Point. I suspect most of you were at Marshy Point on September 21st when well over 2000 community members turned up to give us the best turnout ever for a Fall Festival. This time of year reminds us to be thankful. So, on behalf of the Marshy Point Nature Center Council, I want to thank all our volunteers and staff members that help make us the best nature center in all of Baltimore County. Without your hard work, we wouldn't be able to further our mission of bringing nature to our community. And speaking of volunteers, Marshy Point was recently given the 2019 Volunteer Project Award from the Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach and Service Programs (ANROSP) for the Dundee Creek Osprey Cam that I helped install back in 2016! I hope all of our members and visitors take pride not only in us being the best nature center in Baltimore County, but also one that is nationally recognized. The word is out folks. Marshy Point gets better all the time, thanks to the people that make it happen.

<h3>Trail Guide Training</h3>	<h3>Chesapeake Adventurers Pre-K</h3>
<p>We 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, the ecology of Marshy Point & Cromwell Valley Parks and techniques to share more and teach less. Each day features new subjects for enjoying the great outdoors. 10am - 1pm, March 11, 12, 13.</p>	<p>Fall 2020 September 9 to December 18, 2020 9:30 am - 1:30 pm, Ages 3 to 5 (must turn 3 by Jan. 1, 2020 and be potty proficient). Alongside two Adventure Guides, children journey through the forests, wetlands, & tidal creeks that make up Marshy Point. Registration begins January 6, 2020.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Marshy Point Newsletter Staff Editor: Gerry Oshman - Layout and Design: Ginny Elliott</p>	



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