



Cattails

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www.marshypoint.org | 410-887-2817



The Marshy Point Nature Center Council's Newsletter Winter 2022-2023

Reflection and Thankfulness

Daniel Dean

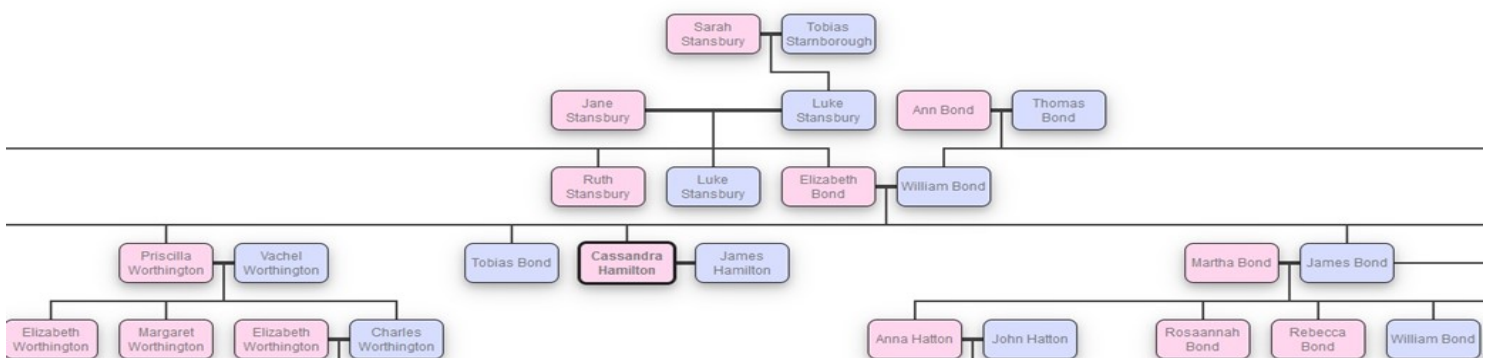
Sharing Marshy Point's history has become a key passion for me. It all stems from a love of learning about the past and the ambition to figure out what isn't well known. If you read my previous articles or caught one of my talks at our festivals, you'll know that Cassandra Hamilton was the prominent figure behind a mystery. Her grave was our only clue into a past without context. Since 2019, we have come a long way into her life's timeline at Marshy Point, along with her immediate family who made this land their home. Inheriting the property from her father, William Bond, in 1769 and remaining in the deeds until the early 20th century was a big deal. Another important source of insight is having her gravestone marked with a name clear enough to read. Finding items left behind from her lifetime established a connection I never imagined would be obtainable. Displaying and discussing these items and their provenance with our community and will assist in progressing our archaeological endeavors through education and outreach.

So, what's next? I prefer long-term goals over the typical New Year's resolution. One of those goals is a new family-tree exhibit in the nature center that will undergo construction in the coming new year.

Our cemetery—located off the yellow trail—contains several, probable grave shafts, which were discovered during the Maryland Historical Trust's Office of Archaeology's survey; our hope with this family tree is to reduce the overall guesswork of who may or may not be interred along with Cassandra. In addition, this may help those seeking their own family journey, as the Bonds—along with their spouses' families—were eminent members of their world at that time.

Another important goal and aspect of this research is to bring to light those left in written history's shadows and to create a platform upon which they can speak their truths. Enslaved, indentured, and imprisoned individuals completed most of the labor necessary to develop early American communities, but written history failed to properly acknowledge their stories. While no current evidence exists of Marshy Point being a major plantation or a large, labor-supported property, it is important to uncover what we can for the few individuals listed in past tax records and commemorate their lives during an unjust time.

We will continue to explore and examine areas of interest throughout the new year. Our park is vast



Reflection and Thankfulness cont'd.

Daniel Dean

with hidden details, which could possibly lead to an expanded project that spans multiple generations and delves into the area's prehistory.

During the winter season, please continue enjoying the history display located in the nature center's auditorium as you warm up after a cold-weather walk. We will add to shelves as we uncover more pertinent information. I am thankful for the many

opportunities provided by both the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks and the Marshy Point Nature Center Council to ensure our history is sought out and preserved. We may never learn the personalities of those who trekked the land we laid trails upon; however, we will forever remain an open and honest source of artifacts and information the earth presents about our history.

Hummingbirds

Valerie Greenhalgh

Hummingbirds are amazing, little birds, almost magical in both their appearance and flight. While there are hundreds of species that nest in the American tropics and more than a dozen species in the western United States, the little three-and-a-half-inch ruby-throated hummingbird is the only species that breeds east of the Mississippi River. Don't let their delicate appearance fool you—the ruby-throated hummingbird makes the long annual journey to the American tropics during their fall migration, with many trading a safer route for a 500-mile non-stop flight over the Gulf of Mexico.

Ruby-throats have an incredible wing speed of about fifty three beats per second. Based on these speeds, it comes as no surprise that hummingbirds have the highest metabolism of all species. Given their high calorie output, hummingbirds eat frequently and can consume more than fifty percent of their body weight in food each day; when not taking in large quantities of calories, hummingbirds can spend up to eighty percent of their time sitting, perching, and digesting.

If you have ever looked closely at a ruby-throated hummingbird, it appears that they actually have no legs. Their little legs are so short that they simply shuffle along, unable to walk or hop. In fact, they are of a taxonomic order of Apodiformes, which in part means "weak feet."

Hummingbirds are specialized for feeding on nectar from flowers, but they also consume flying insects and spiders. Vulnerable to starvation due to their high metabolism, hummingbirds tend to zero in on reliable food sources and can be territorial, often guarding feeders from other hummingbirds. If you choose to use a hummingbird feeder as a food source, please keep in mind that red food dye is not necessary to attract hummingbirds.

These little wondrous birds will begin their annual migration back to the United States and Canada in late February to early March, reaching the Gulf Coast states by mid- to late March. Get your feeders ready this spring and enjoy!



President's Message

Dave Oshman

I'm afraid to say it, but as of the time of writing this, COVID seems to have finally settled down in the United States. Things certainly seemed closer to normal than in many years. One serendipity that COVID brought was many more people out of doors and into our park. I hope everyone has enjoyed the park as much as I have this past year. Personally, my

favorite amenity of the park is our community garden, which was started in 2021. We have several plots open for next spring if you'd like to try your hand at gardening. Have a wonderful holiday season, and I look forward to seeing many of you around the park next year—maybe even in the garden!

Senior Naturalist's Report

John Lehman

The vagabond opossum has gobbled up the last of the persimmon, the Ranidae have dug themselves partially into the mud, and the vigilant squirrels are caching their pignut hickories. There is something outstanding about fall at Marshy Point. I would like to think it is a combination of the cool breezes drifting off the Gunpowder to Dundee Creek, the white-throated sparrows and juncos' familiar calls, and the sweetgum leaves' unmistakable, saccharine smell amongst the forest floor that brings about a refreshing but nostalgic sense of peace.

Since the last time I wrote this report, we had our 14th Fall Festival, annual member's fish fry, fall trail guide training, and season's end at our community garden; I hope I was able to chat with you during one of those events. Our Fall Festival saw a great visitor, vendor, and exhibitor turnout; amongst the laughter-filled hay rides, apple butter's aromatic scent, resounding live music, and endless festive merriment, I observed with pride Marshy Point's dedicated volunteers and staff working diligently to put on such a wonderful event for the public. Along with the larger events, staff hosted a collaborative event with the National Park Trust and Wilderness Inquiry. For two days, staff led land-based animal

encounters and sensory hikes in the park and nature center while the kind Wilderness Inquiry folks led educational canoe trips for Baltimore City schools; in two days, approximately 200 students were able to experience Marshy Point.

Along with our weekday field trips at the marsh, we had some diligent scouts complete several projects. Our nature exploration backpacks received a much-needed update; they are now available for rent and can be found in our front lobby. Another scout installed bird strike indicators on the backside of the nature center windows. These indicators break up the forest reflection for birds and reduces the deadly bird collisions into the nature center windows. Many thanks to our hard working scouts!

Like the white-tailed deer here in the park, staff are preparing for winter. However, we are not growing out our grey winter coats with long-guard hairs and wooly underfur. Instead, we are looking towards engaging in regular public programming, maintaining the park's trail system, updating exhibits, and working with our spectacular team of volunteers. If you are ever in the area, come stop on by! There is a good chance I'll have the wood stove going so you can warm up from your winter adventures.

Membership Renewal

Dave Oshman

As a reminder, Marshy Point Nature Center Council (MPNCC) memberships transitioned to a calendar-year renewal in 2022; current 2022 memberships will expire in December, and 2023 memberships will begin in January 2023. That being said, you are always welcome to renew your membership early (or gift one as a holiday present). You can renew your membership by completing and returning the enclosed membership form (in person or by mail) or going online to www.marshypoint.org. If you decide to use the paper form, please include cash or a check made out to Marshy Point Nature Center Council; web renewals are processed through Paypal.

MPNCC memberships provide exceptional benefits, such as discounted programs, member-only events, priority summer camp registration, and summer camp discounts (family memberships only). While there are many personal benefits gained through a MPNCC membership, the park and nature benefits as well! The Nature Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit,

helps fund Marshy Point's various operational aspects, such as special events, programs, exhibits, trail maintenance, community outreach, archaeology projects, and animal ambassador care and supplies. Your membership fee could be the very money put towards an animal ambassador's newest enrichment or the newest addition to the community garden. By being a member, you are taking an active roll in promoting conservation education and preserving our environment. Marshy Point's success

Feel free to call the nature center at 410-887-2817 or email contact@marshypoint.org with questions!



Are you interested in starting or expanding your native plant collection? Do you like to save money? Winter sowing is an inexpensive way to accomplish both. Native perennials provide essential food sources for insects and pollinators, such as moths, butterflies, honeybees, and native bees. Without the insects, there is little for birds to eat. One nest of baby chickadees will eat over nine thousand insects before they leave the nest! A native oak tree will host over five hundred different types of butterfly and moth caterpillars. I am not suggesting you try to winter sow an oak tree, but winter sowing native plants will increase the food supply for pollinators and birds. It is a great project for kids, especially on a cold winter day. Mid to late December until early February is the best time to do this.

In essence, you are going to create as many mini-terrariums as you have space—and desire—to propagate. Here is what you need:

- Rinsed-out, empty gallon milk jugs or other plastic containers (added benefit of using these otherwise waste stream products)
- Duct tape
- Glue gun or sharp knife or scissors
- Sharpie or another indelible marker
- Soilless seed starter (avoid moisture retentive or weed control types)
- Willingness to get your hands dirty
- Seeds

Buying seeds costs around three dollars a packet. Buying plants or even plugs adds up very quickly. Getting free seeds from a gardening friend is even better.

Make between four and six small holes in the milk jug's bottom with the heat gun or sharp knife. Make a cut around the milk jug about halfway from the bottom leaving the top attached to the bottom by a hinge at the handle. You can line the bottom with newspaper or a coffee filter if you want. Fill the jug's bottom half with about four inches of the seed starter mixture. If you have very tiny seeds, you may wish to mix them with some sand as you plant them in the seed mixture. Otherwise, just plant the seed as you would normally do, following the depth instructions on the packet but ignoring the distance

apart suggestions. Give them a good spritz from a hand-held sprayer. Now, close the jug's top half so it meets the bottom, and duct tape it back together. Voila! Your mini terrarium is ready to use. Wait! Do not forget to label what you put in the jug. Use a sharpie to write right on the jug. Since these things will outlive all of us, in subsequent years I cover the writing with more duct tape and describe that year's planting.

Do NOT replace the caps on the jug. You want air and water to get to your seeds. I know it seems counterintuitive, but place the jugs outside where they receive at least partial sun, and leave them there until at least March. If your area experiences a prolonged period with no snow or rain, mist them with the sprayer. You should see condensation form in the jugs even in the bitter cold. If algae form, simply unwrap the jug and expose it to the sun and air and the algae should disappear. Many native plants need a period of stratification to grow; that is exactly what you are providing. In the absence of a gardener's helping hand, seeds overcome dormancy by spending time outside, where the seed's hard coat is softened by frost and weathering. This cold period triggers the seed's embryo, and as it grows, it can break through the now softened outer part of the seed.

Once your seeds have spouted and the frost-free date approaches, open up the jugs during the day for two to three days before transplanting them so they can harden off and acclimate to their soon-to-be freedom. You can separate each seedling, or you can plant them in a hunk and let nature decide who will thrive. You may be surprised at how long and extensive the roots are. This means it worked!

Some good native seed choices—many of which can be found in Marshy Point's native garden on the front lawn—are columbine, bee balm, cardinal flower, ironweed, Joe-Pye weed and mountain mint. You can also use this method for vegetables; however, I recommend not starting them until March. Happy winter gardening!

Carl Gold is a Maryland Master Naturalist and can be reached at cgold@carlgoldlaw.com.

Do something good for yourself—and our planet—this holiday season! According to the Climate Change 2022 authors, studies show that a shift to plant-based diets rich in pulses, nuts, fruits, and vegetables could lead to substantial reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as compared to current dietary patterns in most industrialized countries. You'd be surprised how easy that shift is! In fact, many of your holiday favorites can be made with “accidentally vegan”, easy-to-find ingredients. Here are some plant-based recipes for you to try this holiday season!

SAVORY NUT STUFFING

Ingredients

- 1 loaf day-old bread, cubed and left to dry out overnight
- 1 cup nuts and seeds, mixed (walnuts, pecans, almonds, sunflower seeds, pepitas...)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup mushrooms, mixed
- ½ cup plant-based butter
- ½ box or one cans vegetable broth

Cooking Instructions

Preheat your oven to 325 degrees F. Sauté the celery, onion, garlic, mushrooms, and nuts and seeds in half of the plant-based butter. When all vegetables are soft and slightly browned, add them to cubed bread. Moisten with vegetable broth and the rest of butter, melted. Mix thoroughly and spread in a 9 x 12 buttered casserole dish. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake for another 15 minutes until the top is brown.

CRANBERRY-MANDARIN-GINGER SAUCE

Ingredients

- 12 ounces cranberries, rinsed
- 8 to 10 small mandarin oranges, peeled and sectioned
- Two-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled
- 1 cup brown, coconut, demerara, or other type of darker natural sugar
- ¼ cup bourbon or rum (optional)

Cooking Instructions

Put all the ingredients into a large saucepan and bring to a slow boil. Turn down and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes. Taste and add more sugar if needed. Let cool and remove ginger before serving.

GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

Ingredients

- 2 cans green beans
- 2 cans Campbell's mushroom gravy
- ¼ flour
- ½ cup oat milk
- garlic powder, onion powder, salt & pepper to taste
- 1½ crispy fried onions

Cooking Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Drain green beans and spread in 9 x 9 casserole dish. Add milk to gravy and thicken with flour. Pour over green beans and season. Stir in half of crispy fried onions. Bake for 20 minutes. Top with rest of onions and bake for 5 more minutes.

In the traditional Christmas carol, holly and ivy are an appealing combination, but don't be fooled! One of these characters is generous with its gifts, while the other is an environmental Grinch!

Ilex opaca, commonly called American holly, is an evergreen tree native to eastern and central United States; it is frequently found in moist woods and forest bottomlands adjacent to rivers and streams. We are fortunate to have an abundance of American holly trees in every part of Maryland. They are a handsome, slow-growing, and shade-tolerant tree.

Maryland is home to two other native hollies, inkberry (*Ilex glabra*) and winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), which have a shrub-like growth habit. *Ilex opaca* is our only native holly tree with spiny evergreen leaves and bright red berries, making it a popular decoration at Christmastime, symbolizing both the sacred and merry making since the time of the Druids. Have hollies but no berries? They are probably male. Hollies are dioecious, which means they exist in nature as separate male and female plants and only the female produces berries. Female hollies can also lack berries if there is no male nearby to provide pollen for reproduction. The female flowers are pollinated by insects, including bees, wasps, ants, and night-flying moths, who often don't get sufficient credit for their many good deeds. The holly's dense canopy offers protection to birds from predators and storms. A savvy squirrel will build its nest, or dray, in a holly for the same reasons. The berries provide an essential winter food source for overwintering songbirds, such as bluebirds, robins, mockingbirds, and other thrush species. Occasionally, a migrating group of robins or cedar waxwings will actually strip a tree bare in a matter of hours to fuel their journey. Some game birds and small mammals also enjoy holly berries, but BEWARE! The berries are poisonous to dogs, cats, and humans.

English ivy (*Hedera helix*), on the other hand, is an environmental Grinch that strikes a sour note and disrupts the landscape's harmony. English Ivy is an invasive, non-native plant that can rob a forest of its diversity—and if left unchecked—its very vitality. Even the smallest patch of English ivy can spread rapidly and overwhelm native plants found on the forest floor that support wildlife and provide habitat. The ivy will eventually make its way to the base of a

tree and begin its climb up the trunk and along the branches. Ivy leaves block sunlight from reaching the tree's foliage and interfere with photosynthesis, thus depriving the tree of the nutrients it needs to thrive. This invasive plant's foliage can become so dense that the tree can no longer sustain itself and slowly dies.

English ivy spreads readily on the ground, but only flowers and reproduces sexually when it climbs a tree (or fence, wall, etc.). There it produces berries that are consumed by birds, whose droppings spread the seeds for countless more plants, uncontrolled in our woodlands. What can be done to stop the spread of this invader? Here's what you need to know to get started.

First, stop ivy from reproducing by tackling it on the trees. Cut the vines around the base of the tree and again at about three to four feet up, then remove the sections of ivy vines between your cuts. Be careful not to nick the tree bark when you make your cuts and to gently pry the vines from the tree to avoid pulling off any bark. Ivy left in the tree will remain green for a while, but now that it's been separated from its roots, it will eventually dry up and die. Although it may be tempting, DO NOT try to pull the upper vines down from the tree! English ivy produces root clusters and sticky tendrils along its stems that adhere to the tree's bark as it climbs. Pulling the vines can damage the bark, and you run the risk of unintentionally pulling a dead tree branch down on your head!

Next, create an ivy-free zone on the ground by removing ivy in a three-foot perimeter around the base of each tree. Check back from time to time and pull to ensure ivy can't reach the tree.

Finally, it's time to tackle the enemy on the ground. Ivy has shallow roots and is fairly easy to pull, especially after a rain. An efficient technique is ivy mat-rolling. Make a straight cut across a manageable portion of a patch then, starting at the edge, roll up the ivy like a rug. It seems like an endless task, but diligence and repetition will pay off, and native plants buried under the ivy carpet will again make their appearance.

Please note: For all its environmental downsides, English ivy helps curb erosion on steep slopes and hillsides. Before stripping ivy from these areas, please make an advance plan for replacing it with an alternative native ground cover, especially near

The Holly and the Ivy cont'd.

Lise Crafton

bodies of water where a naked slope's sediment run-off can wreak havoc on the aquatic habitat.

Winter is nearly upon us. The trees' seasonal loss of deciduous leaves is your gain! Ivy's evergreen leaves are easy to spy almost everywhere. Now is the perfect time to get outside, tromp around in the forest, and start to eliminate this Grinch from our beautiful woodlands.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful "green" holiday season filled with all the gifts that Nature provides.

Lise Crafton is a Maryland Master Gardener & Master Naturalist and with the Anne Arundel County Weed Resistance

Chesapeake Dolphin Watch

Jamie Testa

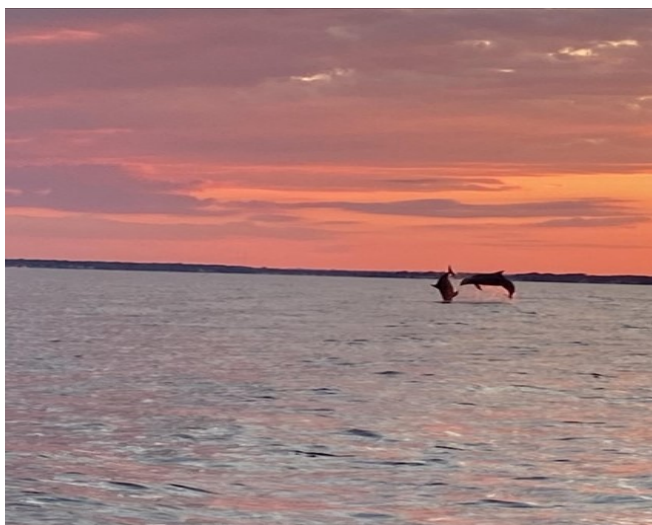
Little is known about how often bottlenose dolphins come into the Chesapeake Bay, how long they spend here, and what areas of the Bay they are using and why. In 2017, Dr. Helen Bailey and her team at Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (CBL) developed an app that engages the public to help answer these questions. Members of the public can report dolphin sightings in real time. This observation network provides information on dolphin distribution, and local residents are encouraged to learn about these animals and their environment through participating in this research project.

We are beginning to receive reports of dolphins north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and in the tributaries off this portion of the bay. We hope Marshy Point Nature Center visitors will keep their eyes peeled for dolphins and report each sighting in the Chesapeake DolphinWatch app. Based on the first five years' data collection, the best time to see dolphins that far north in the bay is June and July.

To join over 12,000 observers who are already reporting dolphin sightings, set up a free account at chesapeakedolphinwatch.org or download the app on your mobile device. All you need to sign up is an email address.

To report a dolphin sighting:

1. Click the map location where you saw dolphins
2. Enter your dolphin sighting date and time
3. Select the group size from the slider bar
4. Type a short description of what you saw, where you observed the dolphins, or other interesting details
5. upload images (photos or video)



*Image by Ashley Ruff from
Gunpowder River mouth, July 2022.*



To download the mobile app on your device, hold the camera on your smartphone focusing on the circular image above. Allow your phone to open the link when prompted.



Marshy Point Nature Center
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Support Marshy Point Nature Center

Help support Marshy Point by becoming a member! Our annual memberships are valid January 1 – December 31. Membership fees vary by type, which includes individual, single senior, senior couple, and family options. Members receive special program discounts, have access to priority summer camp registration—including a \$25 discount for family membership holders—and are invited to members-only events. Membership fees support the nature center and park by funding programs, scholarships, animal care, exhibit development, trail maintenance, and more. You can begin or renew your membership on our website or by completing and returning the membership registration form; fees may be paid by check made out to MPNCC, with cash, or on our website.

The Marshy Point Nature Center Council presents yearly scholarships to college-bound seniors and undergraduate students who display a high-level commitment to the environment's health, plan to continue their studies in environmental sciences or nature education, and maintain a strong affiliation with Marshy Point. Applicants must be a freshman, sophomore, or transfer (first-time) student entering their Junior year. The scholarship applications and additional qualification information is available on our website; we are currently accepting scholarship applications for the 2023 Spring Semester; please submit applications and supporting documentation by **January 1, 2023**.

Marshy Point Newsletter Staff

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