



Pickering Creek, My Happy Place...

By Natalie Rowlands, *Junior Naturalist*

When I was four years old, my grandmother introduced me to Pickering Creek Audubon Center (PCAC) through the summer EcoCamp. She said that it would be a great experience for me to learn about my local ecosystem, meet new people, and have fun. Little did I know that it would turn out to be a summer tradition that I would continue doing for another 11 years and hopefully more to come. Over the years, I would attend summer camps that included hiking, fishing, canoeing, exploring nature, playing games, and learning important life skills. I would learn about the Chesapeake Bay, its watershed and the importance of caring about and protecting our environment.

As my experiences with nature with fellow campers continued, I was eager to someday become a Junior Naturalist (JN) and help to share the magic of Pickering Creek with others, especially campers. The JN's are a group of middle and high school students who learn even more about PCAC through hands on research and exploration and they help as junior counselors at the summer camp. Three years ago, I became a JN and have loved working with the campers throughout the summer.

Our camp days are filled with fun games while exploring the forest, wetlands, and waterfront. I have had the opportunity to teach campers how to care for our ecosystem and what they can do to make an impact

through their actions. Also, I am able to teach them how to interact with other campers. In preparation for the summer camp season, JNs attend monthly citizenship meetings where we explore all the habitats around Pickering Creek and visit natural places in Maryland to expand our knowledge of the ecosystems we live in. There are also many field trips taken during the school year with the PCAC staff and my fellow JNs. I have participated in garden renovations at PCAC to improve the habitat for a variety of local birds and butterflies. This type of community service inspires me to do more for our local environment and to get excited about nature.

One of the best parts of my time spent at PCAC are the friends. I have had the opportunity to belong of a group of students that, like myself, love the outdoors. I have made friends with some pretty amazing people and also met my best friend of 9 years Olivia Blades where together we helped each other in teaching kids what we learned as campers. I remember as a camper, my favorite game to play is capture the flag, a PCAC tradition since the beginning. One of my best memories of this game was when I was 10 years old. The JNs played against the Campers and I won the game for my team. It was an amazing feeling, that is one of my favorite camp memories. I cannot wait for new kids to discover PCAC and to create great memories like I have had and hope for more to come!

Pickering Creek Audubon Center conserves natural habitats on Maryland's Eastern Shore by engaging and empowering our community through exploration, education and stewardship.

Students Lead the Charge:

Wicomico 6th Graders Address Environmental Issues Close to Home

Throughout the month of May, Wicomico County 6th graders found themselves discovering a new part of the Eastern Shore on their spring field trip to Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Part of Pickering Creek's Audubon Chesapeake Exploration (ACE) program, the field experience provided an opportunity for students to roll over logs looking for beetles, sweep insect nets through the meadow, and wade into the freshwater wetlands that teem with minnows, tadpoles, dragonfly larvae and more. The field trips were one part of a multi-lesson Meaningful Watershed Education Experience. The project is a partnership between the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education & Training Program and Pickering Creek Audubon Center. The ACE program seeks to provide an opportunity for students to investigate and address the driving question- How do humans impact wildlife populations in Chesapeake Bay ecosystems?

Pickering Creek begins a second year of working with Wicomico County's 6th graders in September 2019. Following the

pilot year that focused on two schools, PCAC will work alongside 6th grade science teachers to roll out the program in all five Wicomico County Middle Schools and their 50 6th grade classrooms over the course of the 2019-2020 school year.

Pickering educators and Wicomico teachers alike are looking forward to bringing student voice to the forefront of the



Wicomico Middle School students taking action to protect wildlife on their school grounds by creating window decals which they hung in an enclosed walkway with lots of windows.



learning process, with students having more say in what issue they choose to focus on that is important to their communities and themselves. After meeting in July to plan for the new school year, teachers walked away with a plethora of new resources and ideas for how to have students engaged and leading environmental investigations and the development of an action plan to address the issues they find.

In its entirety, the ACE program will engage each of the 1,100 Wicomico County 6th grade science students in multiple in-class and field lessons. Between September and May, Pickering educators will visit the classroom and the students will visit Pickering Creek. Throughout the process, PCAC educators will work closely with Wicomico teachers to provide guidance as students investigate issues that they discover around their communities, use democratic decision making processes to narrow down their focus and then work collaboratively to create a multi-faceted action plan to address the root cause of their chosen issue, spread awareness and become engaged with policy makers and stakeholders.

Students gather around science teacher, Jamie Eakin, while conducting wildlife surveys of their school grounds. Students do short bird point-counts, then catalogue areas of the school where they can find food and shelter sources for birds.



New Faces in Familiar Places

During the pilot year, students learned a lot about birds and wildlife and compared the habitats at Pickering Creek to the space available for wildlife on their school yards. With this newfound knowledge some students decided to create bird decals to prevent window strike deaths while others put up bluebird boxes in appropriate habitat to provide nesting space.

“We’re really excited to try a new strategy to build more student investment into the action project process this year,” said Mary Helen Gillen, Pickering Creek’s Education Manager. “Having both the



Wicomico County teachers joined Pickering Creek’s director, Mark Scallion and Board Member, Ron Ketter for an exploration of the Center’s freshwater wetlands. Teachers worked with Pickering educators for two days to strengthen student investment in the development of an action project for the 2019-2020 school year.

time and the tools to give students space to come up with their own ideas is always a challenge, but having the time this summer to work with the teachers and learn from experienced practitioners of student voice from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, has given the program an exciting boost.” The ACE program is a learning experience for both the students, the teachers and Pickering educators, as the project is designed to allow more and more ownership to shift from Pickering Creek to the teachers over the course of the three years. By the end of the project, teachers will feel empowered to help their students become more environmentally literate while promoting student buy in for more informed and relevant action projects.

As former Education Manager, Jaime Bunting, moves on to teach at Salisbury University and former Camp Director and Teacher Naturalist, Krysta Hougen, moves on to work with NOAA’s B-Wet program, we welcome 2 new full-time faces to the Pickering Creek Audubon Staff.

Harrison Jackson comes to Pickering Creek from Clemson University, where he recently attained his Masters in wildlife & fisheries biology working on a bird friendly campus initiative. Harrison joins the dedicated education staff as a full time teacher naturalist and will be in charge of public programs, social media and all things outreach. He loves the eastern shore along with waterfowl and wetlands and wants to share his passion for these underappreciated habitats and animals with as many people as possible.



Q: What do you hope to do at PCAC?

“I’m so excited to be working at PCAC and for Audubon. PCAC has done amazing work not just on site but in the Easton community and beyond here in the Mid-Shore so I’m ecstatic that I get a chance to continue the legacy of excellence that has already been set here. I aspire to ensure that diversity and inclusion are included in everything we do here, from educational to public programming and that our audience continues to grow and change to reflect the community that surrounds us. I believe that Pickering Creek is truly a special place and that more people should know about not just the amazing animals and plants that live here but also the hard work and dedication that all PCAC staff members have towards helping to create the connections between nature and people that are crucial for a healthy community and society.”



Sammi Ocher returns to Pickering Creek as the EcoCamp Camp Director and Teacher Naturalist, and just completed her first EcoCamp season. She first worked at Pickering Creek as a seasonal educator from 2015-2016, after which she went on to other education positions, most recently, as an Educator at SoundWaters in Stamford, Connecticut. Sammi enjoys exploring wetlands and tide pools with her camera and binoculars, and especially loves finding cool pieces of sea glass to craft with.

Q: How was your first year of summer camp?

“EcoCamp has been an amazing whirlwind of toad hunting, wetland mud slinging, and fort building. It’s been so great getting to relearn the trails and the grounds here while exploring with campers. One of the EcoCamp traditions is to use a “nature name” while we’re here and my nature name is Chickadee. Our first week of EcoCamp, I told the campers that chickadees say their name: Chickadee-dee-dee...and asked if they could make a chickadee call. It’s a good thing I like the chickadee call, because from then on every camp group announced itself to me with a chorus of chickadee calls! It brought a smile to my face every time, especially when the tradition continued on through the rest of the summer, passing from camper to camper.”

Q & A with an All Star EcoCamp Staff

We set out on the EcoCamp 2019 journey with a few fairly big changes—online registration (sold over 110 camp spots in 20 minutes with significantly less paper), the first increase in camp prices in over 8 years, camp t-shirts for all, the addition of an Assistant Camp Director, AND the departure of longtime Camp Director, Krysta Hougen, who had masterfully handled and grew EcoCamp over the last six years. Former Pickering Seasonal Educator, Sammi Ocher hit the ground running and camp counselors, Pickering staff, AND campers had a terrific summer. A heap of thanks to the wonderful folks below, Alex Lloyd, Seaghan Lambert, Yazan Hasan and Devin Herlihy, who made 2019 EcoCamp a grand success!

What was your favorite thing about EcoCamp?

Otter: The variety of campers and the challenge of handling the different situations that arise based on how each kid learns best.

Sycamore: I am a former camper and JN, so getting to spend more time at Pickering has been great. I have also really enjoyed watching the campers seeing something new, learning about it and actually retaining it throughout the week!

Prickly Pear: The time and flexibility to enjoy the things often taken for granted, such as playing simple games with my campers. I have fallen in love with camp and the idea of nature play—the fact that a walk through the forest can take hours as we enjoy every miniscule beauty nature has to offer.

Firefly: Capture the Flag....just kidding. Watching campers, JNs and counselors learn and grow and helping campers learn to deal with others in respectful ways.

What lessons did you learn?

Otter: That kid-driven nature play is a great way for kids to learn and suits my teaching style almost perfectly. I just wish I had more time with each kid!

Sycamore: To be a better leader and



2019 Summer Camp Counselors: Yazan Hasan (Prickly Pear), Alex Lloyd (Otter), Devin Herlihy (Firefly) & Seaghan Lambert (Sycamore)

teacher. I also enjoyed learning more about plants and marine biology.

Prickly Pear: I realize now that camp, for many children, is the only/main opportunity they get to explore the outdoors or escape whatever troubles they have at home. To be the steward that guides them through their weekly adventures at Pickering has been a great privilege I am very grateful for.

Firefly: Improved my group management and mediation skills, and that I was able to help counselors with conflict resolution even though I was not on the front lines. But the best lesson was I was able to handle emergencies in a calm manner.

What's next?

Otter: School year-Seasonal Educator for Pickering Creek! Can't wait to learn more from working with such a great staff.

Sycamore: Odd jobs until October then back to school in Washington State to take a marine Biology course and more.

Prickly Pear: I will be returning to school

this fall to complete my degree in international relations and continue to work for the benefit of the people around me. I am grateful for the lessons and laughs I've had at Pickering Creek and those memories will live with me on my journey through life.

Firefly: I will be one of Pickering Creek's new part time teachers this fall, plus I will be the JV Volleyball coach at Colonel Richardson High. I plan to go to nursing school in January.

Favorite Spot at Pickering? (Come check out how great these spots are for yourself!)

Otter: The newest freshwater wetland-quiet, with only the sound of the wind, and a variety of wildlife at every turn.

Sycamore: The meadow behind the pond, where there will soon be a viewing platform. Great plant variety!

Firefly: The Sycamore by Cardinal Circle.

Great Relationships, Healthy Gardens

“Is it alive?” asked Tynita Cummings, one of six Habitat for Humanity homeowners participating in Pickering Creek Audubon Center’s Native Habitats for Habitat program. She pointed to a plant with brown leaves from last year that she had been puzzling over to Pickering Creek naturalist, Samantha Pitts, during a garden visit late one summer evening. “Maybe it didn’t make in through the winter after all,” Cummings added, with a little edge of worry crossing her face.

“It’s alive and doing great. It just needs the old growth to be cut back,” Samantha reassured her after closer inspection. She pointed out the healthy new growth coming through last year’s brown stubble. “You’ll want to trim last year’s leaves back early in the spring.” “Oh, I didn’t know that,” replied a relieved Tynita as they continued their walk about the yard and moved easily on to other garden questions. The relaxed atmosphere where homeowners feel free to ask questions about their garden is the result of time well spent by Pickering Creek Audubon staff.



Habitat Gardener, Michele Friend’s Blueberry Bush turned out to be a great addition for the birds and her this year.

For the past two summers Pickering Creek has worked closely with the same six Habitat for Humanity homeowners to establish gardens using native plants to beautify their yards, improve water quality and benefit wildlife. Most of these homeowners had little, if any gardening experience, but they were willing to take



on the challenge of trying something new. Audubon staff took the time to understand the homeowners goals for their yards and to be present over time to answer questions, check in on how the gardens were growing, and to resolve gardening challenges everybody faces, like staying on top of pesky weeds.

“It’s been both humbling and rewarding to work with these homeowners and see them take real ownership of their gardens in addition to navigating the challenges of work, family and homeownership,” notes Pitts. “I remember visiting one of our families with a single working mother who has a very difficult garden site with heavy clay soil. I found that she had successfully cleared an entire garden bed absolutely full of weeds in tough soil for the first time in her life... and it looked fantastic!”

Funding garnered through the Chesapeake Bay Trust’s Outreach and Restoration Grant has done more than insure installation of six Bird and Bay-friendly gardens. A cordial and productive partnership has flourished between Pickering Creek and Habitat for Humanity Choptank throughout the project. Beyond work with the initial homeowner gardens, Habitat Choptank and Pickering Creek hosted two native plant gardening workshops held in March of 2018 and 2019, giving 50 Habitat homeowners and staff a chance to learn more about the value and use of plants indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay region. Additionally, two “Pickering

Creek Days” at the Habitat for Humanity Restore in Easton reached over 100 visitors who walked away with new native plants to try and tips on native garden care for all seasons.

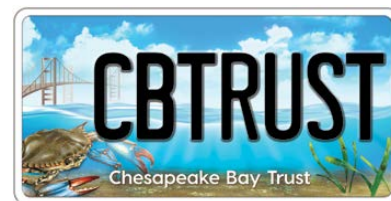
The successes of these smaller activities led to a highlight of collaboration this summer. Pickering Creek and Habitat for Humanity partnered on a tree planting workshop day that engaged participants in planting native trees at Habitat’s new Saint Michaels build site, which includes plans for seven homes. Participants learned about tree care and correct planting techniques as well as the unique value of having native trees in your yard. They also discovered how trees could be part of best management practices for water quality



Tynita Cummings adding another native to her native garden

and learned about upcoming opportunities from Envision the Choptank’s Landowner Assistance Coordinator, Whitley Grey.

While the Native Habitats for Habitat program successfully wrapped up at the end of the summer, the growing partnership between Habitat for Humanity and Pickering Creek Audubon Center – the celebration garden success and building healthy communities for people and wildlife—will continue on.



Registration required.
Visit pickeringcreek.audubon.org or call 410-822-4903.

Monarch Tagging

Friday, September 20, 2019
4:30PM – 6:00PM

\$5 per person

Join Pickering Creek Audubon Center naturalists for Monarch butterfly tagging on three dates in September. Witness the incredible migration of the monarch while exploring the trails on the 410-acre wildlife sanctuary. Participate in the University of Kansas's widespread Monarch Watch tagging program and learn how to protect monarch habitat in your backyard or community.

Nature on the DuPont Estates

Thursday, October 3, 2019
8:00AM – 4:00PM

\$65 per person

Travel to northern Delaware "Chateau Country" for a guided naturalist tour of several estates in the rolling hills and beauty of the Brandywine Valley. Walk through the Delaware Nature Society's Flint Woods Preserve and tour the society's Coverdale Farm Preserve,

two DuPont estates that are now nature preserves. Van transportation from Pickering Creek and box lunch included. Trip limited to 10 participants.

Family Adventure Night

Friday, October 11, 2019

4:00PM – 7:00PM

Free

Meet the Pickering Creek naturalists on an open house "Back to Pickering Night" with the whole family! Talbot County students visit Pickering Creek throughout the school year, this fall the whole family is invited to walk the trails and see the sights. Wade into the freshwater wetlands, catch a butterfly, search for salamanders in the woods, or fish in the creek! This is a chance for parents and their learners to visit and explore Pickering Creek together.

Fall Trail Day

Saturday, October 19, 2019

9AM-Noon

Volunteer for a few hours to help us get the trails ready for the school and winter seasons! Call 410-822-4903 to register.

Outdoor Photography

Saturday, October 26, 2019

10:00AM – 12:00PM

\$20 per person

Join Royce Ball, Pickering Creek's "unofficial photographer" to learn all about nature photography and capturing the perfect outdoor images. The class is open to professional and amateur photographers alike and to anyone with a camera or camera phone! Join us as we wander through wetlands & meander through meadows to find inspiration in the changing season.

Our programs are for kids, families, volunteers, birders— anyone who loves nature and learning. Sign up for one of our fantastic nature adventures today!

Hello Hibernation!

Friday, November 1, 2019

4:00PM – 5:30PM

\$5 per person

Where do rabbits, squirrels, turtles and frogs go during the winter? Can your young ones help our forest friends get ready for hibernation and the cold winter months? Join us as we build shelters for animals big and small, collect food for hungry critters and listen to stories about the fall, leaves changing colors, hibernation and more! Recommended for ages 3-6, but all ages are welcome!



Waterfowl n' Waders

Thursday, November 7, 2019

8:00AM – 10:00AM

\$5 per person

Get into waders to visit our freshwater wetlands to watch migrating waterfowl as they move through the area. Learn about Mallards, Teal, Pintails, Geese, and more. Join us as we talk about why waterfowl migrates, and the history of waterfowl and waterfowl hunting here on the Eastern Shore and get ready for the Waterfowl Festival that weekend!

Roadside Cleanup

Saturday, November 16, 2019

9AM-Noon

Help keep wildlife safe and our neighborhood beautiful. We will be removing trash from alongside Presquile and Sharp Roads. Call 410-822-4903 to register



Starry Starry Night

Friday, December 13, 2019

8:00PM - 10:00PM

\$5 per person

Come join us for a night of starry wonder and adventure! Take a look through our telescope as we explore our galaxy and watch for shooting stars during the amazing Geminids meteor shower. Listen to stories about how the constellations were born and make your own constellation to take home with you!

Wine & Art Night

Saturday, January 11, 2020

3:00PM - 5:00PM

\$30 per person

Every season is beautiful here at Pickering Creek, but winter offers us some amazing scenery. Frozen wetlands, snow-laced trees and winter residents all make Pickering Creek into a winter wonderland. Join us as we travel across the creek to Peterson Woods to paint &/or create mosaics inspired by our love of nature and feel free to bring your own wine or beer!

Weed Warriors

Saturday, January 18, 2020

9AM-Noon

Work out your winter doldrums while you help us wrangle, clip and knock back invasive plants on the property.

Very Birdy Craft Day

Monday, February 10, 2020

3:00PM - 4:30PM

\$5 per person

Looking to add some color into someone's life? Come to Pickering Creek to make birdfeeders for overwintering species, create beautiful and unique bird crafts and make some homemade binoculars to help you gear up and get ready for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Recommended for ages 3-6, but all ages are welcome!

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 15, 2020

9:00AM - 12:00PM

Free

Join us at Pickering Creek for the Great Backyard Bird Count on Saturday, February 15 with activities for adults and families from 9am-12PM. Work with experienced birders for a morning of bird

Pickering Creek Birdseed Sale

Feed the birds and support Pickering! Seed selections will include Nyger, black oil sunflower, songbird mixes, several suet selections, peanut hearts, and other goodies for your feeders. All local sales benefit Pickering Creek Audubon Center. An order form is available at www.pickeringcreek.org. Anticipated order deadline: Monday 7 October. Order pickup Saturday, October 19th, at Pickering Creek Welcome Center from 9-11AM. Contact Eastern Shore Coordinator: Anne Walker at Aywwalker@gmail.com or call 410-409-8714.

watching and counting on a center-wide winter bird survey. Adult-only teams will cover most of our regular e-Bird monitoring routes that are covered on a monthly basis. A family-friendly bird walk is also scheduled, complete with a scavenger hunt for little ones. All visitors are invited to wrap up the morning's activities with hot chocolate, coffee or tea at the Center office.

Birds & Brews: Flight of the Timberdoodle

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

7:30PM - 9:00PM

\$10 per person

As winter breaks and spring begins to emerge, the timberdoodle start dancing. At dusk the male woodcock spirals into the sky, creating a trilling sound with its wings. Then he descends, fluttering, warbling and zigzagging back to the spot he began. This unusual mating ritual will take place in Pickering Creeks' warm season grass meadows which provide ideal habitat for this annual late winter event. We'll spend a portion of our time in our rustic classroom learning the basics about this unique upland shorebird before going out at dusk, with a local brew in hand, to listen to the sounds of the evening, including owls, frogs and ducks overhead before focusing in on hearing and seeing the woodcocks display.

Photo by Bill Hubick



Nature writing: Spring Sonnets & Vibrant Verses

Friday, March 19, 2020

5:30PM - 7:00PM

\$5 per person

Whether you're a loquacious lyricist or a trepidatious transcendentalist, we all appreciate and express our love of nature in our own unique way. Join us as we explore Pickering Creek for poetic inspiration, visit the Gilbert Byron house and read selections of poems inspired by nature.

Owl Prowl

Friday, April 10, 2020

7:00PM - 9:00PM

\$5 per person

Who's calling so loudly at night? Come out and join Pickering Creek naturalists as we venture out into the spring night in search of our nocturnal feathered friends. We'll hike around the wetlands, meadows and forests in search of Barred, Great Horned or Eastern Screech owls during our annual owl prowl.



Photo by Cindy Joyce

Students Transform Gardens for Wildlife

Nestled within the border of white fencing and fruit trees along Pickering's driveway, and adjacent to meadows, wetlands, and the Herb Garden, is an area of the Center heavily worn by students and visitors alike. Pickering Creek's Imagination Garden, is currently in the midst of a slow transformation. During the 2018-2019 school year a team of plant-loving volunteers conceived of a new native plant garden plan; one that would transform the space into a space intentionally designed to attract birds and pollinators.

At the same time, tenth grade Environmental Earth Science students in Caroline County were participating in Pickering Creek's Explore and Restore Habitats program, funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, to investigate the many ways human activities impact the health of habitats in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Through the Explore and Restore Habitats program, students visit Pickering Creek twice each semester; first for a full-day investigative look at the management practices used to maintain healthy



Chesapeake Bay Trust promotes public awareness and participation of all local residents in the restoration and protection of our region's natural resources through its grant making to projects such as Pickering Creek's Explore and Restore Habitats program.

habitat at the Center. On this field trip students explore freshwater wetlands, warm-season grass meadows, mature forests, and the tidal creek. During their second visit to Pickering Creek, students actively participate in one of the studied management practices – habitat restoration. During the fall of 2018, 242 Caroline County students planted ten native plant species, totaling 1,000 plants, within a restored freshwater

wetland at Pickering Creek.

While planning for the spring semester, Pickering Creek staff recognized the chance to share with students a different kind of restoration experience – one that they would have more opportunities to utilize in their own lives: the usage of native plants in their own yards and outdoor spaces at home and at school. The fencing, organized garden beds and a small 'Settlers Cottage' in Pickering's garden resemble areas they might find in their own yards, along walkways and fences, next to a house or shed, and among multi-use areas in school and neighborhood spaces. This past spring, 216 Caroline County students planted 665 plants of 26 native species and cultivars in the Garden, utilizing the designs put together by volunteers and staff.

In addition to engaging directly with the local landscape at Pickering Creek, students spent a week conducting school surveys to investigate human impact issues related to waste, water quality, habitat, and energy at their schools. Students at

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10th grade students from Caroline County planting a variety of native plants in the garden at Pickering





Camp Like a Girl participants from left to right, Daijah Roberts, Alia Elwagih, Brooke Kozak, Bre'Asia Jackson, Ashanty Perez, Maya Mosslih, Kristian Cherry, Daniela Vasquez-Ramirez, Katelyn Martin

Camp Like a Girl

Can we go walking after dark? Can we go canoeing? Can we go back in the wetland? Pickering Creek Audubon educators meeting with an eager group of girls at Easton Middle School were pelted with such questions. Nine girls, so full of questions, were participants of the Audubon Center's pilot Camp Like a Girl. This program, supported by Talbot County's Women and Girls Fund, was undertaken to reach out specifically to boost the confidence and outdoors skills of middle school girls, especially those from underserved communities who have few opportunities for exposure to outdoor activities beyond school.

Over the course of several months, these girls from widely divergent backgrounds gelled into a supportive network that gave each other the incentive to try new things and challenge themselves outdoors. During after school meetings the girls bonded over games and snacks. The games helped them practice skills they would need for their campout; like setting up a tent (in the school library) and the snacks kept them going. With guidance, they planned their campout, including what they wanted to do and eat and the supplies they would need to bring with them.

In February, the girls went on a woodland walk and did teambuilding activities at Pickering Creek. They tried out waders for the first time to catch bullfrog tadpoles and

fish in the wetlands in February and went fishing off the dock in April. These short outdoor experiences gave them ideas about what they might want to do more of during their campout.

In addition to planning games and activities that built their skills and confidence we included time and opportunities to address the girls questions and fears. Most of the girls had never camped out, or had even been in a forest at night. They asked questions sometimes in a group setting, sometimes in side conversations with one of us, and other times as anonymous handwritten notes passed on to us. "Where do we go to the bathroom?" "Will I get to take a shower?" "What can I bring with me?" "Will we see snakes?" "Can we go hiking at night?" "Can we get into the water?" After months of prep, they were all excited about their camping trip.

Camp Like a Girl culminated in an overnight campout in May. Audubon staffers, Mary Helen Gillen and Samantha Pitts picked up nine girls completely loaded down with their gear, ready for adventure. Setting up their tent at Pickering was their first great challenge: struggling to align poles and stakes and rain flies, but they all got their tents up. Then, they moved in like they didn't plan to leave anytime soon. They had to be coaxed back out with snacks.

During the campout, the girls were



given "challenges by choice" and each rose to the challenges in their own unique ways. One girl confessed right at the end of the canoe trip that she had been terrified of being out on the water the whole time. However, as the group came ashore with their canoes she carried herself with a new confidence. She had conquered a fear and was eager for more challenges.

The whole camp out was peppered with magical moments: the fun of messy s'mores over a campfire, unfettered time for fun and silliness, moments of unexpected wonder like discovering that firefly babies glow on the ground during their night hike.

As campout time drew to close Audubon staff leading the trip heard girls telling each other that they wished it could be for the whole weekend and that they wanted to do this again. At the final moments of the campout as they being rounded up to depart, several girls dragged their feet. One girl said, "I'm just gonna walk slow cause I don't want to leave". Mission accomplished. We look forward to another Camp Like a Girl Program!

Eight Teachers Attend E-Lit Camp Learning Like Kids Again

For nine weeks last fall, a cohort of mid-shore teachers gathered on Wednesday evenings and two Saturdays to immerse themselves in Maryland's Environmental Literacy (E-Lit) Standards. Established in 2011, Maryland's Environmental Literacy Standards require all students to participate in multi-disciplinary environmental programs to build students' understanding of the inextricable links between humans and the natural world. Hailing from Talbot, Kent and Wicomico counties, the eight teachers had experience in a range of grade levels and content disciplines.

Focusing on one standard each week, the teachers explored environmental concepts through investigating Pickering



Lynn Alemon, a 4th grade teacher at Easton Elementary School releases a newly banded thrush while at Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory.

Creek's forest, meadow and wetland habitats, modeling activities, and engaging in group discussions. During the training, teachers became the students, immersing themselves in nature. They pulled on chest waders to explore freshwater wetlands, and seine before discussing how human activities influence the availability of habitats. They canoed on the creek, taking water quality samples while discussing the influence of the environment on human health. Before the colder days set in, the group spent an evening sweeping butterfly nets through the meadows and looking for monarchs and other insects while considering limiting factors on



Eight classroom teachers and three environmental educators completed the Environmental Literacy Camp for Teachers. Pictured from left to right (Top row): Lynn Alemon (Easton Elementary), Hayley Hartman (Pickering Creek), Danielle Devonport (Pickering Creek), Devin Herlihy (Pickering Creek), Donna Simmons (Kent School), Katelin Cep (Chapel District Elementary), Kathy Kelly (Chapel District Elementary), Jaime Bunting (Pickering Creek); (Bottom row) Jaime Eakin (Wicomico Middle), Charlotte Compton (Easton Elementary), Jeff Eutsler (White Marsh Elementary). Not pictured: Julia Berg (Bennet Middle).

pollinator populations, communities and ecosystems.

"This reminds us that we also need to be outside, and to be mindful of that with our students," remarked Charlotte Compton, a first grade teacher at Easton Elementary School. "We all need it."

Supported through a Chesapeake Bay Trust mini-grant, teachers had an opportunity to earn up to two continuing education credits if they attended both the nine weekday evening sessions and two Saturday field trips. For one Saturday field trip, teachers traveled to Washington College's Chester River Field Research Station, where they shadowed field ecologist, Maren Gimple, and learned about migratory bird banding. Teachers watched as Gimple deftly removed Common Yellowthroats, Ovenbirds and other migratory birds from the station's mist nets, took measurements of each bird, and attached a small metal bracelet to each bird's leg. The teachers learned how data collected at the station in Chestertown is used to enhance our understanding of spring and fall seasonal bird migration.

In October, E-Lit teachers spent a Saturday at Blackwater National Wildlife

Refuge where they heard from refuge Wildlife Biologist Matt Whitbeck and Director of Science at the Nature Conservancy MD-DC, Dr. Ariana Sutton-Grier, to learn about climate change, sea level rise, and the importance of protecting salt marsh habitats for wildlife and preserving the salt marsh habitat's ability to absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere. Julia Berg, a Social Studies teacher from James Bennett Middle School in Salisbury reflected, "I was fascinated to learn about blue carbon and the importance of wetlands in mitigating the effects of climate change. The E-Lit Camp has been really eye-opening and is giving me lots of ideas for working with the science teachers in my school."

On November 7, it was time for the teachers to synthesize what they had learned and develop activities and lessons that incorporate Environmental Literacy Standards. Jeff Eutsler, a Physical Education teacher at White Marsh Elementary shared his idea of creating a fast-moving "Environmental Helpers" game during gym class that can emphasize the influence of individual and group actions on the environment. Lynn

both North Carolina High School and Colonel Richardson High School planned and implemented action projects that included designing habitat garden plans and planting native plants on their school grounds. To design a native plant garden, students had to measure a space in the schoolyard and come up with a list of native plants that met a variety of criteria. Using native plant guides like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping, students chose plants based on bloom time, color, seeds and fruit production, and sunlight, all with the goal of attracting a variety of wildlife.

"The ability for students to get their hands dirty doing something that makes a difference, matters. The program fit well into our existing curriculum – we worked hard to illustrate that humans have changed the environment, for good and for bad, and the community has an opportunity to give back—which these students have demonstrated in the Pickering garden," commented Matt Love, one of Colonel Richardson's Environmental Earth Science teachers. Students entering the 2019-2020 school year at North Carolina and Colonel Richardson high schools will have the chance to study the native plants added to their own school yards, and to extend the restoration work in and around Pickering Creek's garden. Love added, "Our students need examples of ways they can make a difference with environmental issues. We're excited to have a physical example- a showcase of something we did!"

Visitors to Pickering Creek are encouraged to check out the array of native plants in the garden at Pickering Creek this fall and spring and discover how bird and pollinator-friendly gardens can create wildlife-friendly spaces and beautiful gardens at home. Find out more about native plants for your zip code that are good for birds and pollinators at www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds.



Colonel Richardson students work together to install their native plant habitat behind the school. The garden incorporated 422 plants of 8 different species including Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).

Aleman, a 4th grade Language Arts teacher at Easton Elementary School thought about how to enhance a current shark-focused reading project to include her students researching cultural and economic influences on the sharks' populations and habitat. "I am excited to share these lessons and what I have learned with my students, in an effort to better engage them in

science content during my reading block," remarked Aleman.

Just as all of the natural world is interwoven, environmental literacy does not exist exclusively in the science classroom; rather, it is woven throughout the many content disciplines taught in school and in all areas of our lives. And just like many of our student programs, beyond the aca-

demics, the experiential aspect was what really stuck for teachers. Jamie Eakin, a 6th grade science teacher from Wicomico Middle School summed it up: "E-Lit Camp is like teaching therapy for me. I get to be a student and feel the joy of learning again."

E-Lit Camp Teachers canoe along Pickering Creek, taking water quality samples and enjoying the fall sunset.



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