

A Handbook for Volunteers

 PICKERING CREEK
Audubon CENTER



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Welcome!

Dear Volunteer,

You are now a member of the Pickering Creek family and a vital part of our center and our programs.

Pickering Creek volunteers make a difference in the lives of local children and the ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay.

From building trails and weeding gardens, to teaching classes and writing letters, your help makes Pickering Creek possible!

No matter what your expertise, we have a position that will fit your talents, expand your horizons and fill you with the satisfaction of a job well done.

Thank you for becoming a Pickering Creek volunteer!

You are helping to preserve the heritage, health, and beauty of the Eastern Shore for our generation and the next.

Sincerely,

Samantha Pitts
Volunteer Coordinator
Teacher Naturalist

Mark Scallion
Center Director

About Pickering Creek Audubon Center and National Audubon Society

Pickering Creek's Mission

“Pickering Creek Audubon Center is dedicated to community-based conservation of natural resources through environmental education and outreach on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay.”

A History of Pickering Creek Audubon Center

Pre-colonial: Prior to the arrival of the colonists, the Center's old growth forest was the home of a seasonal Matapeake Indian Village. These first inhabitants of the sanctuary disappeared shortly after the opening of the Eastern Shore to agriculture and colonization.

1600's – 1800's: The Lloyd family purchased most of the tillable agriculture land in northern Talbot County. The property that is now Pickering Creek was a portion of their Wye Heights Plantation. Edward Lloyd VII sold the parcel containing Pickering Creek Audubon Center in the 1890's to the Renshaws when it was known as the “New Quarter Farm.”

1940: The land was sold to George Olds, Jr., a graduate of Amherst College and a nationally acclaimed businessman.

1943: Mr. Olds retired from his job with the Continental Oil Company to live on the farm with his wife Margaret Atwater Olds. The farm was renamed “Heigh-Ho Farm.”

1970's: Mr. And Mrs. Olds' death left “Heigh-Ho Farm” in the hands of their children, George D. Olds III and Margaret Olds Strahl.

1982: George D. Olds III and Margaret Strahl started donating portions of the property to Chesapeake Audubon Society.

1988: Through contracts with the National Resources Defense Council, George Olds obtained a major 3-year grant in the amount of \$150,000 to initiate a formal program of school field trips. A full-time director and educator were hired and the Pickering Creek Environmental Center was created.

1991: George D. Olds III passed away leaving his legacy of Pickering Creek and all its programs to carry on the tradition of education and conservation. Dr. Stuart Strahl, nephew of George D. Olds III, was named executive director of Pickering Creek.

1992: Dr. Stuart Strahl hired a Director of Education.

1994: Margaret Strahl, co-founder of Pickering Creek Environmental Center passed away, dedicating the last few years of her life to the center. Pickering Creek's environmental education program was built into the Talbot County curriculum. Since that time, every first through fourth grade class in Talbot County either visits Pickering Creek or has a Pickering Creek educator visit the classroom or meet the class at an outreach site.

1995: An Outdoor Education Coordinator and an Agriculture Stewardship Coordinator were hired as permanent staff.

1996: Richard R. Leader was hired as the new executive director of Pickering Creek Environmental Center. Through grant funds from the Grace Kerr Fund, May Foundation and Friends Research Institute, Pickering Creek added a low-ropes confidence course including 12 permanent and 50 portable elements.

1997: Pickering Creek kicked off its first year of a Community Supported Agriculture program.

1998: As the programs grow and reach even more people, so does the staff. Pickering Creek adds two new staff members to a staff of 6. Throughout the year it also increases its seasonal interns by 2 to 6 a year.

2000: Pickering Creek Environmental Center becomes an "official" Audubon center and is re-titled "Pickering Creek Audubon Center." Chesapeake Audubon Society continues to own and manage the site. National Audubon Society opens its Maryland Audubon state office and Rick Leader becomes the Executive Director of Audubon Maryland-DC. Mark Scallion becomes Pickering Creek's Center Director.

2001: Audubon Maryland-DC opens up an office in Patterson Park, Baltimore. The center begins offering environmental education programs to local children.

2002: Pickering Creek installs 25 acres of freshwater wetlands with funding from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage (CWH).

2003: Pickering Creek receives a large grant from the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Association (NOAA) to design and facilitate a high school education program called "the Audubon Watershed Experience." Subsequent years receive funding again from NOAA and the Waterfowl Festival, and the program becomes very successful.

2005: Pickering Creek breaks ground for a further 50 acres of freshwater wetlands, again funded by the USDA and CWH, expanding Pickering Creek's Trail System.

2006-2007: Pickering Creek installs two riparian buffer strips with the assistance of volunteers. These plantings, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, filter run-off from farm fields and provide essential habitat for birds and wildlife.

2006-2007: The education staff, pen and release two curricula guides, Gateways to Conservation I (grades 1-5) and II (grades 6-8)

2008: Audubon names Jacqui Bonomo the second state director in November 2008.

2010: The expanded trail will include a new birding platform to be completed by October of 2010.

Currently over three miles of trails are open to the public 365 days a year.

The Legacy of Pickering Creek Audubon Center: The Story of George Olds, III and Margaret Olds Strahl

Who Were They?

George Olds, Jr. and his wife had a sense of community spirit and generosity towards Talbot County. As the president of the Memorial Hospital, he developed a landmark fundraising campaign that brought in over 1.5 million dollars in 1952 for expansion of the facility. He also served on the Washington College Board of Governors from the 1950s to the 1970s. Mrs. Olds served as chairperson of the Maryland Board of Mental Health, among other charities.

Their children carried the Olds' tradition for service and dedication to the community. After service in WWII, George Olds, III returned to Talbot County to pursue a career in the frozen food business. Over the next 45 years, he became one of the great civic leaders of Talbot County. His contributions to the development of community programs such as the YMCA, Academy of the Arts and Memorial Hospital were legendary. He was a member of Cruising Sailors of St. Michaels, the New York Zoological Society, and Wildlife Conservation International. Somebody once said: "He was one of the most amazing people I ever met. I've never heard him have a bad day or have a negative word to say. He was completely upbeat. He had wonderment about everything that was going on." His sister, Margaret Olds Strahl, pursued a career in psychiatry in New York spanning 50 years, publishing several landmark texts in her specialty field. She volunteered for family service programs, treatment of Vietnam veterans, and worked on several charitable boards in psychiatry, conservation, and population issues.

Why Did They Want to Create an Environmental Center?

George Olds, III first became interested in the environment when he was in the Navy during WWII. He was amazed to see the star-filled sky at night. "I got the tremendous feeling for nature...even when you saw the thousands of stars, you couldn't help but wonder." He carried his concern for the environment with him to Talbot County. George's sister, Margaret Olds Strahl, worked with the New York Zoological Society and Wildlife Conservation International. Like George, she became concerned about the environment.

"We do so in appreciation of and behalf of those among us who place value in preserving natural riches wherever they exist. We want those in our immediate greater Community who love the myriad forms of life in nature to inherit with us now what little we can make available to them, namely the Pickering Creek sample of untrampled land... Ultimately we hope that this property will be made available for education programs involving our Community's school children. If this world is ever to bring mankind's material needs into harmony with the needs of our natural environment, we must start with the education of the young people." – George Olds, III, and Margaret Olds Strahl, 1982.

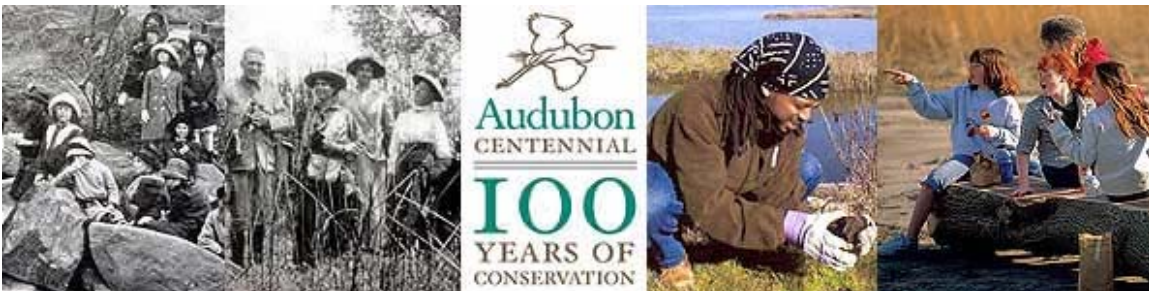
National Audubon Society's Mission



Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

A History of National Audubon Society



Audubon Turns 100

Over one hundred years ago, a committed group of Americans came together to protect birds from slaughter at the hands of plume-hunters. Hats sporting feathers and even entire birds were the height of fashion, making the hunting of egrets and other birds a highly profitable enterprise. Fortunately, the bold and dedicated efforts of a far-sighted group of men and women were successful in saving the Great Egret and other birds from extinction. It was these early conservationists who founded the National Audubon Society, which still includes the Great Egret in its logo.

Today, Audubon is continuing its legacy of protecting birds and other wildlife through individual action. Citizen science programs, like the century-old Christmas Bird Count, the more recently launched Great Backyard Bird Count and the Important Bird Areas Program enlist thousands of volunteers for conservation. Audubon Centers from coast to

coast introduce new generations to the wonders of nature and the importance of protecting it. Grassroots activists advocate for sound national, state and local environmental policy through on-the-ground and web-based initiatives.

As Audubon enters its second century, the conservation challenges we face are no less urgent than those that confronted our founders. Our mission remains as vital as it was one hundred years ago. Birds have long served as barometers for the overall health of our environment, and of our own quality of life and health. By helping to protect them, each of us, like the men and women who worked to outlaw plume hunting, can make a conservation difference. That is the Audubon legacy.

The Legacy of National Audubon Society: The Story of John James Audubon



John James Audubon (1785-1851) was not the first person to attempt to paint and describe all the birds of America (Alexander Wilson has that distinction), but for half a century he was the young country's dominant wildlife artist. His seminal *Birds of America*, a collection of 435 life-size prints, quickly eclipsed Wilson's work and is still a standard against which 20th and 21st century bird artists, such as Roger Tory Peterson and David Sibley, are measured.

Although Audubon had no role in the organization that bears his name, there is a connection: George Bird Grinnell, one of the founders of the early Audubon Society in the late 1800s, was tutored by Lucy Audubon, John James's widow. Knowing Audubon's reputation, Grinnell chose his name as the inspiration for the organization's earliest work to protect birds and their habitats. Today, the name Audubon remains synonymous with birds and bird conservation the world over.

Audubon was born in Saint Domingue (now Haiti), the illegitimate son of a French sea captain and plantation owner and his French mistress. Early on, he was raised by his stepmother, Mrs. Audubon, in Nantes, France, and took a lively interest in birds, nature, drawing, and music. In 1803, at the age of 18, he was sent to America, in part to escape conscription into the Emperor Napoleon's army. He lived on the family-owned estate at Mill Grove, near Philadelphia, where he hunted, studied and drew birds, and met his wife, Lucy Bakewell. While there, he conducted the first known bird-banding experiment in North America, tying strings around the legs of Eastern Phoebes; he learned that the birds returned to the very same nesting sites each year.

Audubon spent more than a decade in business, eventually traveling down the Ohio River to western Kentucky – then the frontier – and setting up a dry-goods store in Henderson. He continued to draw birds as a hobby, amassing an impressive portfolio. While in Kentucky, Lucy gave birth to two sons, Victor Gifford and John Woodhouse, as well as a daughter who died in infancy. Audubon was quite successful in business for a while, but

hard times hit, and in 1819 he was briefly jailed for bankruptcy.

With no other prospects, Audubon set off on his epic quest to depict America's avifauna, with nothing but his gun, artist's materials, and a young assistant. Floating down the Mississippi, he lived a rugged hand-to-mouth existence in the South while Lucy earned money as a tutor to wealthy plantation families. In 1826 he sailed with his partly finished collection to England. "The American Woodsman" was literally an overnight success. His life-size, highly dramatic bird portraits, along with his embellished descriptions of wilderness life, hit just the right note at the height of the Continent's Romantic era. Audubon found a printer for the *Birds of America*, first in Edinburgh, then London, and later collaborated with the Scottish ornithologist William MacGillivray on the *Ornithological Biographies* – life histories of each of the species in the work.

The last print was issued in 1838, by which time Audubon had achieved fame and a modest degree of comfort, traveled this country several more times in search of birds, and settled in New York City. He made one more trip out West in 1843, the basis for his final work of mammals, the *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*, which was largely completed by his sons and the text of which was written by his long-time friend, the Lutheran pastor John Bachman (whose daughters married Audubon's sons). Audubon spent his last years in senility and died at age 65. He is buried in the Trinity Cemetery at 155th Street and Broadway in New York City.

Audubon's story is one of triumph over adversity; his accomplishment is destined for the ages. He encapsulates the spirit of young America, when the wilderness was limitless and beguiling. He was a person of legendary strength and endurance as well as a keen observer of birds and nature. Like his peers, he was an avid hunter, and he also had a deep appreciation and concern for conservation; in his later writings he sounded the alarm about destruction of birds and habitats. It is fitting that today we carry his name and legacy into the future.

Get to Know Pickering Creek

The Staff of Pickering Creek

Mark Scallion, Center Director	mscallion@audubon.org
Mandy Smith, Education Coordinator	mlsmith@audubon.org
Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator and Teacher Naturalist	spitts@audubon.org
Kelsey Frey, Teacher/Naturalist and Summer Camp Director	kfrey@audubon.org

The Outdoor and Indoor Classrooms of Pickering Creek

The following classrooms of Pickering Creek are the places we use to teach children and adults about the wildlife and habitats of the Eastern Shore.

Forest:

Pickering Creek has 95 acres of old growth forest that lie along the creek and 15 acres of recent succession forest. The old growth forest is primarily beech forest with an abundance of sweet gum, loblolly pine, Virginia pine, cypress, juniper, tulip poplar, white and red oak, and sassafras. Also present are black walnut, cherry, mountain laurel, American holly, and sycamore. The succession forest is primarily full of loblolly pine, sweet gum, Virginia pine, cypress, and juniper.

Tidal Marshes:

Pickering Creek has several acres of tidal marsh. Marsh grasses, sedges, and reeds live in the marsh. Wood ducks love this area of the property as do owls, frogs, snakes, and baby fish needing protection before they move out into larger bodies of water.

Deep Water Creek:

At the end of the Fisherman's Shanty the average depth of water is 7 feet. Many fish can be found here including yellow perch, shiners, rock fish, crabs, and spot. The water is brackish and has an average turbidity of 3 feet.

Oyster Reef:

Underneath the Pickering Creek dock there is an oyster reef of approximately 400 square feet in size. Pickering Creek participates in the Chesapeake Bay Foundation oyster restoration project and helps to raise baby oyster spat in floats. Previously, Pickering Creek raised two sets of oyster spats, which we then added to the oyster reef underneath the dock.

Pickering Creek received new spat in late 2006. We will monitor these spat and return them to the CBF once they reach suitable size for placement in oyster sanctuaries throughout the Bay.

Freshwater Wetlands:

In 2002, Pickering Creek converted 25 acres of agricultural fields into a freshwater wetland by sculpting and building land to create a depression. Rain filled the depression to form a shallow pool of water that remains full all year long. A meadow was planted around the wetlands, completing the habitat. Today visitors see a great variety of birds at the wetlands including many shorebirds, waterfowl, and migrating species. A further 50 acres of freshwater wetlands are being added to the first 25. This project received funding from the US Department of Agriculture and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage.

The Farm:

Pickering Creek is a working farm. A local farmer, whose family has been farming the property for four generations, plants and harvests soybeans, wheat, and corn. Large tracts of corn fields are left standing in the fields to feed migrating birds.

The Pond:

A one acre farm pond was made in 1990. It receives drainage from much of the property and feeds into the marshlands of Pickering Creek. It provides perfect habitat for many birds, turtles, and frogs. There is a platform for turtles in the center.

Riparian Stream Buffers:

In 2005 and 2006 Pickering Creek staff and volunteers cleared invasive plant species from buffer strips that ran along streams that lead into the pond. With the assistance of a number of volunteer groups and individuals, we repopulated these strips with native plants that filter agricultural run-off and provide diverse and valuable habitat for wildlife.

Bird Boxes and Bird Houses:

All around the property there are a variety of different bird boxes and bird houses. The small white gourd-shaped houses that stand on a tall pole are for purple martins. The largest bird boxes are for wood duck boxes. The smaller rough wood boxes are for blue bird boxes.

Children's Imagination Garden:

The garden is organized into theme gardens such as the dinosaur garden with a pre-historic Dawn Redwood and Gingko tree and the butterfly garden filled with flowers that attract butterflies. A settler's cottage in the center of the garden displays information about historic farming and life on the Eastern Shore. We have a compost area, fish pond, mushroom logs, and a series of flower beds.

Garden Classroom:

Our garden classroom is used for our educational programs.

Chesapeake Bay Herb Society Garden:

The Chesapeake Bay Herb Society has created extensive herb gardens that they maintain.

Ecology Classroom:

The Ecology classroom is used for our educational programs and also houses our animals including turtles and snakes.

Waterman's Shanty:

The waterman's shanty is used in our educational programs and houses floats for oysters and crabs.

Summer Kitchen:

This is a small outbuilding that was once a summer kitchen for the estate. It has been restored and now serves as an additional classroom.

Challenge Course:

The low ropes challenge course is used in team-building activities for a variety of different groups that come to Pickering Creek.

The Buildings of Pickering Creek

Garden Outbuildings:

Pickering Creek has three garden outbuildings. These buildings contain maintenance equipment, garden supplies, and tools.

The Main House:

Pickering Creek's office, display room, and library are in the main house at the end of the lane, by the creek. The main house contains a volunteer hour log book, a visitor sign in book, information about our facilities, programs, and membership, and canoe sign-out information. Office hours are 9am-5pm Monday thru Friday.

Welcome Center:

Our welcome center offers information about some of Pickering Creek's attractions. It has a 3D map to show you a bird's eye view of the land, an exhibit featuring our wood duck box trail, a visitor sign in book, a volunteer hour log book, and general information about what Pickering Creek offers.

Welcome Center Outbuildings:

Pickering Creek has two sheds – one is called the hog shed that is near the freshwater wetlands, the other is called the long shed and is closer to the welcome center. There is also a pond shed, a corn crib, a concrete storage building, and a bird blind. Many of these buildings are used for maintenance equipment and storage.

The Gilbert Byron House:

Born on July 12, 1903 in Chestertown, Maryland, writer and teacher Gilbert Valliant Byron lived nearly all of his 88 years on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Nearly 45 of those years were spent in the cabin he built on San Domingo Creek near St. Michaels, Maryland. Following Byron's death the house was saved from destruction thanks to the efforts of historic St. Michaels – Bay Hundred, the Talbot County Board of Education, and Pickering Creek Audubon Center. After a three year journey, the cabin was relocated to Pickering Creek where it has undergone initial restoration and preservation.

The Programs of Pickering Creek

Core Curriculum:

Pickering Creek has a continuum of education and teaches all ages from 2 to adult. Pickering Creek has 24 core programs, most of which can be adapted for various age groups. Staff regularly develops special programs to meet particular school group needs. A variety of service learning and environmental education programs are offered to middle and high school students. The "Audubon Watershed Experience" is one such environmental education program provided to high school students.

Challenge Course:

Our low ropes challenge course offers group from all over, the opportunity to challenge their concepts of teamwork and good communication in an outdoor setting. The Life Skills program uses the challenge course to teach teambuilding skills to at-risk groups.

EcoCamp:

Each summer, Pickering Creek offers five to six weeks of environmental camp that combines conservation learning with fun, hands-on experiences.

Tiny Tots:

Each season Pickering Creek offers programs to young children and their parents. The programs are regularly updated and changed.

Evening and Weekend Programs:

On a regular basis we offer a wide variety of children's, adult and family programs for the general public.

Pickering Creek Canoes and Canoe and Kayak Launch:

Members of National Audubon Society (members of Pickering Creek are automatically members of National Audubon Society) are allowed to use our canoes as long as the air and water temperatures are warm enough. Members are also allowed access to our launch during open hours (between dawn and dusk.) Please note: Pickering Creek is not liable for any injury or equipment damage that may occur while using the launch. The launch is to be used at a visitor's own risk.

Volunteering at Pickering Creek

How Volunteers Fit Into Pickering Creek

Volunteers do a little bit of everything at Pickering Creek. Below are examples of the most common volunteer activities:

- Participating in citizen scientist initiatives such as Project FeederWatch and our nestbox monitoring programs
- Assisting with our service learning and Tiny Tots programs
- Maintaining our trails, lawns, and buildings
- Providing carpentry and electrician work
- Assisting with fundraising and outreach events
- Office work
- Acting on our Board of Directors
- Helping with animal care and feeding
- Assisting in habitat restoration projects
- Gardening and landscaping

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

- Our rights and responsibilities are in place to keep Pickering Creek a respectful, safe, and enjoyable environment for all.
- Volunteers deserve and have the right to great respect and are expected to treat other volunteers as well as Pickering Creek staff, students, visitors, and members with great respect as well.
- Pickering Creek staff relies on its volunteers. Volunteers are expected to fulfill established agreements and time commitments to the best of their ability.
- If a volunteer is unable to fulfill any agreement or time commitment, the volunteer is expected to notify Pickering Creek as soon as possible so that a replacement can be found.
- Volunteers are expected to accurately record their hours in either of the two volunteer log books, (one is located in the Welcome Center and one is located in the Main House) or if that is inconvenient, at home. If record keeping is done at home, then at the end of the year, they are expected to hand in the hours in order to tally the year. These hours are very important as they are used to match funds in grants and provide us with a tool to measure the success and growth of the center.

- Volunteers have the right to request projects and assignments that are meaningful to them.
- Volunteers are expected to work around visiting children and the education programs that regularly take place at the center.
- Volunteers are expected to provide an emergency contact name and phone number for Pickering Creek's files in the case of an accident.
- Volunteers have the right to sufficient training. If the training received is not adequate, a volunteer is expected to notify a staff member so that further training can be given.
- Volunteers have the right to have tools and training needed to work safely. Volunteers will be given safety guidelines before the beginning of a project. Volunteers are expected to follow all safety guidelines provided. Volunteers have the responsibility to check in with staff before beginning any unsupervised volunteer activity.
- Volunteers are expected to park in the three designated parking areas:
 1. The welcome center parking lot
 2. Bus and van parking down by the main house
 3. The parking lot near the waterman's shanty
(Limited short term, unloading parking is also permitted.)
- Volunteers are expected to record any expenses they accrue during the year. After submitting them a volunteer will receive a record of their expenses that may be used for tax purposes.
- Volunteers should complete a new application if any changes to contact information or emergency contact information occur. Pickering Creek may track changes in address as well as emergency information.

Benefits

In addition to a feeling of accomplishment, pride, and camaraderie, Pickering Creek volunteers also receive: access to our canoes and canoe and kayak boat launch, our seasonal newsletter, and invitations to special volunteer recognition events.

Cumulative awards at our annual volunteer recognition dinner in the spring are based on recorded hours that are tallied each January. The dinner features service hours milestone awards and special awards, such as Volunteers of the Year and Special Recognition of Service.

Membership

Membership of Pickering Creek is also membership to National Audubon Society. Membership will give you the benefits mentioned above as well as a subscription to the Audubon magazine as well as free admittance to any Audubon Center in the country, and discounts on programs. To become a member, come to the Main House during office hours to fill out a brochure. The cost for a year membership that covers a volunteer and his or her family is \$35.

Access to Pickering Creek Property and Materials

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to Pickering Creek's property and materials necessary to fulfill their projects. They shall also receive training for the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required to fulfill a project or job.

Vehicles

Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and hold a valid state driver's license in order to operate a Pickering Creek automobile. The vehicle may only be used when necessary to perform volunteer duties, and volunteers must undergo a vehicle orientation before using center vehicles.

Photography

Occasionally we use pictures of our volunteers in our newsletter, in press releases, or for general advertising purposes. If you would prefer that your photograph not be used, please do not sign the photography release on your volunteer application.

Insurance

National Audubon Society covers accidents that occur during volunteer activities. Volunteers must report any accidents, injuries, and damages to property as soon as possible so that an Incident Report may be completed and so that photographs may be taken. National Audubon Society requires that the form be completed and submitted to them within 48 hours of the accident.

Volunteer Safety

Safety is an essential part of keeping Pickering Creek a happy and successful center. General safety guidelines are included as part of all volunteer workshops and training events. Safety procedures for specific activities are generally provided by the project manager before the beginning of each volunteer project.

First aid supplies can be found in the downstairs closet next to the display room of the Main House and in the Garden Classroom. There are additional first aid kits in the Pond Shed and in the Welcome Center. Report all incidents and accidents to a Pickering Creek staff member no matter how minor.