



Cattails

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The Marshy Point Nature Center Council's Newsletter December 2021 - January - February 2022

Masks REQUIRED for all visitors while inside Nature Center

Membership Renewal

All members wishing to keep with membership for the 2022 year can begin renewing on January 1, 2022. The new membership cycle will run from January 1—December 31 each year. You can renew online, by mail, or in-person at the Nature Center.

By-Law Voting

Marshy Point Nature Center Council members are encouraged to participate in the by-law voting held on Saturday, December 4, 2021 at Marshy Point Nature Center. Members will have the opportunity to support or vote against proposed changes to the Council's bylaws. Please refer to page 7 for further information regarding the voting process.

An Indoor Seeds Activity

Carol Lancaster

Several years ago around this time of year (early November), my grandson and I attended a seeds class at Ladew Topiary Gardens. Unfortunately, it was a rainy fall day, so the class had to be conducted indoors in the barn; but, as usual, the Ladew educators did a great job. The children were given maple seed "helicopters" to throw in the air. They stuck a cocklebur onto their clothing and jumped and hopped to see if they could get it to fall off. Many enthusiastic jumpers were hopping all around the room! It was a sight to see! Many other examples of seeds were shown. The children took a close-up look at a cut apple to see the seeds, viewed a plastic case full of all kinds of seeds, handled and talked about acorns as being examples of seeds, blew milkweed seeds around the room, and had a great time learning about seeds.



Then they had Storytime and were read aloud *Planting the Wild Garden*. A planting activity followed where the children were allowed to choose which seeds they wanted to plant—acorns, maple-seed helicopters, or coneflower seeds that they'd pulled off the coneflower heads

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Here in Maryland we will soon be in the throes of winter. Fall will quickly become just an interlude, a kick-off to the season that follows. Winter is not even officially here, and already many of our thoughts have turned to spring. Reminiscent of the Roman god Janus, represented with two faces looking in opposite directions, we too look both ways—to the seasons past and those to the future. But what about the season that lies between? What about winter?



You must admit, winter is pretty sic and I mean that in the most slang-type way. Who doesn't like to snuggle under a warm blanket in front of a roaring fire, sipping hot chocolate or a glass of wine; binging on favorite Hallmark movies while wrapping holiday gifts or decorating your Christmas tree; simmering a pot of homemade chili or soup on the stove and baking a loaf of crusty bread; feeling that childlike anticipation that only an overnight snow storm can bring. You go to bed with nary a flake falling and you wake up to a winter wonderland. I don't care how old you are, that's pure magic!

We humans might not be storing acorns, reinforcing dens and nests, or growing additional fur to keep ourselves warm, but we are preparing for winter in our own unique ways. Like the annoying yellow jacket that buzzes around our faces and hands as they scavenge for food and a safe place to wait out winter, we too experience a little of that fight-flight-freeze response as fall comes to an end. All of nature's landscape knows that winter is coming and we human are no different. We too possess intuitions that tell us to prepare now. For yellow jackets, it's literally a matter of life and death. For humans, our winter preparations are necessary to the wellbeing of our psyches. The doldrums of winter are real!

Colder temperatures and limited daylight are notorious for bringing on bouts of depression. Science says that they can influence our thoughts and decisions even without our awareness. They can influence what colors we wear to how we judge others. They can change our limits of human creativity and deplete our energy levels. A dull, dreary winter can have a monumental effect on the human mind as our serotonin levels drop to only half of what they are in the summer. Sadly, we begin to feel gloomy.

Cabin fever and a yearning to get out into nature make it imperative to plan ahead and prepare based on how you expect you'll feel when the going gets tough. Of course, these preventative measures will be different for everyone, so you likely already know what to prepare in order to make the best of the situation. Jigsaw puzzles, good books, and homemade soup work for this writer. How about you?

The good news? Alas, this too shall pass. Soon the snow and ice will melt, the trees will grow their leaves back; crocus and daffodils, the harbingers of spring, will force their mighty heads above ground. The air will smell sweeter and the days will grow longer. The doldrums of winter will be replaced with the hopefulness of spring. And, the cycle continues.

Our Climate Is Changing, Bur Are You?

Dave Oshman

Since 1880, the average global temperature has raised a little over one degree Fahrenheit. While this doesn't seem like a lot, consider that is fifty times the amount of temperature change from the 21,000 years before 1880. There is no doubt that climate change is caused by humans. We have already witnessed changes in the amount of flooding and fires, and the intensity of hurricanes that have impacted us. As I sit writing this article, leaders from around the world are meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, to craft a path to limit climate change. While government can make laws and provide incentives to decrease the amount of carbon released into the air, what can we do today to help limit our own carbon emissions and still leave the amount of carbon released into the air, what can we do today to help limit our own carbon emissions and still leave the world inhabitable for future generations?

If you think that you can't do much to help, consider if half the people you know do a little something to help, and then half the people they know do something. We, as individuals in a larger community, can make a difference. Here are some practical steps that you can do now to limit your effect on the environment.

Switch to a green energy provider. The electric that is provided to our houses and businesses is provided by a combination of sources, most of which is fossil fuel based but some is provided by renewable energy. You can switch over to a company that provides all renewable energy. BGE will still deliver the energy to your house or business, but will "plug" the other end into a "green energy provider". To get started, go to this link to choose a provider: <https://cshutack.medium.com/how-to-sign-up-for-green-energy-in-maryland-if-your-utility-company-is-bge-d0f26bf6e679>. Then contact BGE and tell them you want to switch to a green energy provider. It's that simple.

Eat less red meat. There are hundreds and hundreds of studies that show how red meat is one of the largest factors affecting our environment. Through deforestation, water use, methane release, and soil degradation, cattle production is doing an incredible amount of damage to our environment. I, along with many members of my family, no longer eat meat at all, but if everyone reading this would skip meat for one or two dinners per week, especially skipping beef, we could make an impact.

Drive less and consider an electric vehicle on your next purchase. It is predicted within the next five years, that one in every five cars sold will be electric. While not all aspects of electric cars are super-green (battery production and disposal, in particular), overall, the use of electric cars is substantially better for the environment, even taking those aspects into consideration.

So, instead of waiting for the global powers in the world to fix the environment for us, let's each of us start doing a little bit to help. If enough of us do, we can make a difference for the future generations that are counting on us.

Senior Naturalist's Report

Ben Porter

I have been at Marshy Point for the last unbelievably fast and extremely rewarding nine years. Some of you have been a part of Marshy Point even longer than that, while others discovered the marsh much more recently. There is something about our swampy, out-of-the way, little corner of Baltimore County that draws people in, captures their imaginations and attention, and routinely provides better sunrises than almost anywhere else I've ever seen. This, however, is my last Senior Naturalist's Report, and so I thank you for these last nine years and the opportunity to meet and work with some of the finest people I have ever known.

I came to Marshy Point full of ideas and enthusiastic to make this place the premier environmental education center on the Upper Chesapeake. Thanks to all of our efforts, I feel that objective is well on its way. From park volunteers and staff to our ever growing number of visitors: know that I have learned from all of you, valued our time together, and given my all to provide the best visitor, work, and volunteer experience that I could.

It is now time for fresh ideas and new enthusiasm at Marshy Point. I have accepted another position in the Department of Recreation and Parks as the Chief of Nature, Agriculture, and Environmental Centers. In this new capacity, I will be responsible for all of our Baltimore County nature centers and sites. While I won't be making the daily rounds at Marshy Point any longer, you might still find me on the dock at sunrise and I hope to see you there as well.

There may be nothing more natural than making your own bread from scratch. Sourdough bread has been around for millennia. Thousands of years ago, some observant baker noticed that water and flour left alone began to have air pockets. These pockets are filled with carbon dioxide. This is microbiology before anyone had a name for it. These microbes come from the air, from your hands, from utensils... They are everywhere. Like sci-fi alien invaders, these microbes are hungry. When the flour and water mix, enzymes in the flour convert starch molecules into sugar, also known as microbe food. When the microbes eat the sugars, they exhale carbon dioxide creating the bubbles. This is commonly known as *fermentation*. Generally speaking, two of the most important microbes are yeast and lactic acid bacteria.

You can make your own sourdough starter, recognizing that every single starter will be different, just like us. The simplest way is to mix equal parts flour and water. I take a quarter cup of flour and a quarter cup of warm water, mix them together and let them sit uncovered in a glass bowl or even a drinking glass. Every 12 hours, I feed the nascent mixture with more of the same ingredients and pour out about a quarter cup of the mix, referred to as the discard. I save this excess in a mason jar that I keep in the refrigerator to share. You should see the mixture start to rise on its own within a few days. When it does, you have your starter. It is best to wait about a week before you use it; the microbes take a while to reach an optimum balance. If you don't want to wait, just borrow some from a friend!

EVERYDAY SOURDOUGH

Ingredients

50 grams (1/4 cup) bubbly active starter

350 grams (1 and 1/2 cup plus 2 tbs.) warm water

500 grams (4 cups plus 2 tbs) bread flour

9 grams (1 1/2 tsp) fine sea salt

Make the dough: Whisk the starter and water together in a large bowl with a fork. Add the flour and salt. Combine until a stiff dough forms, then finish mixing by hand to fully incorporate the flour. The dough will feel dense and shaggy, and it will stick to your fingers as you go. Scrape off as much as you can. Cover with a damp towel and let rest for 30 minutes.

After the dough has rested, work the mass into a fairly smooth ball. To do this, grab a portion of the dough and fold it over pressing your fingertips into the center. Repeat, working your way around the dough until it begins to tighten, about 15 seconds.

Bulk Rise: Cover the bowl with a damp towel and let the dough rise overnight at room temperature. This will take about 8 to 10 hours. The dough is ready when it no longer looks dense and has doubled in size.

Shape: In the morning, coax the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. To shape it into a round, start at the top and fold the dough over toward the center. Turn the dough slightly and fold over the next section of dough. Repeat until you have come full circle. Flip the dough over and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, line an 8-inch (20-cm) bowl with a towel and dust with flour. With floured hands, gently cup the dough and pull it toward you in a circular motion to tighten its shape. Using a bench scraper, place the dough into the bowl, seam side up.

Second Rise: Cover the bowl and let rest for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The dough is ready when it looks puffy and has risen slightly but has not yet doubled in size.

Preheat your oven to 450 degrees. Cut a sheet of parchment paper to fit the size of your baking pan leaving enough excess around the sides to remove the bread.

Score: Place the parchment over the dough and invert the bowl to release. Sprinkle the dough with flour and gently rub the surface with your hands. Use a serrated knife or a razor blade and score the dough with a cross-cut pattern or any way you would like. Use the parchment to transfer the dough to the baking pot.

Bake: Bake the dough on the center rack for 20 minutes covered. Remove the lid and continue to bake for 30 minutes. Then carefully remove the loaf from the pot and bake directly on the over rack for the last 10 minutes to crisp the crust. Cool for 1 hour before slicing.

I never wait an hour before eating. I also mix and match the time covered and uncovered. Enjoy!

Marshy Point Nature Center's Community Garden

Jack Cogle

Are you familiar with Marshy Point Nature Center's Organic Community Garden? Nowhere in Baltimore County will you find the total combination of the following advantages to growing in our organic gardens at Marshy Point Nature Center with an onsite coordinator.

Out in the meadows of the nature center is a fenced-in compound, surrounded by fields of milkweed and other flowering plants, indigenous to bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Flying overhead are hawks, bald eagles, woodpeckers, and bluebirds (hence the trail around the area is called the Bluebird Trail). Some birds are recognized by their flight, others by the sounds and songs they sing. A tranquil spot to sit pondering your next move in planting your garden. A chair is even provided!

Because of the eight foot of fencing, there is no concern for deer or other larger animals to bother your plants, but keep an eye out—you might see them in the meadows surrounding the compound. As for those pesky groundhogs, there are prevention barriers being installed as you read this. The property, outside and inside the compound, is maintained by contract scheduled grass cutting supplemented by volunteer help.

An onsite tool shed with well-stocked tools and a double-wheeled wheelbarrow are on site for easy use. Along with multiple well-supplied water faucets, hoses and reels are supplied. A workbench near the beginning of the rows is provided for you to work off of, set down your veggies, or leave some to share with other gardeners. There are also wood chips to dress up around your beds, and an onsite rain gauge. Periodically or as needed the on site co-coordinator, through the gardeners group contact email list, will report rainfall over night, or during a duration, as well as other pertinent news.

Also onsite is a pavilion with picnic tables for your use as well as two to four beehives to help with pollination, maintained by a local beekeeper who also maintains the hives at the nature center.

In late winter/early spring, a 120' X 10 ' plastic covered hoop house/green house will be available for seedling starts for a jump on the Spring season.

The coordinator will periodically have classes to help both beginning and seasoned gardeners.

All beds are **100 sf**. At grade beds are **10' X 10'** for **\$25**, and raised beds are **12' x 12'** with a **4' x 8'** key-hole in the center and are **\$40**. You can sign up for as many as you want!

All beds will be amended with mushroom compost/topsoil. Any additional amendments are up to the gardener but must be within the guidelines for organic gardening!

Registration form is included with this edition of the Cattails

As I write for this issue of Cattails, the sound of my neighbor's extravagant Halloween decorations are heard through my window. The decor fills their yard and brings delight to those who pass by. Cars pull over to see the skeletons and ghouls hanging from the trees. Thinking of the passion and care given towards what many consider a minor holiday, it reminds us of the little things we give our full effort—some out of love and some out of necessity. Many externalities will leave an impression, lasting generations. When you volunteer for the many activities at Marshy Point, the interactions with friends, strangers, staff, and children become part of their lives as it does yours.

Like the neighbors across the street, you are doing something special by affecting those who share the same interest. Even if the memory is fleeting, it may last the lifetime of a child who tells their future children of the time spent enjoying our park. The park projects involve multiple moving parts to create something great. People will come and go with time and interest, but if a continuous push to achieve holds true, the goals can still be attained. Afterward, sharing of the accomplishment will last for its natural life. When its time has come to an end, it passes as if it were a living being returning to the earth itself.

The nature center, the giant fish playground, the community garden, the archaeology site, and the earth oven reciprocate a gratitude between creator and guest. They were collaborations to complete something amazing. But what about the projects of the past? Their use is symbolic of humans, fallen to ruin and hidden under the leaves and debris. Souls long passed who wanted to create something of value, just like we strive for today, returned to the earth along with their achievements. Time is the only depreciator of former dedication. Should we not memorialize those accomplishments and bring light to what was important for our area, or the individuals who preceded us?

For example, smelting iron is still evident in our park. The byproduct of this process, seen in the form of slag, has been noted in a few locations along Brinkman's Trail and beside Marshy Point Road. We are unaware of the time period these specific pieces were produced as its use extends many years. However, we know it was used to create iron related items such as horseshoes, hinges, and tools. The process involved separating the usable metal from the ore. What was left is slag. While the slag is not equivalent to the examples I use of finished feats, its existence and importance are just as noble. The evidence leads to many questions. Who sourced the ore? Did it come from our hematite rich area called Iron Point? Was it just used for

wrought-iron projects or was it refined more? Is the foundation of a furnace somewhere in the park? We may never know the answers to these questions, but we should seek them out with the same perseverance as we would want to be remembered.

What will be left to those wishing to touch the past centuries from now? The permanence of our triumphs are up to you. Without volunteers, staff, and participants with devotion, will the visitors of the future be left with a handful of nails from a forgotten playground? Will it be chunks of clay from our earth oven? Will it be a scattering of bricks and stone from



the nature center? Will our cemetery fall to ruin again? We count on your support and interest to maintain the distinction Marshy Point deserves. The time we spend with family, friends, or alone at Marshy Point makes it just as much our home as it was to those of the past.

Please consider volunteering and telling us your story of what Marshy Point means to you.

President's Message

Dave Oshman

I hope everyone has enjoyed the park this year. I know I've logged more miles on our trails than in any previous year. In 2022, we are hoping that things will get closer to normal, if we can even remember what "normal" was. As we consider our budget, we are hoping to start back up with all of our events, including the Spring and Fall Festivals, along with the Summer Solstice Faerie Festival. Thank you for all of your support and we hope to see you even more in 2022.

By-Law Voting

Dave Oshman

We need your input on changes to our bylaws and election of new officers. These will be brought up for vote at our Holiday Party, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, December 4th.

The Bylaws changes are to adjust the Council year to start on January 1, instead of September 1 and changing the number of members required for a quorum (changed from 10% of total membership to an even 20 members). See the attached draft updated Bylaws for details.

To effect the changes to the bylaws, we need to reach a quorum of members that vote. We currently have 390 members, which means that 39 need to vote. At the Holiday party, we will have a sign-in sheet. If you are a member, you may place your vote on the sign-in sheet. That will count towards the quorum. We will also actively vote during the meeting if you would prefer, but please don't do both. If you would like to discuss the changes at the Council meeting on December 4th, feel free. If you have any questions about the changes that you'd like to bring up beforehand, please reach out to our President, Dave Oshman at president@marshypoint.org.

Regarding elections, last year, the Executive Board members agreed to extend their positions for an additional year due to the inability to meet as a group to hold elections. But for the Council year 2022, we will hold elections at the Holiday Party. All of the current officers are running unopposed, with the exception of our Vice President, Chris Davis, who has asked to step down from his position, while still remaining a Director. Ms. Dawn Duffy has accepted the nomination for Vice President.

The current Board of Directors that are running for their position are:

President: Dave Oshman, unopposed
Secretary: Cathy Finnegan, unopposed
Director: Mary Gruver-Byers, unopposed
Director: Chris Davis, unopposed

Vice President: Dawn Duffy, unopposed
Treasurer: Angelo Bianca, unopposed
Director: John Coffman, unopposed

Support Marshy Point Nature Center

The Marshy Point Nature Center 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. Applications will be available online (www.marshypoint.org) or by calling the Nature Center.

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Equity in Nature and Interpretive Education Briana Searfoss

As environmental educators, it is our job not only to deliver memorable conservational messaging as part of a kinetic, enriching program, but it is also our duty to act as ambassadors for natural exploration. Part of this duty is reaching historically underserved populations and establishing resources for our parks and nature centers so they can be accessible by all. This process brings up the concept of equity in nature and interpretive education. Now, this isn't a new concept, but it is one that often experiences a resource and evaluation deficit. More often than not, it is assumed that nature, being an all-encompassing entity, is readily available to all who wish to seek its benefits, but what about those who do not have the resources or knowledge to do so? How do we create a lifeline to populations lacking these wondrous opportunities? As educators, we can participate in outreach programs, adopt equitable practices, such as choosing accessible program locations, researching our populations background and unique needs, and offering accessible programming to underserved neighborhoods. It is our duty to perform regular self-evaluations to determine if we are acting in best practices, keeping up-to-date on the latest equity research, and reaching out to those we serve to see where our educational deficits lie.

This work is not only for environmental educators, however. To better our world for those who inhabit it, it's our duty to evaluate ourselves on an individual level to see how we can better our role in enhancing equitable opportunities. Understanding equity and its place in nature and society doesn't have to be a daunting task, and it shouldn't be. To take the first step, take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions and see how you answer them. There is no right or wrong answer, but this should act as the start to a conversation about equity with yourself and others:

- How do you define equity? What examples can you come up with that exemplify equity?
- What populations come to mind when you hear the word "equity"? Why?
- Where do you see equitable practices in your community? What areas are lacking equitable practices?
- How can you introduce others to nature? How can you be a nature guide while incorporating equitable practices?