



Save the Date!

## Tour, Toast & Taste

A Benefit for  
Pickering Creek Audubon  
Center and the Historical  
Society of Talbot County

Saturday, June 16, 2007  
6:00- 9:00 pm

- ☺ Tour historic Wye House, a 17th century country estate.
- ☺ Enjoy wine, hor d'oeuvres, and entertainment.
- ☺ Find an intriguing dinner for purchase that will take place during the upcoming year.
- ☺ Bid on spectacular special events and trips.

\$95 per person

Call 410-822-4903

Visit [www.pickeringcreek.org](http://www.pickeringcreek.org)  
for details.



*Connecting  
all generations  
with nature*

## Get Outside and Get Involved!

By Beth Wasden

Volunteers transform daunting projects into cakewalks at Pickering Creek. I'm constantly amazed by the drive, skill, and energy of our volunteer corps.

In the waning months of 2006, volunteers helped plant over 4,200 herbaceous and woodies in our second phase of riparian buffer strip planting funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The SCOPE group of Easton High School constructed a "Mock Fossil Pit" by clearing an area, filling it with sand, adding borders, and staking a sign. Eagle Scout Kevin Caraker dished up a Thanksgiving weekend bird blind as his Eagle Scout project.

So far in 2007, Pickering Creek has hosted the 2007 Legacy Leadership Institute for the Environment class and an National Civilian Conservation Corps team, has worked with a prospective Eagle Scout who expects to complete his project-the transformation of the former goat fort to a Children's Activities Fort-in the spring, and has offered service learning and community service workdays. Beyond all of the above lurks the signs and signals of planning, scheduling, and implementing.

The spring season looms, and I look forward to seeing plans turn into action, thoughts into results. We'll hold our spring workday on Earth Day this year and will also be hosting events on National Trails Day (June 2) and a National Public Lands Days event in September. We will be cutting a new trail through the impoundments, offering yet another section of trail to be explored by visitors and on Guided Nature Walks.

Spring also brings out a great influx of visitors from school groups to weekenders. While the elementary school students may be difficult to miss as they follow staff members and education volun-



Photo by Royce Ball

**This summer volunteers will be working on new trails and viewing blinds around wetlands created in conjunction with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage and the USDA. These new wetlands provide fantastic wildlife viewing opportunities, like the Great Blue Heron snatching a snake, for both volunteers and casual visitors.**

teers, the prospect of catching sight of baby Wood Ducks and Eastern Bluebirds draws volunteers of a different nature.

It's a beautiful time of year, full of possibilities and potential. We have more volunteer opportunities now than any other season. Get outside and get involved. Feel free to give me a call or email about any of our upcoming volunteer programs or if you're interested in becoming a new volunteer. I look forward to seeing you this spring.

Pickering Creek's Volunteer Program is funded through the generosity of the Chesapeake Bay Trust and an anonymous local foundation.

# Let the Summer Times Roll!

**Y**es, summer is just around the corner! Can you believe it? Another year of adventure and excitement at EcoCamp is upon us! I am especially thrilled to gear up for camp this year, as it is my first summer not only at Pickering Creek but also in Maryland! I joined the Audubon family in October of 2006 as the teacher naturalist and summer camp director. Before making the journey east I had lots of really great opportunities to work with environmental education and summer travel programs in many capacities and interesting locations. I have been promised that the summer temperatures here on the Eastern Shore will rival those I experienced while running summer programs in Thailand and Costa Rica. And I certainly plan to make the programs that we offer every bit as exciting!

How does a scat scavenger hunt where you get to eat the prizes sound? Or an art show filled with natural masterpieces taken from the beauty of our very own ecosystem. And of course there will be plenty of time to cool off and play in the Bay! Searching for creepy crawlies, canoe relay races, and a camp-out adventure are just a few other activities planned for camp this year. Check out our website [www.pickeringcreek.org](http://www.pickeringcreek.org) for more details and to download registration materials!

## First Impressions

By Kate Rogers

**H**ello! I would like to introduce myself as the newest employee at Pickering Creek and here is the story of how I got here. I was nervous and excited as any interviewee should be upon arriving at a prospective job site. But I had made it the 400 miles from home and I was ready. The night before my interview I re-checked my directions to Pickering Creek and chose what to wear based upon the fact that I needed to look professional and at the same time show that I was prepared to spend my days romping through the woods and wetlands. When I saw the long gravel drive stretched out in front of me, wetlands to one side, soybean fields to the other the place reminded me of my home in rural Ohio. Add the farm buildings, gardens, and forests further along the drive and my anticipation any remaining apprehension dissolved. All of this from the car window! The best part of my interview was the tour because I had time to take in the amazing scenery of the varied landscapes. I even got to see some wildlife including the resident pair of bald eagles and an animal I had never even heard of, the chubby little Delmarva Fox Squirrel. I left Pickering Creek that September day with the same emotions as



when I arrived, excitement and nervousness. Of course I did not know what the outcome would be, but I knew that if I was offered the position I would have lots to think about. Pickering Creek and Maryland's beautiful Eastern Shore had left quite an impression on me, one that I knew would be hard to forget.

*Continued on page 7*

## EcoCamp Info

- All camps are for students entering 2nd-6th grade in the Fall.
- Camp runs Monday to Friday from 8:30am - 3:30pm
- The price for each week is \$160.00 for members and \$195.00 for non-members
- After-care is available Monday-Thursday until 5:30pm for an extra \$65.00/wk
- Registration forms can be downloaded from our website: [www.pickeringcreek.org](http://www.pickeringcreek.org)
- Financial aid available - contact by May 1st Camp Director Kate Rogers at [krogers@audubon.org](mailto:krogers@audubon.org)

Pickering Creek Audubon Center  
11450 Audubon Ln. Easton, MD 21601

### *Creepy Crawlies Week July 9-13*

Explore the exciting world of Pickering Creek's resident creepy crawlies as you search for insects, reptiles and water creatures. Use all five senses (yep, even taste!) as you learn some fascinating facts about how these crawlers live.

### *Wild Water Week July 16-20*

Hike through our wonderful wetlands and discover all of the amazing creatures living there. Cool down while exploring Pickering Creek by canoe. And of course get ready to help your team compete in our wet and wild relay race (say that 5 times fast)!

### *Forest Discovery Week July 23-27*

Beat the heat in the shade of our lovely forests as you meet a tree, make plant-stamp t-shirt and have a scat scavenger hunt! Search for our beloved and endangered Delmarva fox squirrel and the awesome birds of prey that hunt him.

### *Outdoor Skills Week July 30-August 3*

Master the techniques of orienteering, knot tying, and outdoor cooking! Learn to identify some helpful and harmful plants and some basic wilderness first aid. Test your skills on our overnight camping adventure!

### *Earth Art Week August 6-10*

Discover how to use natural materials to make paints, paper and even beautiful music! Decorate a t-shirt using natural dyes you find while hiking. And don't miss the grand finale, an outdoor art show to showcase your muddy and mossy masterpieces!



# The Bird Call

NEWS FOR AND ABOUT PICKERING CREEK VOLUNTEERS

## Legacy Leadership Institute Helps Pickering Creek to Connect People with Nature



### FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS

Pickering Creek Audubon Center has engaged in a successful partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center in Grasonville, and Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely, called the Legacy Leadership Institute for the Environment (LLIE).

This unique program is designed to bring on board at the participating centers, a group of committed retiree volunteers who will use their previous work experience and leadership expertise to benefit the environment.

This past January, Pickering Creek staff welcomed 2007 participants for the first Session of the 2007 Institute. The Legacy Leaders will meet weekly into April for training sessions taught by staff from the three Centers as well as experts from governmental and non-profit organizations. The classes rotate across Centers. In the mornings, participants receive instruction with content focusing on the specific missions of each Center; in the afternoons, they engage in targeted stewardship activities such as trail maintenance and

habitat enhancements while continuing to learn about our ecosystem. Following these weekly sessions, the leaders will participate in field experiences with guidance from Center staff, and will commit to perform volunteer service at the Center of their choice over the remainder of the year.

This is a win-win program for everyone! It helps to develop an increasing reservoir of informed and committed volunteers for Pickering Creek and for its partners. Those involved are brought up-to-date on current environmental issues and strategies. They develop bonds with one another as well as with the Centers and their staffs. They contribute in meaningful ways to the work of the Centers.

If you are interested in learning about our next annual Institute, contact Beth Wasden today!

*Volunteers contributed over 7,011 hours over the last year worth over \$84,132 in services!*

## Wolves Devour Service Projects at Pickering Creek

**N**ational Civilian Conservation Corps team Wolf 5 joined Volunteer Coordinator Beth Wasden and volunteer Bill Reybold at Pickering Creek on February 5 and 6 to help complete a number of service projects at Pickering Creek Audubon Center.

In spite of the frigid temperatures, the team finished a number of projects, including making repairs to the dock, decking and repairing a trail bridge, building a new bridge over waterlogged terrain on the Children's Trail, deconstructing a dilapidated bird blind, and removing invasive plants.

This two-day mini-spike served as the first work detail that the entire team completed, Wolf 5 leader Michael Noh explained. NCCC, the National Civilian Conservation Corps, is a national AmeriCorps program for young people aged 18-24. Wolf 5 is based out of Perry Point, MD, and is a member of the North East region. The team will assist in relief efforts in either Florida or the Gulf Coast in the near future and will return to Perry Point to work on regional projects in July.



Pickering Creek hosts a number of groups every year. If you are a member of a local business or community organization and would like more information about volunteer group projects at Pickering Creek, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Beth Wasden at 410.822.4903, extension 26.

# Boy Scouts Build Bird Blind for New Wetland



**Beth Wasden, Pickering Creek Volunteer Coordinator and Eagle Scout Candidate Kevin Caraker in front of the new viewing blind at Pickering Creek.**

THIS FALL 12 MEMBERS of Eastern Maryland's Boy Scout Troop 190 constructed a viewing blind at Pickering Creek for a new 75-acre wetland impoundment. The scouts, ages 11-18, their leaders and several parents were at the Center to help Kevin Caraker, an Eagle Scout, complete his required community service project.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank in Boy Scouts, and those earning their badge need to complete a community service project for a non-profit organization. Some people "clean up cemeteries, but [I] heard about the new wetlands needing an observatory," Kevin said. Beth Wasden, Volunteer Coordinator at Pickering Creek, is currently planning a new wetlands extension trail that will include an overlook and several viewing blinds. This new blind will be located along the trail extension. Viewing blinds provide shelter for birders and hikers to sit

and rest while setting up a scope or using binoculars. While building this blind, "the scouts who assisted Kevin were able to experience the edge of the wetlands and its congregations of geese and ducks," Beth said.

The blind is the first of several trail improvements Pickering Creek will be working on this year as trails expand around the new wetland complex which was created in partnership with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage. Volunteers will be working on a viewing platform, interpretive signs and several trail bridges over the course of the year.

Eagle Scouts have completed several other projects at Pickering Creek in the past, including additional viewing blinds and trail enhancements such as bridges and platforms. If you are interested in Eagle Scout or other volunteer opportunities at Pickering Creek, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Beth Wasden at 410.822.4903, extension 26.

## Upcoming Volunteer Events- Mark your Calendar!

### Invasives Eradication Workday

**Saturday, March 24 9:00 am-3:00 pm**  
Need community service or service learning hours? Just want to get outside for some fresh air? Help Pickering Creek remove invasive plants on the property while attaining service learning or community service hours. Participants can work half-days or full days and should wear warm, comfortable clothing that can be dirtied. Please bring a lunch or snacks, a water container, and work gloves, if you have them. Adults welcome, too! Please RSVP if you intend to attend.

### Earth Day Workday

**Sunday, April 22 10:00 am-3:00 pm**  
Come soak up the sights, sounds, and smells of spring on Earth Day while helping Pickering Creek staff snaz up the site in preparation for our spring school programs. Bring yourself and a friend! We'll provide everything else, including lunch, refreshments, and work projects. Please RSVP Beth Wasden if you plan to attend.

### Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner

**Saturday, May 19 6:00 pm**  
We can't say thank you often enough, but we'll spend an entire evening doing just that for our incredible volunteer corps. Mark the date on your calendars, and get ready to kick back on a lovely spring evening at the Creek.

The following folks saw our last wish list and gave generously. Do you have any of these items?

Ed James...IMAC Computer  
William Reybold...Lumber  
Cathie Liebl...Carpet  
Bob Messick...Office Furniture & Canoe

We need:

Mini Van, Station Wagon or Sedan  
Lumber  
Lawn Tractor  
Power Tools  
Garden Tools  
Native Annuals and Perennials  
Wheelbarrows  
Wrenches, screwdrivers, hammers

Kayaks  
Canoes  
Milk crates  
Digital camera  
Birdfeeders  
Life jackets  
Mounted birds  
Nature books and field guides  
Folding Tables

### National Trails Day at Pickering Creek

**Saturday, June 2 9:00 am**  
Join us for a Saturday walk, stay for trail work on the wetlands extension, and then relax in the afternoon. Pickering Creek will celebrate National Trails Day with events throughout this late spring day.

## On the Hunt for Farm Projects *By Martin Vito*

One day in the fall of 2005 when I was an intern, I looked out at the agricultural fields of Pickering Creek and imagined them full of a variety of farm projects, with walking trails and hayrides weaving in and out of each different project. I imagined visitors coming from all over to visit the Center's farm. Just imagine driving down our gravel driveway on a bright, sunny day and hearing the sounds of chickens and cows, looking into our fields of not just corn and soybeans, but filled with the beautiful colors of flowers, vegetables, and fruit. Cars coming in from miles to visit Pickering Creek's Farm. With the help of funding from the Town Creek Foundation, this is the start of a reality for all of us.

Currently, we are in search of farmers, garden enthusiasts, and others to create farming opportunities and initiate farm projects at our site. We would like to incorporate a variety of farm projects. All projects are welcome (fruits, vegetables, animals, etc). The projects must be environmentally-friendly and ecologically-sound, and use sustainable practices. They should help broaden the scope of farming at the Center, have educational value, and provide knowledge that can be freely shared with all farmers, visitors, and the local community. These projects will serve as agricultural models for the Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake region. Participants will have the use of our land and the support of Pickering Creek.

We are on the hunt to diversify the farm projects on our property. For our farm program to expand, we need a wide variety of farming projects that will attract people to Pickering Creek's farm. Visitors will remember not only the traditional conventional corn, soybeans, and wheat rotation, but the other farming projects as well, such as raising animals and growing vegetables and fruit.

One of my best memories from my younger years is when my dad brought my sister and me to a special park to play baseball. This park was special not for the baseball field, but the farm next to it. This was the only farm in the city where I grew up. I remember my sister and I would go up to the fence, looking in amazement at the different animals—chickens, goats, cows, and llamas. We both got excited when the animals came up to the fence and we can see them face-to-face. I felt like I could stand there for hours watching those animals, and I feel this experience made a positive impact on my life.

Starting to diversify our farm projects will have a positive impact on young students' lives. Farming is very unique—petting the animals, smelling the farm, tasting fruits and vegetables—and I feel that there is no other experience like it. So if you or someone you know is interested in setting up a doing farm project or would like to help with this effort, please contact me at [mvito@audubon.org](mailto:mvito@audubon.org) or (410) 822-4903 ext. 21.

## Great Tastes for Great Causes!

### Upcoming Food and Wine Festival to Benefit Pickering Creek

The St. Michaels Food and Wine Festival, which is being held April 26-29 is an exciting four-day celebration of food and wine. The festival's beneficiaries are Pickering Creek, the St. Michaels Food Bank, and Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, as well as several food industry scholarships. The Festival has contributed \$31,000 to the Pickering Creek's education programs over the past three years. This year's award has been dedicated to our budding Farm Program program. "The goal of the festival was to create an event that would raise money that would be put to good use locally," said Festival Chairman Jon Mason.



The purpose of the Farm Program at Pickering Creek is to connect people of all ages with the sources of their food, and help people make well-informed decisions that support local and sustainable agriculture practices in the Chesapeake Region. Ultimately, citizens will become better connected with the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and become better stewards. Through public outreach people will gain a better understanding of the value of farms in the landscape, the benefits of buying locally grown food, and the process by which food gets from the field to the plate. The way our agricultural land is used, conserved, and preserved is of vital importance to the long-term health of the Bay. The decisions consumers make about the food they eat, where it comes from, and how it is produced, can be one of the most powerful "votes" a citizen of the Chesapeake can cast. Pickering Creek will become a showcase for residents of the Eastern Shore, demonstrating field scale conservation measures on the farm as well as providing the public information about how their food gets from the farm to the table.

## We thank our Lucy & John James Audubon Society members for their support!

Lucy & John James Audubon Society members support Audubon and Pickering Creek's goal of Connecting People with Nature through superb outdoor educational experiences, citizen science, and bird conservation. Society members have given a minimum unrestricted gift of \$1,000. Gifts support a variety of community based education and research programs focused on improving the environment for the benefit of humanity. Each level of membership has different benefits, all Society members receive invitations to unique stewardship events.

#### Raptor \$10,000-\$25,000

Mr. Paul Tudor Jones  
Mrs. Dorothy Metcalf  
Mr. and Mrs. Ira Ringler  
Mr. and Mrs. Antoine van Agtmael  
Mr. Bruce Wiltsie

#### Waterbird \$5000-\$9,999

Mr. Coard Benson  
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Elicker  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Seip  
Dr. Peter Stifel  
Dr. Stuart Strahl  
Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Wyman

#### Songbird \$2,500-\$4,999

Dr. and Mrs. Howard Hughes  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lane

Mrs. Catherine Liebl  
Mrs. Norma Redeke  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Tilghman

#### Hummingbird \$1,000-\$2,499

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Baxter  
Mr. and Mrs. John Bayliss  
Mr. and Mrs. Franz Burda  
Mr. and Mrs. William Corace  
Mr. and Ms. Tucker Dalton  
Mrs. Debbie Geisenkotter  
Mr. and Mrs. Bryson Goss  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Granville  
Mr. and Mrs. William Griffin  
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Hershey  
Mr. and Mrs. Julien Larkin  
Mr. Richard Leader  
Mrs. Anne Kimberly Morton

Mr. and Mrs. John Nelson  
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Osgood  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Peters  
Mr. and Mrs. William Reybold  
Mr. Les Roslund  
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Scallion  
Mrs. Mattie Shafer  
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Siegmann  
Mr. Hugh Simmons & Mrs. Kathy Woods  
Dr. Eva Smorzaniuk  
Mrs. William Storey  
Mr. Bruce Summer  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Thornton  
Ms. Mary Tilghman  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Welch

# Pickering Presents to Maryland Educators

On February 3, 2007 Pickering staff presented its new curriculum, Gateways to Conservation, an environmental education curriculum for students in grades 1-5, to over fifty eager environmental educators at the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Educators Annual conference in Ocean City, MD. The presentation was part of Pickering Creek's effort to help other environmental centers connect children to nature and the Chesapeake Bay while meeting the needs of the Maryland State Voluntary curriculum. As part of the presentation, Pickering Creek staff offered examples, advice, and free copies of their new curriculum to all conference attendees.

This presentation and wide distribution of the new curriculum was not only a goal of Pickering Creek Audubon Center but also a goal of the National Park Service's Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network who helped make the published curriculum a reality. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and Pickering Creek Audubon Center share a similar goal to connect people to the Chesapeake Bay and special places where people can have an authentic Chesapeake experience. The Gateways Network is comprised of over 150 non-profits organizations, state and local government agencies who work together to tell the cultural and natural history stories of the Chesapeake Bay.

While other curriculums focus on the aquatic Bay, Pickering's curriculum focuses on the relationship between the land surrounding the Bay and the Bay itself. The Gateways to Conservation curriculum connects children to

**Dr. Karen Salmon, Shannon Gordon and Dr. Carol Visintainer with PCAC's new environmental curriculum book.**

the outdoors and helps build knowledge important for improving the health of the Bay. This

perspective was a unique contribution to the pool of resources available to formal and informal educators. "This presentation allowed educators from across Maryland the opportunity to explore our exciting curriculum and to learn some new ways they can teach children about conserving the Chesapeake Bay," said Shannon Gordon, who led the presentation. Educators attending the conference were grateful to receive valuable training and a copy of this new curriculum and training that will help build students' knowledge on the importance of improving the health of the Bay.

Creating a partnership between an environmental center like Pickering Creek and a local school is a fundamental part of Pickering's new curriculum and was a goal of this presentation. Conference participants throughout Maryland were urged to take the curriculum back to their local nature centers or schools and



begin a partnership to help students learn scientific and social studies concepts while learning about their connection to the natural world around them. When schools partner with environmental centers like Pickering Creek Audubon Center, great strides can be made towards improving the environment because students are given the opportunity to learn about their own connection to local resources through high quality outdoor learning experiences. It is Pickering Creek's hope that all children throughout the watershed have outdoor experiences that inspire them to make a difference and improve the health of their greatest natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay.

Pickering will be offering this curriculum to educators who attend training programs throughout the watershed over the course of the next year. A middle school companion edition will be released later this year.

## Pickering Creek Matches \$50,000 Challenge Grant in 48 Hours

Pickering Creek Audubon Center received a \$50,000 matching challenge grant from Tom and Alexa Seip of Easton shortly before the holidays and raised the matching funds in 48 hours! The Seips earmarked the challenge grant for a very special Pickering Creek project, replacement of the dock and Waterman's Shanty environmental classroom.

"Pickering Creek Audubon Center is very thankful to have received such a wonderful gift and the opportunity to go into our community and match the funds," commented Mike Linardi, President of the Pickering Creek Board of Directors." He continues, "It's an extremely positive way for us to begin the New Year."

Rita Osgood, Development Coordinator, was contacted by the Seips with the stipulation that a \$50,000 challenge grant would be given to Pickering Creek if a match of the \$50,000 was raised by December 31. "Exciting doesn't even come close to describing how everyone felt," stated Osgood. Three Pickering Creek Board members, Tom Lane, Steve Hershey and Coard Benson formed a team and started raising the matching funds within the hour. Everything moved very quickly from this point.

"The phones in Easton were smoking," stated Tom Lane. "Calls

were being made by the team members at record speed and checks and pledges were streaming in." Laughingly, Lane stated that his phone came close to a major melt down. The momentum grew and within 48 hours, the "Dream Team" (as Osgood came to refer to them) raised the match from Pickering Creek Board members and the community.

According to Mark Scallion, Director of Pickering Creek Audubon Center, "this is probably one of the largest amounts of money raised for Pickering in the shortest amount of time and we're thrilled." "With approximately so many adults and children using the dock and Waterman's Shanty each year, the wear and tear to the structure over the last 20 years has greatly taken its toll," Scallion stated. "Now we're hoping to have the work done and the dock and Waterman's Shanty environmental classroom ready for our Spring 2008 environmental education classes."

The Center hopes to have a new structure in place by spring of next year. If you would like to receive additional information regarding charitable giving to Pickering Creek Audubon Center or questions regarding programs and upcoming events, please call Rita Osgood, Development Coordinator at 410-822-4903.

# WORMSAVER & WORMEATER

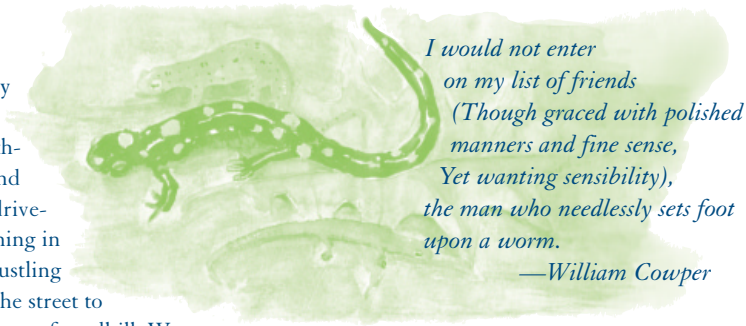
By Carolee Ferris

The day was rainy and warm. The nightcrawlers and earthworms had surfaced and were crawling across driveways, paths and drowning in puddles. Many were hustling their segments across the street to become disgusting smears of roadkill. Worms are slimy, alien and have absolutely no charisma at all but I couldn't bear that so many would die. On my walk, I spent an hour or so rescuing them. I flung as many as I could find onto dryer fields, lawns and woodlands. Later, I smiled at my own silliness as I washed worm goop from under my fingernails.

There is a piece of carpet that prevents rain from seeping under the garage door. I jerked when I picked it up because a glistening not-snake slithered out from underneath. It was a sliver of salamander, black, delicate and whiplike, drawn to hunt in the warm weather.

For seconds only, it eluded my fingers by coiling, whipping its long tail and rolling, much like a snake. I memorized its shape, color, length, and number of toes on the front and rear legs. It was slimy, slightly sticky and continued to struggle against my hold. Fearful of injuring it or causing it to lose its tail, I released it beside the garage in a safer area and rushed to my field guides.

My experiences with salamanders began deep in the Hockomock Swamp of



*I would not enter  
on my list of friends  
(Though graced with polished  
manners and fine sense,  
Yet wanting sensibility),  
the man who needlessly sets foot  
upon a worm.*

—William Cowper

Massachusetts, a secluded wild marsh in an increasingly urban area. I came across an old dump site and poked through broken bottles, shards of old porcelain and rusted farm implements, looking for any unbroken old bottles. Instead I found a population of rare blue-spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma laterale*). In coloration, they resembled the broken blue enamelware that formed their niche.

I collected four, placed them in a broken jar with moist pine needles to hide beneath. With a page from my journal and the elastic from my braid, I covered the jar. The salamanders were verified and documented by the proper state officials. Back then, they were a subspecies of the Jefferson Salamanders but are now considered a separate species of *Ambystoma*. Two days later, the creatures were once more tucked into their odd habitat.

Wet seeped through my dungarees as I knelt and stared up the petticoat of a tiny mushroom. For identification, I had to know whether it had gills or not. Peripherally, there was a flicker of color and I was looking at a slash of crimson poised on the burl of a rotted stump. In a blink, it disappeared into the interior of the stump—an eft in a cleft—so to speak. It was the easily identified Eastern Newt (*Notophthalmus v. viridescens*) in the red eft stage.

The newt is the most commonly known salamander. They have three stages— an aquatic larval tadpole, a terrestrial phase of 2 to 7 years and the aquatic, breeding adult. Some populations of these odd creatures practice neoteny, (your word for the day) which is skipping the terrestrial stage to stay aquatic from egg to breeder; studies indicate this is caused by a poor environment. To keep the population viable, they become neotenic. In effect, becoming sexual adults while still immature, rather like the teens of today and for the same reason.

My garage salamander is a red-backed salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*) in a lead-backed morph. It completes its entire reproductive cycle terrestrially. The males have square snouts, the females have rounded snouts. The legs are the same size with 5 toes

*First Impressions continued from page 2*

I joined the Audubon team in October as the Teacher Naturalist and Summer Camp Director. Each day when I turn down the gravel driveway I am greeted by a host of creatures who make our wildlife sanctuary home and I feel privileged to work in such a beautiful place. Every chance I get to walk along the trails or relax on the dock I am reminded of how important protected places like this are to our fragile environment. And of course I didn't take the job just to wander around and look at wildlife all day! Our staff is busy each day planning and providing such a wonderful range of educational and volunteer opportunities to all members of the community that sometimes it seems overwhelming! I am proud of what we do here at Pickering Creek and I am proud to be a part of this family of dedicated staff members who have quickly become more than just co-workers, they have become my friends.

When is the last time you came out to wander through the woods or to join one of our family or adult education programs? Just as this place belongs to each Canada Goose, Eastern Box Turtle and Sweet Gum tree that resides here, it belongs to you too! On behalf of all of the staff, I extend an invitation and welcome you to explore and enjoy your Pickering Creek Audubon Center! There is no need to RSVP, this welcome does not expire and the only dress code is set by Mother Nature. And next time we meet out on the trails I would love to hear your impressions!

on its hind legs. The female deposits her eggs on the roof of her burrow where they hang like grapes. She stays until the eggs hatch and for a time afterwards. Studies show the eggs develop fungi without her presence and apparently, the young salamanders need the moisture from her larger size.

The day before, I had inadvertently saved more worms than this red-backed salamander will eat in its lifetime. There is now a connection between us. If you look around Pickering Creek Audubon's forested areas, all these amphibians can be found and they are charismatic, more so, maybe, than mummichogs and meadowlarks.

Carolee will be leading a fantastic Nature Journaling program this May at Pickering Creek. See our program schedule.



**Coard Benson and Tom Lane on the Dock after the big success!**

# Notes from the Trail

## River Otter Sighted at Pickering Creek

If you've ever been to Pickering Creek Audubon Center, you know that the 400-acre nature preserve is at capacity for birds. Bluebirds, Wood Thrush, and kinglets abound. But what about the mammals at the Center? Besides the obvious deer and multitude of rabbits, are there any others? Yes, my fellow mammal-phile, there are! On any given afternoon you may see a variety of mammals including Delmarva Fox Squirrels, raccoon, possum, muskrat, mouse, vole, and river otter. That's right, river otter.

River otter are the largest members of the Mustelidae family, which includes badger, weasel, skunk and mink. Although once rare throughout North America, the Northern River Otter (*Lutra canadensis*) has made a big comeback. Despite popular belief, these playful carnivores are found in coastal marine waters as well as fresh water. River otters live in dens and holes on riverbanks or near water.

If otter are left undisturbed, they can be quite playful in groups during the day, unlike its strictly nocturnal relatives. Adults weigh up to 30 pounds and measure about 52 inches long. Populations have been recently increasing but at one time were very low due to their susceptibility to air and water pollution. It is thought that otters may be developing a tolerance to the pollution in the Chesapeake Bay area.

Late last fall, board member Dick Welch spotted one of these elusive mammals along the banks of Pickering Creek. Dick was out canoeing the



Photo courtesy of USFWS

### River Otter

inlet along the northern border of Pickering property with his son and grandson when he saw a "dark, sinuous shape move down the bank and into the water". It was after it disappeared that Dick realized he had just seen an otter. Although the trio waited about ten minutes for the animal to reappear, they did not spot it a second time.

So when you are out at Pickering Creek and you suddenly tire of bird watching (gasp!), how about a little mammal watching? Although they are admittedly much harder to spot, signs of mammals are everywhere - tracks in sand at low tide (otter tracks will be completely webbed), burrows or holes near the creek and even complete rodent skeletons found in owl pellets! Perhaps not as showy or as colorful as our feathered friends, it may prove more rewarding to spot the playful and secretive otter for the fifth time in ten years rather than the 50th flicker of the day.

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11450 Audubon Lane • Easton, MD 21601  
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## Adult/Family Programs

Please call Pickering Creek at (410) 822-4903 for more information.  
Registration is suggested but not required.

### Kilowatt Ours

Thursday, March 29 6:30-7:45pm

Members/Non-Members: Free

Leader: Sarah Kronen

Location: Talbot County Free Library,  
Easton Branch

Come see "Kilowatt Ours: A Plan to Re-  
Energize America," a 38-minute film that  
reveals the consequences of our

coal-powered economy and how  
to save up to \$600 annually on  
energy bills! Discussion and guest  
speakers will follow. Pick up a  
FREE compact fluorescent light  
bulb (while they last!) and a guide  
to energy conservation in your  
home. Food provided. Run jointly  
by Pickering Creek Audubon  
Center and the Maryland Sierra  
Club, Eastern Shore.



### Guided Nature Walks

First and Third Saturdays

from April to October 9:00am-10:30am

Location: PC Welcome Center

Members/Non-Members: Free

Kick start your weekend with a walk on the  
wild side with one of Pickering Creek's  
nature guides. Discover our trails on a casual  
stroll as guides focus on particular subjects,  
including birds, insects, trees, and plants.

Whether new to the area, a weekend visitor,  
or a seasoned member of Pickering Creek,  
you are sure to discover something new and  
wonderful.

### Kid's Agriculture Field Day

Thursday, April 5 1:00pm-3:00pm

Members \$5 per child

Non-members \$10 per child

Leader: Martin Vito

Location: Main Office

Registration required

Don't know what to do with your kids on  
their day off? Come out to Pickering Creek  
and enjoy an agricultural field day. While  
learning about local agriculture, the  
Chesapeake Bay, and the environment, we will  
do some fun, hands-on activities that kids will  
enjoy. Activities include making ice cream and  
butter, tonging for oysters, agriculture jeep-  
ard, and much more.

### Potluck Dinner: Zest Your Meals with Garlic

Thursday, April 19 6:30pm

Members: \$10 per adult / \$5 per child

Non-members \$15 per adult / \$8 per child

Leader: Martin Vito

Location: Main Office

Registration Required

Let's celebrate National Garlic Day with a  
Potluck Dinner at Pickering Creek. Martin will  
show you how to zest up your meals with  
this incredible herb. There will be dishes to  
try and some recipes to take home. While  
showing you cooking techniques, Martin will  
share some helpful hints on the herb of  
garlic. If you have a favorite recipe with garlic  
in it, bring the dish along to share. Note:  
Please leave vampires at home, since they will  
be scared away.

### Star Gazing for Beginners

Saturday, April 21 7:00pm-9:00pm

Members: \$10 Non-Members: \$14

Location: Meet at the Garden Classroom

Ever look up into the night sky and wonder  
what you're looking at? Come learn about  
our beautiful Eastern Shore night sky with the  
Delmarva Stargazers club. You will discover  
what makes stars unique, how to spot plan-  
ets, and when to best catch those shooting  
stars. You will be able to use your knew  
knowledge and observe the Lyrid meteor  
shower at Pickering Creek's viewing platform  
in our newly created freshwater wetland.

### Organic: It is the right thing to do!

Wednesday April 25 7:00 pm

Location: Easton Welcome Center

Leader: Hank Kaestner

Join Hank Kaestner for a look at the organic  
food movement started in 1962 by Rachel  
Carson with her book *Silent Spring*. The talk  
will honor Carson's 100th Birthday and her  
impact on pesticide use worldwide. Over 25  
years ago, our speaker began to "package" his  
photos into slide shows which were first used  
internally at McCormick Spice, then for  
customers, and finally for the general public.  
Since 1981 Hank has presented more than  
1,200 lectures on spices, travel, and birds.  
Hank is a world renowned bird-watcher,  
having seen more than 6,750 species as he

has traveled around the globe. His most  
popular slide shows are those combining two  
or three of the above subjects. Sponsored by  
the Town Creek Foundation.

### Field Journaling 101

Saturdays, May 5, 12, 19, 26

9:30 am-12:30 pm

Members: \$25

Non-members: \$50

Leader: Carollee Ferris

What is a nature journal, how do I begin,  
where do I go and what do I record? The  
series offers a combination of classroom and  
field work that provides you with information  
to keep a journal. It is open to people from  
six to ninety-six and all journaling material is  
provided. This four-part class serves as an aid  
to memory for those interested in their envi-  
ronment from backyard to Bay. It takes away  
the mystique of great literary works, the myth  
of pink diaries with little gold keys and places  
the skill into the backpocket or backpack  
where it truly belongs. Remember, you do not  
need to be gifted to record your observa-  
tions by one word, one phrase or one  
sentence. Many types are discussed—photo-  
graphic, memoirs, garden, personal, travel and  
more. Join us and enjoy.

### Family Fishing

Saturday, May 5 1:30pm - 2:30pm

Members/Non-Members: Free

Location: Main Office

The waters of Pickering Creek are home to a  
great variety of animal life. Come learn about  
the Chesapeake Bay and see what you can  
catch! We will provide all the necessary  
equipment and help needed. Adults, kids and  
experienced fishermen welcome.

## Come see us!

Directions to PCAC From Easton

- take Route 50 West
- take a left at the stoplight by the airport
- take the immediate right on Longwoods Rd. (Rt. 662 North)
- follow Longwoods to Sharp Rd. (this will be a left hand turn)
- take another right onto Sharp Road (the sign will say to Presquile & Sharp Road)
- follow Sharp Road until you see the Pickering Creek sign on your right. Turn right onto Audubon Lane. 410.822.4903

# Adult/Family Programs cont.

## Bird Watching 101

Saturday, May 12 8:30am - 11:00am  
Members: \$5 Non-members: \$7  
Location: PC Welcome Center  
Leader: Kate Rogers

Join world-class local birder Les Roslund as he shares some basics of birdwatching, from binocular use to helpful identification tips.



Photo by Royce Ball

Most of the morning will be spent exploring Pickering Creek's wetland, field and forest habitats looking for the many species of feathered friends who make our sanctuary home. This is the perfect time of year to welcome back Maryland's own Baltimore Orioles that are seen in abundance here at Pickering Creek! Don't have binoculars? Don't worry, we can supply those. ced fishermen, and first-timers all welcome!

## Pizza Party Time

Friday, May 18t 6pm  
Members \$8 per adult / \$4 per child  
Nonmembers \$12 per adult / \$6 per child  
Leader: Martin Vito  
Location: Main Office  
Registration Required

Everyone loves pizza, so celebrate National Pizza Day with Pickering Creek. We will supply all the ingredients and you supply the family. Meet down at the main office and take a hayride to our gardens to pick some fresh herbs for your pizza. We will take the hayride back to the office so you and your family can create your very own pizza. The best part is that at the end, your family will munch away at your creation.

## Tea Time

Saturday, May 19 4:00pm - 5:30pm  
Members: \$10 Non-members: \$15  
Leader: Martin Vito and Sarah Krones  
Location: Meet in Herb Garden  
Registration required.

To celebrate National Garden Month, come learn and relax with cookies and a cup of hot tea made from the herbs in our Herb garden, and take home your own seedling! We will discuss the medicinal properties of many common herbs, and you will learn how to identify and use them. Focus will be on herbs that aid general body health.

## Brandywine River Canoe Adventure

Sunday, May 20 9:00am-6:00pm  
Members \$20 Non-Members \$30  
Leader: Mark Scallion

Location: Meet at Pickering Creek  
Paid reservation required  
Experience the Brandywine River on a canoeing trip guided by the Delaware Nature Society. Pass through lush mature forest, steep hills, and broad floodplains that make the Brandywine a scenic and natural gem. Paddle the picturesque Brandywine Creek as it flows through the forested hills of Chester County, Pennsylvania and into the Delaware Piedmont. Starting at the Brandywine River Museum at Chadds Ford, enjoy an easy paddle with a few riffles and rocks, as you make your way to Brandywine Creek State Park. The beautiful Brandywine Valley, site of artistic inspiration, important Revolutionary War history, and protected natural areas, will promise to delight you as we coast downstream. Look for migratory birds, pass schools of fish in deep pools, and go under a covered bridge. Some canoeing experience required. Fee includes van transportation from Pickering Creek, canoes, paddles, life-jackets and instruction, bring your own picnic lunch. Paid reservations required.

## Picnic Celebration with Fruits and Vegetables

Saturday, June 2 12:30pm  
Members \$10 per adult / \$5 per child  
Non-members \$15 per adult / \$8 per child  
Leader: Martin Vito  
Location: PC Welcome Center  
Registration Required

Enjoy a spring lunch with Pickering Creek. Meet at the welcome center to take a hayride down to the main office. There will be a beautiful picnic lunch overlooking the creek. There will be all sorts of dishes to celebrate National Fruit and Vegetable Month, including grilled hotdogs for the meat eaters. While eating, our staff member, Martin Vito, will show you how to make these dish creations and where you can buy local, sustainable, fresh fruit and vegetables. Today is also National Trail's Day, and if you volunteer with our Volunteer Coordinator, Beth Wasden, today, you will receive a discount at the picnic.



# Tiny Tot Programs

Experience nature through hands-on activities, hikes, crafts, and much more! Tiny Tot programs are for children ages 2-5 years and accompanying adult. Fee is \$5 per child, free to Audubon members. Location: Pickering Creek Audubon Center

## Going Batty!

Wednesday, March 7 1:30pm - 2:30 pm  
Location: Garden Classroom  
Come learn about those furry, flying animals - bats! Your child will learn about the different parts of a bat, where they live and how to spot them. Chances are you will see bats this spring as the weather gets warmer so come with your tot to learn about these unique and mysterious creatures!

## Snakes are Snazzy

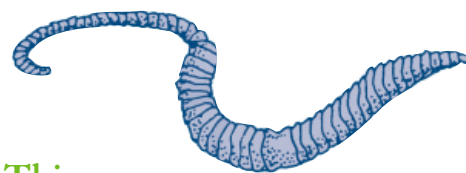
Wednesday, March 28 1:30pm-2:30pm  
Location: Garden Classroom  
Snakes aren't scary, they're snazzy! Through several different investigations, your tiny tot will experience how snakes move, hear, smell, regulate their body temperature, and eat. You will get to meet a real-live snake, examine snakeskin, and make a snake wind-spiral to hang outside.

## Touch, See, Hear, Taste and Smell Your Way Into Nature

Thursday, April 5 1:30pm-2:30pm  
Location: Garden Classroom  
Nature is best appreciated when you use your entire body to sense the world around you. You and your tot will take in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures of the great outdoors through interactive activities and games. Please specify any food allergies when signing up.

## Meet the Unhuggables

Wednesday, April 18 1:30pm-2:30pm  
Location: Ecology Classroom  
How many legs does a turtle have? Why does a snake stick its tongue out? Come meet the Pickering unhuggables as we explore the world of turtles, frogs and snakes. A take home craft activity is included!



## Things are Neat Beneath Our Feet!

Wednesday, May 2 1:30pm-2:30pm  
Location: Garden Classroom  
Your tiny tot will experience the animals that live in the soil up-close. We will use all of our senses to examine these organisms and their homes. Outside, we will use magnifying glasses to investigate our garden soil, and look for soil animals!