



# Cattails



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**The Marshy Point Nature Center Council Newsletter**  
December 2020 - January - February 2021

## **Animal Encounters! Tuesdays, Thursdays at 1 pm, Saturdays, Sundays at 11 am**

Families are welcome to join a Naturalist on the front lawn of the Nature Center to meet one of our animal ambassadors. Registration is not required. Animal encounters last approximately 15 minutes but may be shortened or cancelled due to inclement weather or for the comfort of our animals.

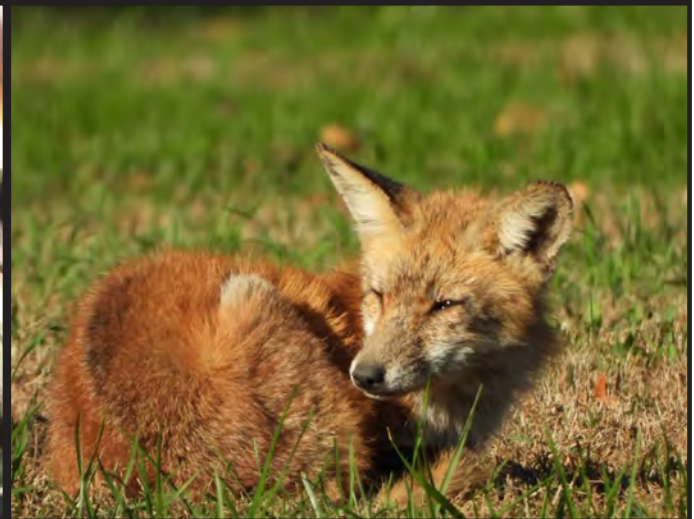
## **CHESAPEAKE ADVENTURERS PRE-K**

**January 25 to February 26, 2021**

Mondays & Wednesdays (virtual), Friday (in person, 10-11:30 am with a parent)

Ages: 3, 4, 5. Must turn 3 by January 1, 2021 & be potty proficient.

## **Fall and Winter are great times to observe wildlife around Marshy Point**



Imagine trotting horses along a winding road toward 19th-century Marshy Point. Before Eastern Avenue was extended, the road was called Shell Road, in some references suggesting an oyster shell road where visitors would ride in carriages from a hotel located near present Bengies Drive-In Theatre. Many of us are familiar with the sounds of sleigh bells from the season, but the ringing of bells was once heard with each carriage rounding corners to alert oncoming transports or pedestrians. The train whistles added to the clamor as travel kept family, friends, and business moving. Going further back in time, we approach even less convenience of the 18th century. Prior to the locomotion of trains, strength and time were left to people and horses for long travel. The resting members of Marshy Point's cemetery dealt with the hardships of travel along with those of the time.



The Bonds of our park had local family. Many were located in Harford County, Baltimore County, or Baltimore City. A mild drive for us would have been extensive in the mid- to late 1700s. Travel limited visiting for short trips. Some would spend more extended periods of time after a long journey, compared to a visit of today. Others would forgo a trip if weather posed a problem. For the Bond family, they did not extend so far as to isolate themselves from seeing each other or doing business with those in either direction; however, it was not a simple ride, easily preformed within an hour. Another obstacle that befell the Bonds of Marshy Point was time of a different sort. Mortality. Sadly, many members passed in the height of their lives. Still unknown is the cause of death for Cassandra Bond who lies in our cemetery, passing in her 40s.

During the holidays, people celebrated. They visited with family. They ate, drank, and were merry. However, when someone was sick, they were cautious. They did not always know the causes, but they did not intentionally further the distress. They used the little they knew to

make decisions, which were felt to be in the best interest at the time. We are accustomed to self-decision within our means, but during this time, the constraints of outside forces sometimes hold us back. With what we have learned, we must make good choices to protect friends and family. Just as in the past, we too can find balance within limits.

This season will feel different. Normal activities are now memories, seemingly out of reach and distant. It feels like ages passing, but only months separate us from our former selves. Simple holiday acts, once taken for granted, are priceless traditions when barriers keep us apart. Just like travel in miles, the passing of time has its similarities making life feel mathematical in routine. Take comfort in knowing our ancestors prepared us for this pivot in life. The emotions through all generations are instilled genetically as we are humans. We will be strong as our parents, grandparents, and all before us were in times of danger and unknowing. Contentment in life comes from willingness to adjust without compromising the traditions you cherish.



You may not know it, but *Vaccinium macrocarpon* will probably be on your table this holiday season. No, it's not a type of bacteria or mold—it's the botanical name for the American cranberry. For many of us, traditional holiday dinners would not be the same without cranberry sauce. From Cape Cod to Washington State, the cranberry has played a role in holiday culture and family health and wellness for years.

Cranberries have had a variety of different names throughout history. Indigenous tribes in the East called them *sassamanesh*. Cape Cod Pequots and the South Jersey Leni-Lenape tribes named them *ibimi*. The Algonquins of Wisconsin called the fruit *atoqua*. While this last word has no meaning in English, the previous two appropriately mean "bitter." It wasn't until German and Dutch settlers came up with "crane berry," after noticing that the small, pink blossoms that appear in the spring on the vine blossoms resemble the neck, head, and bill of the Sandhill crane, that we arrive at what we know today as the cranberry.

Indigenous Americans, long before the settlers arrived in 1620, mixed deer meat and mashed cranberries to make *pemmican*—a convenience food that kept for long periods of time. They also used cranberries for their medicinal value, and were regularly used by medicine men as an ingredient in poultices to draw poison from arrow wounds. Cranberry juice was a natural dye for rugs, blankets and clothing. The Delaware Indians in New Jersey used the cranberry as a symbol of peace.



An unusual berry, the cranberry is unlike any other fruit in the world. Cranberries grow and survive only under a very special combination of factors. Cranberries grow on low-lying vines in beds layered with sand, peat, gravel, and clay. These beds are commonly known as bogs or marshes and were originally created by glacial deposits. The cranberry plant is described as a low-growing, woody perennial with small, oval leaves borne on fine, vine-like shoots. Horizontal stems, or runners, grow along the soil surface, rooting at intervals to form a dense mat. **The cranberry** is native to the swamps and bogs of northeastern North America. It belongs to the heath, or heather family (Ericaceae), which is a very widespread family of about 125 genera and about 3500 species! Members of the family occur from polar

regions to the tropics in both hemispheres. Cranberries not only tolerate shade, they thrive with very little direct sunlight. The perfect environment for cranberries is northern pine forests. Where you find moss, you'll often find cranberries. Its flower buds, formed on short, upright shoots, open from May or June, with the berries ripening by late September or early October. In Maine, cranberry flowers are in bloom from late June to mid-July. It is important to have warm, sunny weather during the bloom period, as that is the best formula for maximizing pollination by the cranberry's two biggest pollinators: bumble bees and honeybees. *Interestingly, cranberries rely on insect pollination because the pollen grains are too heavy to be carried around much at all by the wind.*

The American cranberry grows wild from the mountains of Georgia to the Canadian Maritimes, and as far west as Minnesota. However, undoubtedly, the place we most associate cranberries with is Cape Cod, Maine. It has been cultivated in the Cape Cod area since the early 1800s. Cultivation of the cranberry began in 1816, shortly after Captain Henry Hall, a Revolutionary War veteran, of Dennis, Massachusetts, noticed that the wild cranberries in his bogs grew better when sand blew over them. From then on, cranberry production became an active industry, particularly during much of the last century. The cultivated cranberry industry then spread to New Jersey by the 1830s, Wisconsin by the 1850s, and the Pacific Northwest by the 1880s. Many Maine farms with suitable land produced small plots of cranberries, mostly for home use and a small marketable surplus. The Maine commercial cranberry industry was virtually eliminated in the early 1900s by a combination of factors, including lack of adequate technology for frost protection, the spread of disease and pests, depressed demand during World War I, the increasing trend toward specialized farming, the replacement of fresh cranberries in the market with the new canned cranberry sauce, and its relative distance to markets. And this is how we ended up with that jiggly stuff in a can...

The health benefits of this special little berry abound. Cranberries are incredibly high in Vitamins C, A, and K, fiber, potassium, and antioxidants. Cranberries also contain a range of vital B vitamins, including B-1, B-2, B-3, and B-6. Research has linked the nutrients in cranberries to a lower risk of urinary tract infection (UTI), the prevention of certain types of cancer, improved immune function, and decreased blood pressure. Cranberries have

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powerful proanthocyanidins (PACs); these PACs are responsible for many of their health benefits, and may even help your oral health. PACs prevent bacteria from binding to your teeth. Consuming more cranberries might just mean an easier cleaning at your next dental visit.

## **Cranberry Fun Facts**

The cranberry is one of only a handful of major fruits native to North America. Others include the blueberry and Concord grape.

- During the days of wooden ships and iron men, American vessels carried cranberries. Just as the English loved limes, American sailors craved cranberries. It was the cranberry's generous supply of vitamin C that prevented scurvy.
- American recipes containing cranberries date from the early 18th Century.
- Legend has it that the Pilgrims may have served cranberries at the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in Plymouth, Massachusetts.
- During World War II, American troops required about one million pounds of dehydrated cranberries a year.
- It takes one ton or more of cranberry vines per acre to plant a bog.
- Depending on the weather, cranberry blossoms last 10 to 12 days.
- Cranberries are sometimes used to flavor wines, but do not ferment as naturally as grapes, making them unsuitable for the traditional winemaking process.
- Seven of ten cranberries sold in the world today come from Ocean Spray, a grower cooperative started in 1930.
- If all the cranberry bogs in North America were put together, they would comprise an area equal in size to the tiny island of Nantucket, off Massachusetts, approximately 47 square miles.
- There are 440 cranberries in one pound, 4,400 cranberries in one gallon of juice, and 440,000 cranberries in a 100-pound barrel!
- Americans consume some 400 million pounds of cranberries each year. About 80 million pounds, or 20 percent, are eaten during Thanksgiving week.

If you strung all the cranberries produced in North America last year, they would stretch from Boston to Los Angeles more than 565 times.

Maybe you've picked up fresh cranberries in the store or your farmers' market and thought to make homemade cranberry sauce for your holiday table. Maybe you've put them back, thinking they're not worth the trouble, and then grabbed the canned stuff. Why not be a little adventurous this year and give it a go? They are easily prepared and last months if jarred and refrigerated.

Tarty and tangy, and very low in sugar, cranberries are difficult to eat on their own; they are usually sweetened with sugar or sweet juice, such as apple, or they are mixed with other fruit. Here are few variations on the traditional cranberry sauce. Enjoy and eat in good health!

### Homemade Cranberry Sauce

- whole cranberries, rinsed and cleaned of debris
- 1-2 apples, peeled, cored and grated
- 1-2 oranges, squeezed, pulp included
- zest from oranges
- sugar, agave, or other sweetener to taste (use 1/2 cup of sweetener for every 1/3 cup of cranberries) additions and substitutions: 1 inch piece of ginger, peeled and grated fine; cinnamon, star anise, cloves; chopped pecans or walnuts; substitute pineapple and pineapple juice for apple



Add all ingredients to a saucepan and simmer till done!

## La Niña Winter Coming Up

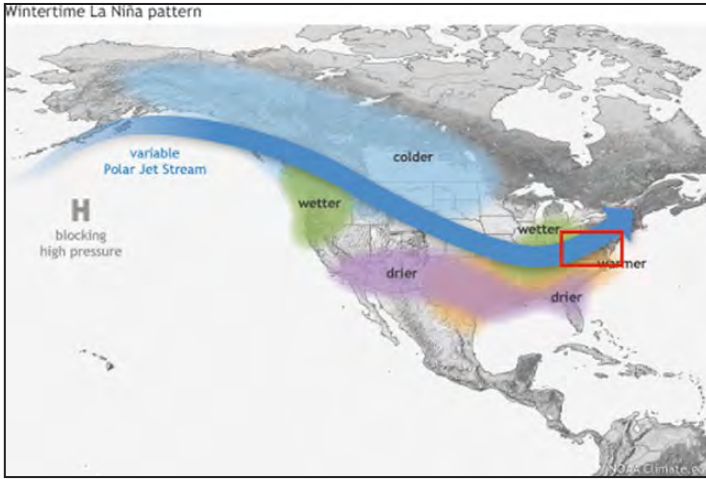
Anna Stoll

Those of us who are National Weather Service groupies will know that there's a 75% chance that we're in for a La Niña winter. This year's La Niña started as early as September and may have contributed to the number of hurricanes this season. La Niña, which in Spanish means "little girl," is a weather pattern phenomenon in which warm water at the surface of the Pacific Ocean is blown from South America to Asia, causing cold water from the deep to rise to the surface near the coast of South America.

La Niña's opposite is El Niño ("little boy"), which features warmer-than-average sea temperatures in that area.

A La Niña tends to occur every three to five years, but it can occur in consecutive years. The last La Niña was during the winter of 2017-2018, followed by an El Niño the next winter, and last winter we weren't affected by either. During a La Niña winter, the US states farthest north tend to have more precipitation than usual and colder-than-average temperatures. The states farthest south tend to be dryer and warmer than usual.

Here in Maryland, we're in the middle. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center's map shows a good chance of warmer-than-usual temperatures this winter for our area, but an equal chance of below-normal, normal, or above-normal precipitation. This forecast covers the period from December 2020 through February 2021.



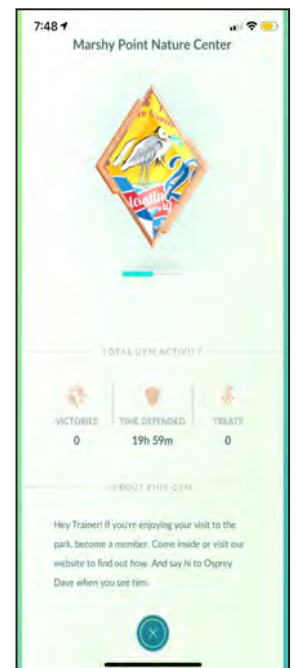
## Shout Out to Our Pokemon Players

Dave Oshman

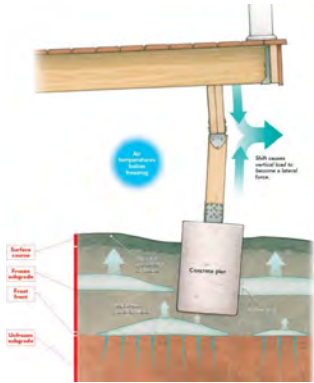
This year, our park has seen more regular visitors on the trails than ever before. Anyone that has spent some time here on a weekend knows how much use our trails get. I'm so pleased to see the diversity of our visitors. It's fun to know the diverse reasons that people visit our park. Most people are here to hike the trails for exercise or just to bathe themselves in nature. Some visitors come to forage for nature's bounty. Many come to see our animals, inside and out. But there's a large group of people who come to find virtual "animals" in the augmented reality game of Pokemon GO!

The game was created with the goal of getting people out of their houses and into local parks and other interesting areas. As a result, Marshy Point has become a favorite place for Pokemon trainers (as they're called in the game) since the very early days of the game. I originally started playing when I realized my children were playing, thinking it would be a fun thing to do with them. If you remember anything about the summer of 2016, it seemed that everyone in the world was playing Pokemon GO! Everyone was talking about it. It was even on the news, including some of the accidents people had, playing while driving. Marshy Point took advantage of the craze by sponsoring Pokemon GO Madness where we'd reopen our gates after dark and set lures to attract extra Pokemon into our park. It was neat seeing the community that was built around those early events. To this day, we still have many of the same people playing in the park. And just like so many of you who enjoy our park for nature, these folks support our park monetarily. They were happy to pay money for the events and whenever we have fundraisers online, I always see many Pokemon GO players' names among the list of donors. Recently, the company that makes Pokemon GO, Niantic, offered a sponsorship package to businesses that had been negatively affected by the COVID pandemic. Some of the local Pokemon players nominated Marshy Point and we were accepted. So now, Marshy Point is an even better place to play Pokemon GO. More importantly, it gave me, the current President of Marshy Point Nature Center Council, instant credibility with my children as I am mentioned in the description of the new Pokeygym within the game. That's right, Dave Oshman, aka, Osprey Dave, is mentioned in a video game! It's only for a year, but I'll have bragging rights till it ends.

So, if you see people walking around the park staring at their phones, they may be looking for the virtual animals that we have at the park. Who knows? It may be Osprey Dave himself!



Have you ever been out walking on a brisk winter day and noticed how the ground, in places, seems separated and cracked? Or, have you ever witnessed a once secure fence post that has popped out of the ground unexpectedly? I have, so I was prompted to learn more. After searching around a bit on the internet, the words “frost heave” appeared. “Aha,” I said as I came across the images below along with many more similar ones.



Courtesy of finehomes.com



Courtesy of totallandscaping.com



Courtesy of wisegeek.com

Frost Heaving begins when temperatures drop below 32 degrees F and ground-level moisture begins to freeze. As colder temps prevail, frost gradually works its way down to deeper levels. In well drained soil that contains little moisture, frost spreads evenly and won't cause much trouble, but if the soil is wet, the water will freeze into a paper-thin sheet called an ice lens. Ice lenses grow thicker as they are introduced to more moisture that rises up from wetter soil below or from ground water, commonly called the water table. When water freezes, it expands about 9 percent in volume so, when water freezes against the ice lens, it expands, thickening the lens and compressing the soil, eventually forcing the soil to thrust upward along with anything else in its wake. This uplift of soil is called “frost heave.”

Usually a frost heave is slow, creeping only a fraction of an inch over days, but because the expansive force of freezing water is so powerful, a frost heave can lift a seven-story building or collapse a steel-reinforced concrete wall without much effort. Without proper preparation, our much smaller home foundations, garages, decks, patios and other do-it-yourself projects don't stand a chance against frost heave.

So, why is an article about frost heave and buildings in a nature newsletter? Simply put, frost heave doesn't just affect solid inanimate objects. Frost heave can have an enormous impact on tree seedlings, how our forests grow, and more specifically, your home garden.

In our home gardens, frost heave can quickly destroy plants and small shrubs if the proper preventive measures aren't taken. The freezing and thawing of our soil does exactly the same to our gardens as it does to our decks and patios. Cold air permeates down through the ground finding warmer soil and more moisture, freezing it and forming that ice lens I wrote about earlier. The cold air from above presses down while the ever-expanding volume of the ice lens below pushes plants upward out of the ground.

Frost heave is most likely to occur in late fall and early winter as temps dip during the night and any moisture is easily frozen. Low-lying areas in the garden are the most susceptible since they tend to gather and hold more moisture. Plantings at the base of a slope or in a tiered garden should be monitored closely for any signs of frost heave.

So, what can you do to protect your plants from frost heave? I suggest you do some internet searching too and prepare your soil correctly before planting or installing that fence post. But, this winter, if the soil around your plants exhibit signs of frost heave, press them firmly back into the ground, cover the soil around the root area with leaves, and place boughs of evergreen on top, forming the perfect insulator and moisture barrier.

As I sit to write this article the exhibit area of the nature center has unfortunately just closed again. At this time we can continue to offer outdoor programs and provide access to the restrooms but by the time this installment of Cattails goes out, that too may have changed. As we wind down 2020, the year with many nicknames not suitable for this family publication, one cannot help but reflect on the long slog that seems to show no real signs of improving. Even so, we've done our best and there have also been many opportunities to adapt to these strange and tiresome conditions.

Marshy Point has put out a program calendar for the winter months, we continue to offer virtual content, and the park continues to provide places for hiking, birdwatching, and escaping into nature.



We are continuing to work with our animal collection to provide the best possible care and training to keep them ready for when they finally get back to work. Although this is not how we imagined celebrating Marshy Point's 20<sup>th</sup> year I want to thank everyone who generously contributed to the fundraiser that helped us make up for some of the tens of thousands of dollars of lost program income. As nature continues her timeless cycles we all look forward to better times ahead but will make the most of what we have to work with in the present.

## President's Message

Dave Oshman

For the Nature Center Council, now is the time of year when we start planning for next year. Given the uncertainties that COVID-19 presented during 2020, how do we plan for 2021? It's clear things will be not be "normal" for the first half of the year. We are setting our budget expecting not to have two of our largest fundraisers next year: Spring Festival and Summer Solstice Faerie Festival. If things turn a quick corner, we can still possibly have them. But we believe it's prudent to plan our budget not expecting to have the income from both events. As such, we will be asking for more monetary help from those that can give it. Our \$20K fundraiser for our 20th anniversary is doing well. At the time that I am writing this, we are at about \$13,000 total, with the Facebook fundraiser along with the donations sent in separately via check, cash, and PayPal. We plan to start a final fundraiser for Giving Tuesday, which falls on December 1st this year. We will set our goal for the difference between what we have raised and the \$20,000 total goal. Keep in mind that Facebook will match early donations on December 1st. In past years, they have reached their match amount within minutes from the beginning of the fundraiser. So, if you know you'll be able to give, please set an alarm for 7:45 on December 1st, and plan to hit the donate button at 8:00. Thank you for your support in 2020. Let's hope we can get back to some semblance of "normal" in 2021.

Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

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## Happy Retirement!

Ben Porter

The staff and volunteers of Marshy Point extend their thanks and congratulations to our longtime office assistant Ginny Elliott. After 26 years with Baltimore County, Ginny is retiring into grandma duty, which might not be all that relaxing after all. Ginny began her career in 1995 at the Lutherville-Timonium Recreation Office. From there she moved to the Parkville Recreation Office and on to Marshy Point in May 2000. Working first with Bob Stanhope, Ginny found the office equipped on her first day with a folding chair, a telephone, and not much else. Well, we've come a long way since then and Ginny has seen it all. Four senior naturalists, more ducks than we care to admit, a couple of hurricanes, and a park and nature center that have become a fixture in our community.



For your time, talents, good nature, years of laughs, and most importantly patience with certain senior naturalists, thanks Ginny. I hope to see you around the marsh as a visitor with those grandkids and while we can't give you a blowout send-off right now let's plan for some more fun in 2021!