

# VIEWS

## Here Comes the Bus! Let the Exploring Begin

By Mandy Smith

A rumble and a rattle off in the distance lets us know that it is time. Soon, little ones are pouring out of the bus with fresh faces and smiles of delight. Just another field trip for elementary school one would think, but it is much more than that. For some of these children this may be their only field trip outdoors for the whole year. A few may not have ever been in the woods or gone ponding. With each student, a new adventure begins.

Here we circle up, get to know people's names and maybe one thing that they are really excited about or their favorite animal: an animal we may catch glimpses of throughout the day. As groups start out with a game, a hike, dip netting or a creature discovery, the energy builds. There are a thousand different questions, and the taking of time for all to see, touch and smell. Then come the "teachable moments" when something incredible happens or is seen and you just cannot pass it by: a toad in the middle of the trail, a Monarch caterpillar quietly munching milkweed, or a Great Blue Heron squawking as it flies overhead. These moments are magic!

Through engaging, hands-on activities these children are being taught (a bit sneakily) about the natural world. They are becoming aware of the world that surrounds them and all the amazing creatures and plants out there to be discovered. They learn how to appreciate and respect the natural world and why it is so important to our lives. With that, plus some vocabulary and concepts, they develop a deeper understanding of nature as their school career progresses.

Each time a student visits Pickering Creek Audubon Center

a connection is made. With enthusiasm and energy on the part of the adult leaders – educators, teachers and chaperones – that connection strengthens with each visit. One of the hardest and greatest challenges for educators is to maintain the enthusiasm for a lesson they may have already taught that week. It is the knowledge that not only are we teaching the children, but we can be taught by them and their interests.

Students start visiting Pickering Creek Audubon Center in first grade to learn about water habitats in our Chesapeake Bay Watershed. When they return in second, third, and fourth grades, they start acquiring knowledge about specific habitats, animals, plants and their connections to one other. They see how the natural environment is affected by environmental problems and human impacts. Most importantly, they learn what they can do to make less of an impact. A simple mention to their family or friends about what they learned while on their field trip or a clean-up of their schoolyard: each small act makes a big difference. What makes me most happy are the parents and guardians who come to experience nature with their child on the field trip. Families who are learning and exploring together make an even greater difference.

Pickering Creek Audubon Center is a place where connections are made, adventures await, and children learn that every step they take in the natural world holds wonder—a habit of mind we hope they take with them into adulthood.



Dedicated to  
Community-Based  
Conservation  
of Natural  
Resources through  
Environmental  
Education  
and Outreach  
on the Eastern  
Shore of the  
Chesapeake Bay

### Harvest Hoedown Sunday October 9, 11 am- 4 pm

Join us for our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Harvest Hoedown celebration at Pickering Creek! Enjoy a wonderful day with your family. The Hoedown has fun for everyone including live music on two stages, hay wagon and boat rides, crafts, exhibits by artisans, children's activities and great food. Admission is \$10 a car. Rain or Shine.

**Fall Feast 2011** (after Harvest Hoedown)  
Sunday, October 9 For more info, see page 6.

The Sunnyland Band's newest recruits.



# The Red Fox: Pickering Creek's Unofficial Mascot

By Ben Grace

If your children have attended any of the Pickering Creek Audubon Center's EcoCamps, then they are undoubtedly familiar with Red Fox and the riddles the fox leaves for campers to find. If you have visited the Center recently, then there is a good chance that you, too, have come across a Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) while hiking the trails or driving down the lane. While the riddles left behind for campers are an important part of their camp experience, the foxes that are a part of Pickering Creek's ecosystem play an important role in the natural balance of this unique habitat that they call home.

Around five months ago, two adult resident Red Foxes made their den near the pond at the front end of Pickering Creek's property; weeks later, small kits (the term used for young foxes) started to appear around the garden and farmhouses. Typically, female foxes (called vixens) give birth to a litter of 2 to 12 kits. At birth the foxes are actually brown or gray. A new red coat usually grows in by the end of the first month, but colors vary. Some Red Foxes are golden, reddish-brown, silver, or even black. Both parents care for their young through the summer before they are able to strike out on their own in the fall. The Pickering Creek kits have been slowly expanding their territory from their den outward and, with this writing, can be seen near the Pickering Creek Herb Garden.

Red Foxes are far from rare; in fact, they are the most geographically spread member of the order *Carnivora*, being distributed across the entire northern hemisphere from the Arctic Circle to North Africa, Central America and Asia. Red Foxes inhabit the entire state of Maryland, and like many other species, have become "urbanized." They do quite well in urban and suburban environments and have adapted to the sprawling nature of human development. Foxes can survive almost anywhere but the rich habitat that encompasses Pickering Creek provides the perfect amount of food, water, shelter, and space for these foxes to thrive. While the exact number is hard to pinpoint, at least five kits have been spotted at Pickering Creek over the last three months.

As top predators, Red Foxes play an important role in helping keep a check on a number of species. Red Foxes are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and animals. Their varied diet includes insects, birds, mice, snakes, rabbits, nuts, berries and fruit. Top predators (also known as apex predators) have no predators themselves (except for humans) and reside at the top of their habitat's food chain. These species are often at the top of long food chains, which means they have a crucial role in maintaining the health of their ecosystem.

If you haven't been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of one of Pickering Creek's Red Foxes you can recognize them by their typical Red Fox features. Red Foxes are small (typically 10-14 lbs.), dog-like animals with a sharp pointed nose, erect ears, and a bushy tail. Although they can range in colors from black to blonde, they are usually red, with black legs and a white tipped tail. Like a cat's tail, the fox's thick tail aids its balance, but it has other uses as well. A fox uses its tail (or "brush") as a warm cover in cold weather and as a signal flag to communicate with other foxes. Foxes also signal each other by urinating on trees or rocks to announce their presence.

Whether you're a parent of an EcoCamper or a visitor to Pickering Creek Audubon Center, chances are, you've heard of or seen one of the resident Red Foxes. The riddles left for campers are designed to help the campers explore the environment and have fun, but the riddle that everyone needs to think about is: what would Pickering Creek Audubon Center be like without the Red Fox?



Above: Red Fox kits cavort with each other as they explore their Pickering Creek habitat.

Below: The siblings emerge from their den at the Sanctuary.

Photos by Royce Ball

# New Legislation Mandates Environmental Education Literacy Requirement for High School Graduation

Students in our rural Eastern Shore counties are often assumed to be better connected to the natural environment than their urban peers. However they face the same pulls of technology and organized activities that their urban counterparts do. Meaningful experiences in nature are critical to learning; we need to ensure that our youth become active and aware citizens when they graduate from high school.

Concerns about children and the environment were on Governor O'Malley's mind in 2008 when he set in place Maryland's Partnership for Children in Nature and charged the group to provide a report about environmental literacy. This report culminated late this spring with a key addition to the Maryland High School graduation requirements. Over the last two years Audubon has been working as one of over 200 partners with the Maryland No Child Left Inside Coalition to ensure that students are getting consistent outdoor experiences with the Chesapeake Bay throughout their career. After taking public comment and working with partners between September of 2010 and June 2011 the Maryland State Board of Education approved language for a strong, clear environmental literacy graduation requirement mandating that public school systems provide all students with a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary Environmental Education program.

Maryland is the first state to pass this landmark legislation.

***What is an environmentally literate student? Are you?***

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature defines environmental literate students who possess the knowledge, intellectual skills, attitudes, experiences and motivation to make and act upon responsible environmental decisions as individuals and as members of their community.

This mantra has been the focus of Pickering Creek's efforts for over a decade. Beginning two decades ago Pickering Creek staff worked with Talbot County

Public School administrators to incorporate field experiences into each elementary grade level's environmental science and biology units, laying the foundation for environmental literacy. In 2002, with support from NOAA and the Waterfowl Festival, Audubon was able to incorporate a multi-day Audubon Watershed Experience (AWE) into 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes in Talbot

County. AWE uses the enjoyable activities of fishing and birdwatching to investigate issues that wildlife, and the ecosystems they depend on, face. Today we work with all Talbot County Public school high school students and a growing number of students from Wicomico and Caroline counties.

In 2008, thanks to a grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust, we are now able to link the elementary school programs with our signature AWE program with a middle school curriculum which reaches every sixth through eighth grader at least twice a year. Both our middle and high school curricula have action components that engage classes in interdisciplinary student-driven habitat restoration projects.

This continuum of education provides students with a set of experiences that build upon each other and are completely integrated into their existing school curriculum, enriching each student's learning experience with practical applications.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is our home, and all life in and around it is ultimately tied to its health. It is critical at this time that we all take a progressive approach to ensure that our next generations are well equipped to address the environmental challenges that lie ahead. With climate change and sea level rise a serious concern to all residents of Maryland, it is critical that graduating students understand the systematic dynamics of nature.

In the words of Governor O'Malley, "Enacting this environmental graduation requirement ensures that our young people graduate with a demonstrated understanding of the natural world and their place in it, and is another step toward keeping Maryland's education system in the forefront, developing green jobs and creating the next generation of stewards."

We feel pretty confident in saying that Talbot County students are already one step ahead—and likely already among the 'environmentally literate!' We know many graduates are already on the frontlines of improving the health of our environment and the Chesapeake Bay.



*Maryland is the first state to pass this landmark legislation.*

## Your Support Matters!

As a donor and volunteer, I can say without a doubt that Pickering Creek Audubon Center is one of Talbot County's greatest community assets! Though I admit I don't have a chance to walk the 4 miles of trails that often, I must say that when I DO have a chance to share them with my friends and family, I am overwhelmed by the beauty of Pickering, how talented the staff is and how much I want others to experience Pickering Creek for themselves so they can be wowed as well.

As we head into the season of thanking and giving, I want to thank you for your generous support that has enabled Pickering to do so much great work. We couldn't do it without you. Also, I want to thank the staff and the simple natural beauty of Pickering Creek for opening the eyes of thousands to the wonders of nature.

Please join me this season in making a gift to Pickering Creek's Annual Appeal. Unrestricted gifts from the Annual Appeal not only help keep the lights on and connect people with nature, but they let us know that the community we serve is behind us. I know you will be as wowed as I have been with the results! Visit [www.pickeringcreek.org](http://www.pickeringcreek.org) to make a gift today!

Thank you,  
*Tom Lane*  
President, Pickering Creek  
Board of Trustees



# Why I Volunteer

By *Cemmy Peterson*

Children's laughter floats across the Creek and climbs our bank. I'm reminded of the day more than a decade ago when my husband and I found our home-to-be, set in the woods and across from Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Perhaps one day we'd have grandchildren to explore its paths with us.

Now we do, and the time that retirement brings, as well. Yet it took a February phone message from Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator, to lure me into volunteering. "I see you are signed up for the Winter Bird Count," she ventured, "Could you help out with some activities?"

That cold, forbidding day, I walked around with Terry Allen and learned how to differentiate between black and turkey vultures, while Junior Naturalists placed ten toy birds (the kind that sing when you press them) in the woods for children to locate on walks with their parents. Back at the Office Building, we were warmed by tea and homemade bread.

I was captivated by the morning's events, especially upon learning about Margaret Olds Strahl's and George Olds' donation of the land that would become Pickering Creek Environmental Center. They wrote of their gift: "**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 young people.**" Surely the joyful sounds that George and I hear across the Creek gave evidence of the Center's founding intent.

Filling out a volunteer form was initially perplexing. On the list of possible ways to help, I could have checked almost all. "What do you *need*?" I remember asking. "Can you stay for an hour to do a bird count," asked Samantha, and I soon found myself by a window, chart in hand, sighting chickadees, finches, and a downy woodpecker.

On my next visit I discovered Samantha could use help on a proposal. She had the ideas; I had time to give them shape. Working with her in the office, with Mandy Smith, the Education Coordinator, coming in from time to time between school obligations, I realized how devoted they are to their work—and how varied and abundant are their responsibilities.

Further visits, and I met Mark, Susanna, Pam, and other members of the staff. Sometimes we talked over lunch, and I knew more and more that these were people whose dedication was deep and real, who kept this place of beauty up for the benefit of us all.

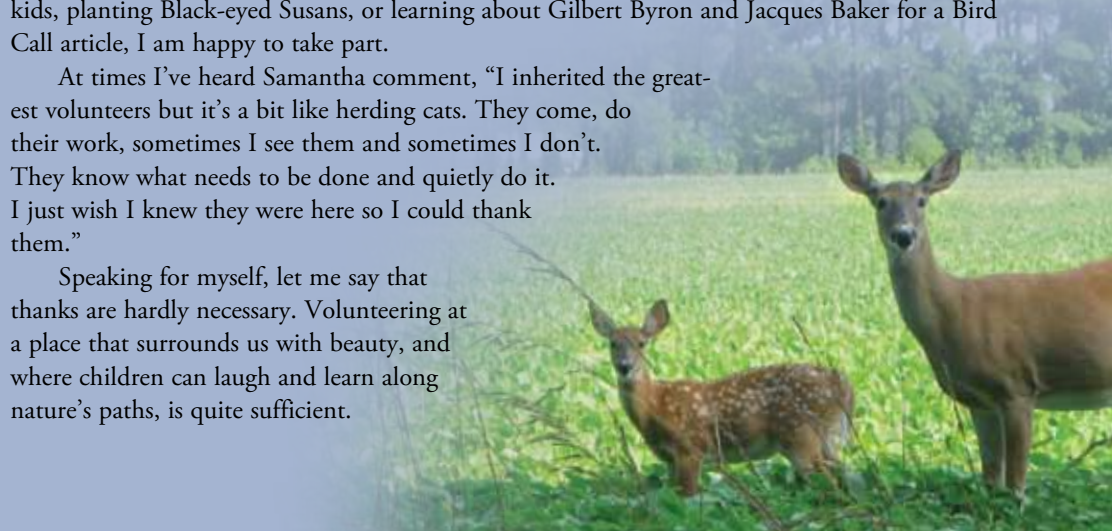
I volunteer and become a speck of pectin, stirred in with others to help in the preservation of the wildlife sanctuary and the work it does for the community. Whether it's kayaking with kids, planting Black-eyed Susans, or learning about Gilbert Byron and Jacques Baker for a Bird Call article, I am happy to take part.

At times I've heard Samantha comment, "I inherited the greatest volunteers but it's a bit like herding cats. They come, do their work, sometimes I see them and sometimes I don't. They know what needs to be done and quietly do it. I just wish I knew they were here so I could thank them."

Speaking for myself, let me say that thanks are hardly necessary. Volunteering at a place that surrounds us with beauty, and where children can laugh and learn along nature's paths, is quite sufficient.



Cemmy Peterson prepares to paddle with her granddaughter, Callie.



# Five new Trustees welcomed to the Pickering Team

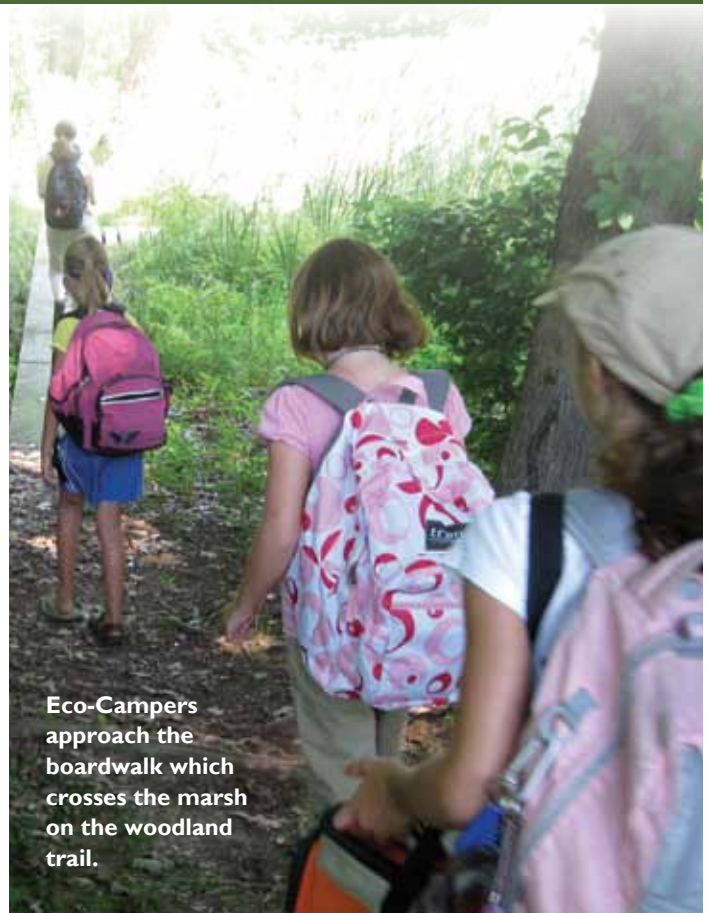
Pickering Creek Audubon Center recently elected five new members to its Board of Trustees and expressed great thanks to retiring members Bill Reybold, Bud Hughes, and Mark Jules. President Thomas Lane made particular note of Bill Reybold's leadership as Vice-chair of the Board and Chair of the Nominating Committee. Bill served on the Board from 1998-2004 and again from 2005-2011. His volunteer efforts appear all over the Center—from the outdoor stalls by the Ecology Classroom to the newly installed signposts along the trails.

Trustees, who may serve two consecutive three year terms, support the Center's activities in many ways: fundraising to support educational programs, maintenance of trails and building upkeep, and service on a number of committees, all of which make it possible for Pickering Creek to host over 13,000 student visits each year. The new trustees, listed below, will find themselves busy with myriad tasks to assist the staff and other volunteers in making the Center hum.

**Bill Barnes** currently consults, following a long career in the medical laboratory and pharmaceutical fields. His interest in the medical field began after working in a U.S. Army hospital clinical laboratory. He later received his doctorate of education in endocrinology from Catholic University of America. In his own time, he has long enjoyed protecting the natural environment of amphibians and birds in their natural habitat. His areas of interest are helping and educating others about advancing their knowledge of our plant and animal environment.

**Cindy Browne** is a life long resident of Talbot County. After receiving her B.S. degree from the University of Maryland, she utilized her major working in the health care industry. Cindy later married Rollin Browne and helped manage and expand their custom moulding and millwork business which they sold in 2000. In the same year, Cindy started her career in real estate and is now with Benson and Mangold Real Estate. Cindy and Rollin live near Oxford and together have logged many miles racing and cruising sail and powerboats on the bay and beyond. In her spare time she can be found gardening, kayaking, traveling, and painting.

**Tony Passarella** graduated from the Naval Academy in 1961 and served 21 years, retiring as a Commander. He worked for a couple of years as Treasurer of a British consulting firm, then joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and eventually retired as the Director of the Directorate for Freedom of Information and Security Review in 1999. After building a home and moving to Oxford, Tony served on the Oxford Community Center Board for six years, three as president. He has served on the Oxford Planning and Zoning Board for five years, and on a few yacht club boards as well. For over ten years, Tony has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity on the Thursday Crew. Tony and his wife, Cammy have been married almost 50 years and have



Eco-Campers approach the boardwalk which crosses the marsh on the woodland trail.

two children and five grandchildren.

Education has been **Cemmy Peterson's** career: teaching, developing social studies and math curricula, and serving as Head of School at Capitol Hill Day School in Washington, D.C. for 22 years. A graduate of Smith College with a Masters of Education from Goucher, Cemmy has enjoyed, over the years, preparing materials for families on their visits to the National Zoo, writing math "stories" for a Time/Life children's series, and helping schools with governance. She notes that a common thread through her career has been appreciation of curiosity and its power to involve young people in learning: something she observes in full force when children visit Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Now retired, she and her husband, George, have the pleasure of living across the Creek from the Center, enabling Cemmy to kayak to "work" on volunteer activities.

**Colin Walsh** is long time denizen of the Eastern Shore. He first arrived to the Eastern Shore in 1966 as a youngster living his summers at the headwaters of Broad Creek in St Michaels. In 1971 his family moved to Unionville where he continues to reside today. Throughout his youth, he has been an avid outdoors person. He grew up fishing, crabbing and hiking. In college at the University of Vermont, he was involved with the Outing Club, leading trips through the White Mountains, Green Mountains and the Adirondacks. During the summers he worked for the botany department at UVM collecting data for acid rain research. Today, Colin spends his time between New York City and Easton. Still an avid fisherman and outdoorsman, he is enthusiastic about the preservation of community and environment. He looks forward to being a member of the Pickering Creek family.

Welcome all—we look forward to working with you!

## Family Programs

Please register by calling 410-822-4903. Registration is required unless otherwise noted. Children are considered ages 15 and under. Unless indicated, all events take place at Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pickeringcreek](http://www.facebook.com/pickeringcreek) to get program reminders.

### Best Night Hike Ever

Friday, September 16

6:00-9:00 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$50/adult; \$25/child\*

What is your fondest memory of being outside past sunset? The Pickering Creek naturalists discussed this question and came up with a list of their favorites for this Best Night Hike Ever. Walk through a field lit by fireflies, call in owls, head out on a starlit paddle down Pickering Creek and settle in by the campfire for s'mores and storytelling. We'll do them all as we discover the 'afterhours' side of Pickering Creek. Fun for children, too! \*The proceeds from this special event benefit Pickering Creek's education programs.

### Monarch Tagging

Thursday, September 22

5:00-7:00 PM

Location: Welcome Center

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Not only are butterflies among nature's most beautiful creations, they have fascinating life histories. We invite you to join us during the height of Monarch migration season for a close-up look into the astounding life of the Monarch Butterfly. Then move out to the fields and do a little 'Monarch tagging.' Come give it a try!

### Autumn Family Canoe Adventure

Friday, October 7

6:00-8:30 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Paddle up Pickering Creek to wetland coves in search of herons, osprey, eagles, and much more. We provide the canoes, paddles and life vests, but you may also bring your own. Afterwards, tell some tales by the campfire and roast a marshmallow.

### Among the Ancients with Author Joan Maloof

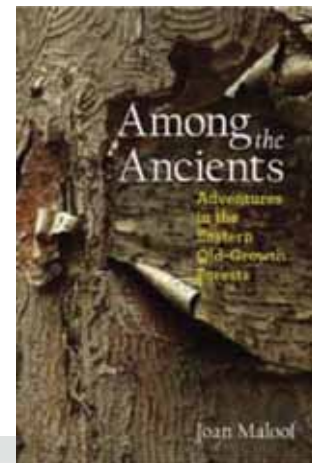
Wednesday, November 9

5:30-7:00 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

In her new book, *Among the Ancients: Adventures in the Eastern Old-Growth Forests*, biologist and nature writer Joan Maloof takes readers on both a practical and lyrical journey to some of the oldest and least known forests in the land. On this journey, from giant hemlock groves in Pennsylvania to a lonely stand of pines in Wisconsin, readers will delight in the web of life as observed by a scientist with a poet's sensibility. Join her at Pickering Creek for a talk about her wonderful experiences around the writing of this exceptional guide.



### Fall Foliage Hike & Crafts

Friday, November 11

2:00-4:00 PM

Location: Welcome Center

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Breathe in the crisp, fresh air while exploring and learning about the colorful forests and fields of Pickering Creek. Be inspired by this beautiful season to make crafts from leaves, flowers and other natural things.

### Winter Solstice Tracks & Traces

Tuesday, December 20

2:00-4:00 PM

Location: Ecology Classroom

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

It might be colder and the days shorter, but there are still animals out and about. Learn how to search for traces of mammals and birds during the winter months by creating your own track guide. We will then do a little tracking of our own out on the trails.

## Fall Feast 2011

Sunday October 9, 2011

\$50 for adults; \$25 for children 12 and under.

Following a great day at Hoedown, bring the whole family down the street for a feast of seasonal and local favorites, Maryland beers and wines and pumpkin carving and games. Plenty of fun for the kids and a great way to end the day after the Harvest Hoedown. Hosted by Julien and Emily Larkin. Call 410-822-4903 for more information.



To become a Pickering Creek Volunteer or to register for one of these events, please call Samantha Pitts at 410-822-4903 x 26 or email [spitts@audubon.org](mailto:spitts@audubon.org)

## National Public Lands Day

**Saturday, September 24**

**10:00 AM-3:00 PM**

**Location: Welcome Center**

Join in on this national day of stewardship by volunteering at Pickering Creek Audubon Center. We will be getting the trails in tiptop shape for school trips, public programs, and use by center visitors. There are a great variety of activities to choose from. You could trim and mulch trails, tidy up gardens, remove invasive plants, plant native wildflowers, and more. Lunch will be provided. Advance registration is encouraged so that plans can be made for lunch and supplies. To learn more about National Public Lands Day events go to [www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org). National Public Lands Day at Pickering Creek is supported by Together Green, a unique partnership between the National Audubon Society and Toyota to promote citizen involvement in conservation.

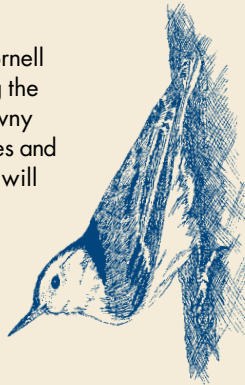
## Project Feeder Watch

**Wednesdays and Thursdays: November 12 through early April**

**Time: at your convenience**

**Location: Main Office**

Sit at our window by the bird feeders and help with Cornell University Ornithology Lab's bird census by identifying the species and counting the number of birds you spot. Downy and Yellow-bellied Woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches are a few of the birds you will spy (along with a couple of hungry squirrels). Come when you can, and stay as long as you like. Contact Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator, [spitts@audubon.org](mailto:spitts@audubon.org), before your first visit so she can provide you with helpful information and training.



## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

**Thursday, October 20**

**6:00-8:30 PM**

Pickering Creek volunteers, please save the date! The staff at Pickering Creek looks forward to thanking you at our annual party. Come enjoy hors d'oeuvres and awards, and most of all, the company of fellow volunteers. Look for an invitation in the mail at the beginning of October.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

**Saturday, February 18**

**9:00 AM-12:00 PM**

**Location: Main Office**

Time for the annual bird census! All over the country, people will be counting birds this day, and we'll be counting them at Pickering Creek. All are welcome—experienced and inexperienced, adults and children; Audubon staff will guide us on the count. Activities for the children, and refreshments are available for all.

**Long-time volunteer and scientist, Peter Stifel releasing a tagged Monarch Butterfly during a Monarch tagging event.**



Talbot County Free Library, Easton

28712 Glebe Road

There are no fees for these programs; however donations to Pickering Creek Audubon Center are greatly appreciated.

## Meet the Creatures of Pickering Creek

Join Pickering staff and Junior Naturalists in the children's book section of Easton's branch of the Talbot County Free Library to meet some native creatures. Every month, we share information on reptiles and amphibians found throughout the Eastern Shore and bring some friends along, too.



**Thursdays: September 22, October 27, November 17, January 26, and February 23**  
**4:00-5:00 PM**

## Program Series

### Bird Walk n' Talk Series

**Sundays, 1:00-3:00 PM**

**Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child**

The Bird Walk n' Talk series introduces beginning birders of all ages to the birds found along the Delmarva Peninsula. Each month will be an exploration of the habitat, identification, and calls of different bird groups.

**September 25, Welcome Center – Hawks**

**November 6, Main Office – Feeder Birds**

**January 22, Main Office – Woodpeckers**

**Saturday, February 25**

**10:00 AM-2:00 PM Leaves from Acme in Easton –**

**Diving Birds at Tilghman Island**

**(limit of 9 participants)**



### Fresh Air Walks

**Thursdays: October 6 through**

**December 14**

**10:00-11:30 AM**

**Location: Main Office**

**Cost per session: Free**

Join volunteer naturalists for a walk along Pickering trails on Thursday mornings (one or many). While enjoying gentle exercise, you'll look for signs of the changing seasons, identifying plants and animals along the way. Bring a friend. Registration not required.



# Strolling the Gardens at Pickering Creek

At Pickering Creek, you will find public access to a variety of landscapes all within walking distance. Slip through the shade of a mature hardwood forest, cross rich wetlands, and wind through colorful meadows; along the way you are likely to pass one of the gardens and flowering meadows established and maintained by volunteers. A few of these, like the Herb Garden, have been a part of the Center's landscape for years. Others, like the Byron House Garden and Meadows, are recently established.

Lou Russell, an energetic lover of herbs who had been a member of an herb society in Bethesda, founded the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society (CBHS) in 2002. Two years later, after making arrangements with Pickering Creek's Director, Mark Scallion, the members took charge of Pickering Creek's Herb Garden, overgrown and weedy, which stood along the lane at the Center.

At the Society's next meeting, volunteer Peggy Hegwood handed out paper and pencils. "Now everybody draw what you envision," members were told. Thus emerged the garden's plan: the serpentine paths and surrounding beds—a maze intentionally designed to slow one's pace through fragrant plantings.

The first spring's work was especially hard. Pathways were laid with meticulous care, using large ropes to guide their shape and maintain an even width. The beds were raised and edged with bricks, compost worked into the soil, and small seedlings set in place. The beginning of a garden that would bring delight!

Seven years later, the garden continues to flourish and please. One Monday morning when volunteers went to the Tool Shed for hoes and rakes, they found an anonymous note from a weekend kayaker. "This is the best herb garden I've ever seen," it read.

When you visit, you will notice that the beds have names: Fragrance, Tea, Lemon, Basil, Lavender, Culinary, Shade, and Pizza. The fourteen CBHS volunteers of the Pickering Creek Herb Garden

Committee start the year by dividing the beds up among themselves, taking responsibility for the initial purchasing and planting. After that, the care of the garden's territory belongs to all, and the weekly work of watering, weeding, and trimming begins.

Pollination is the work of bees and butterflies. They hover over basil—eight varieties, fennel, scented geraniums, Greek oregano, hyssop, thyme, and so many more. Bunnies hide in this verdant paradise, often nibbling favorite herbs, and sometimes encouraged to move along by spray from a volunteer's hose.

At October's Hoedown, CBHS volunteers are on hand, introducing visitors to the Herb Garden and distributing late fall herbs to those who want them. It's a lovely time for a stroll along the pebbled paths, and a time to thank the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society volunteers for their dedicated work.

## Pickering Poets

Friends, former students, family, and friends gathered on July 12 at an annual celebration honoring the legacy of Gilbert Byron, born 108 years ago. Many contributed Haiku, inspired by Byron's teaching and writing.

*Dawn stripped bare by the  
Chirping of birds, nesting now  
The future woven*  
By: Michael Egnatz

*Osprey are soaring  
Hear their call and see them dive  
A fish in their sight*  
By: Eddie Chen

*Rain grey in murk blue.  
Meditating stealth wades to  
jab, slurp up a treat.*  
By: Mandy L. Smith



**The Herb Garden receives its weekly care from Chesapeake Bay Herb Society volunteers.**

**All of the Pickering Creek gardens are dependent upon volunteers.** Please, won't you help? Under regular care from the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society, the Herb Garden thrives. The other gardens would surely flourish as well with such thoughtful vigilance! Give Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator a call to join the Pickering Creek Gardeners and find yourself weeding and watering, and learning with others about Eastern Shore flora.



# Byron House Garden and Meadows

Seventeen years ago, Gilbert Byron's self-constructed cabin found its new home at Pickering Creek. The cabin originally stood near the shore of San Domingo Creek where Byron, a prolific writer of essays and poetry, lived in harmony with nature until the year before his death in 1991. Once the work on the cabin was well underway, it was time to begin work on the surrounding landscape. The Pickering Creek staff wished to honor Byron's spirit by using native plants in a garden by his cabin and in the nearby meadows. They also wanted to provide a demonstration of how native plantings can be used, not only to enhance the landscape around dwellings, but also improve habitat for pollinators.

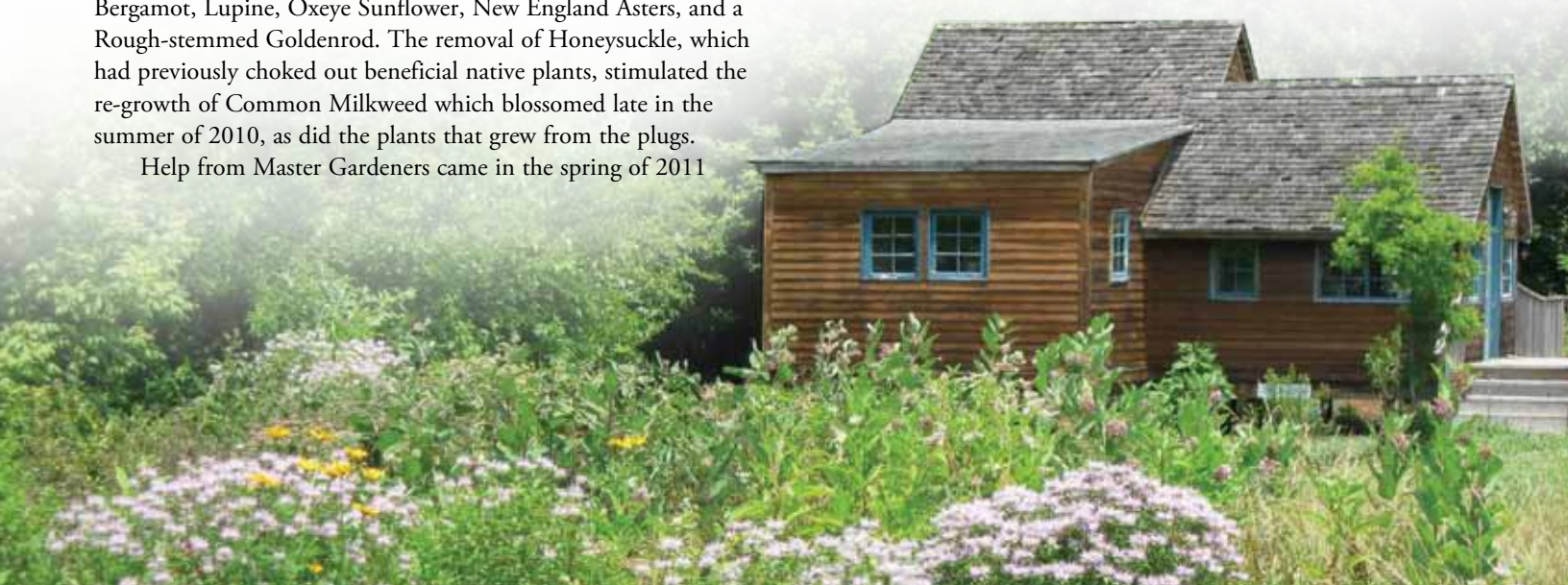
Work on the wildflower meadows, now established in front of Byron House, was started in the spring of 2010. Students from The Country School helped pull out a large patch of invasive Japanese Honeysuckle. After an early summer bare-cut mowing, volunteers removed invasive thistle and planted plugs of Wild Bergamot, Lupine, Oxeye Sunflower, New England Asters, and a Rough-stemmed Goldenrod. The removal of Honeysuckle, which had previously choked out beneficial native plants, stimulated the re-growth of Common Milkweed which blossomed late in the summer of 2010, as did the plants that grew from the plugs.

Help from Master Gardeners came in the spring of 2011

when Lin Clineburg offered to plan the foundation garden, oversee its planting, and coordinate the efforts of volunteers. Jacques Baker, instrumental in memorializing Byron's legacy, provided donations of native shrubs and mulch. Under Lin's direction, volunteers from the Master Gardeners, alongside students from Saints Peter and Paul High School Key Club, spent two and half ambitious hours lifting sod, turning the earth, and planting: Wild Bergamot, Fothergilla, Black-eyed Susans, and a Jerusalem artichoke (a species of sunflower). Beside the opening path, Lin made room for a small copper plate, placed on a log, to catch rainwater for birds and butterflies.

Now, both the meadow and foundation garden are thriving. Butterflies and other pollinators hover over sunflowers and other fall flowers. Black-eyed Susans offer bright color, as do the fall colors of the Fothergilla.

**The meadows blossom in front of Byron House.**



## Mapping Our Whereabouts

When Eddie Chen wasn't busy teaching in EcoCamp this summer, he was Pickering Creek's budding cartographer. On the outside wall of the Ecology Classroom, he created three maps: Pickering Creek flowing into the Wye, the Wye and other rivers entering the Chesapeake Bay, and the Bay's six-state watershed. "It's a way to visualize relationships," Eddie explains. "Hopefully people will see how rivers and the Bay and the Ocean interconnect." Certainly, teachers and staff will make use of his handiwork, challenging children to consider implications. On the map, rivers stand still with bright paint; in nature, they flow freely for hundreds of miles, impacting the land around them, just as the land—and its human inhabitants—are impacting them.

**"We're located about here," Eddie Chen explains to summer campers.**



# Visiting with Butterflies, Then and Now

**D**inosaurs roam the land; tectonic forces split apart a gigantic landmass that will become the continents; small mammals, an infant species, skitter about. It's about 125 million years ago, and butterflies flutter above!

Few fossils remain to tell the story of butterfly evolution. Scientists hypothesize that the family *Lepidoptera*, which includes moths and butterflies, co-evolved with plants during the Cretaceous Period.

Today we see them fluttering above the meadows, along the woodland paths, and in the gardens at Pickering Creek, seemingly fragile but taught hardiness by millions of years of rugged adaptation. Of the world's approximately 18,000 species of butterflies, sixty-one populate the Delmarva Peninsula.

We are struck first by the colors: the brightly striped Tiger Swallowtail, the Red-Banded Hair Streak, the Variegated Fritillary, to name just three. Tiny scales of varying colors, some iridescent, create the patterns as they are arranged across the wing's thin membrane.

Color saves energy. Males can easily identify females of their own species when seeking mates, thus conserving strength. And color saves lives. Some species, such as the Comma and the Question Mark (which we can often find in the Children's Garden gorging upon fallen fruit), are cleverly camouflaged.

These two species, so named because of small silvery comma-like marks on their hind wings and one, with a dot alongside the comma to form the question mark, have dark, jagged wings. When the wings are folded upright (the common position for butterflies when they are sipping nectar), they so resemble dead leaves that it is hard for a hungry predator to spot them.

Mimicry is another life-saving trick of color. Take the Pipe-vine Swallowtail, for example. A butterfly with primarily black wings, it is distasteful. Predators who have learned to avoid this species would also shun members of other species with similar coloration (among them, Pickering Creek's Red-Spotted Purple, the female Spicebush Swallowtail, the dark female form of the Tiger Swallowtail, and the female Black Swallowtail).



Clouded Sulphur butterfly on mint.

The butterflies we observe may be sipping nectar with their straw-like proboscis, basking with wings outspread, drinking water from puddles, even mating while in flight—the male grasping the female as the two float as one, tail to tail. These, of course, are the adult butterflies in the fourth and final stage of their metamorphosis.

We can find butterflies in the other stages of their lifecycle as well. In the first, the female deposits fertilized eggs on the plants that will provide sustenance for the larval (caterpillar) stage, and they are particular about the plants they choose. For example, look on leaves of the paw-paw for eggs of the Zebra Swallowtail, white clover for the Clouded Sulphur, and spicebush and sassafras for the Spice Bush Swallowtail. Butterfly guidebooks, such as Elton Woodbury's *Butterflies of Delmarva*, are helpful in connecting plants that serve as food sources with particular butterflies.

Developing from the egg is the caterpillar, an eating machine as ravenous as Eric Carle's *Hungry Caterpillar*—though,

unlike Carle's adventurous creature that eats its way through fruits, ice cream cones, and pizzas—is limited to its own food source. And in the third stage, the caterpillar spins a silk pad on a twig, leaf, piece of bark, or other substrate, and hangs upside down (usually), until it emerges as a butterfly.

From early spring to late fall, we can find butterflies in the four stages of their development. The number of generations per summer differs from one species to another. The Mourning Cloak generally has one generation per year; the American Painted Lady has two, and the Cabbage Butterfly reproduces constantly from spring to November.

When cold comes, the butterflies are gone from our sight. Some, the Swallowtails, for example, stay in the area in the chrysalis stage and emerge in the spring. Others, such as the Variegated Fritillary and Little Sulphur, migrate to Delmarva in the spring. Most die with the first heavy frost; others who remained behind will reproduce in spring's warmth at their home site, with some dispersing once again to Delmarva.

And then there are the Monarchs! We find them in the meadows at Pickering Creek; Milkweed fulfills the caterpillars' dietary preference. With summer's end, the adults at Pickering feed on Snakeroot and Tickseed Sunflower, then begin their lengthy migration south, most to the Mexican highlands. There, those that have survived the journey of thousands of miles, overwinter only to turn around and fly a little way north to begin the lifecycle anew. The new generation then flies a little further, stopping along the way to repeat the generational cycle. The Monarchs that return to our meadows are then the great-or great-great-grandchildren of the butterflies that departed in the fall.

It seems pretty amazing that these lovely creatures, like tiny, untethered kites, fly about with a complexity of adaptations that has enabled them to spread to all parts of the globe, except Antarctica. We, descendants of the small scurrying mammal back in the Cretaceous, watch them with wonder. Watching over them seems a human responsibility, for their health and safety is a measure of the well-being of our natural world.

You are invited to join Pickering Creek staff for an afternoon of Monarch Butterfly Banding. See "Family Programs" for details.



# Junior Naturalists Gain Senior Experience *By Ben Grace*

**Today's high school students are busier than ever.** The list of after school activities is ever growing; there are music lessons, sports, homework, hanging out with friends, and doing chores to name a few. Many of today's students are looking for a way to prepare for the future as well as help the community. Pickering Creek offers such an opportunity.

The Youth Conservation Leadership Club (Junior Naturalists) was started in an effort to connect more youth intimately with the outdoors, inspire curiosity in the natural world and help construct positive environmental ethics. The program is geared to teach and practice leadership skills through observing, doing, and reflecting.

Junior Naturalists attend three to five events per month, including a volunteer/service learning program, an on-site natural history adventure, and they take five to six exciting field trips. Junior Naturalists also serve as volunteers throughout the year, and as invaluable EcoCamp counselors. Read what two JNs have to say about their experiences below.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for the Junior Naturalist program, please contact Ben Grace at [bgrace@audubon.org](mailto:bgrace@audubon.org) or 410-822-4903.

## In their words...

**"I became a Junior Naturalist to learn about nature and make new friends.** We learn about trees, insects, and pretty much anything in the outdoors category. We help with EcoCamp and I learn about leadership and responsibility with the children. It is my first time doing anything like this and I was very apprehensive about doing it, since I am so timid, but I overcame my worries. I am glad I made that decision, because being a JN is fun.

Earlier this year we went to The Baltimore National Aquarium, Jug Bay, a place similar to Pickering Creek, and Slaughter Beach to observe horseshoe crabs. Also we go to our town library to teach children about nature. My favorite part about being a Junior Naturalist is learning the different species of trees, and getting to figure out which ones they are when I see them.

**JN Marjorie Hoxie practices duck identification, putting her ducks in a row!**



What I loved about the summer camp is going canoeing and doing traditional summer camp things, but it's even better because I am a JN. Being a Junior Naturalist was a great experience for me. My family loves that I do it and so do I. I have learned to be a role model with the summer camp, and working with the other amazing JN's was also awesome. In the future I will know more about nature than most other people my age, and I have Pickering Creek to thank."

*Marjorie Hoxie joined the program in October of 2011 and is an 8th grader at St. Michael's Middle School.*

**"When I was younger I went to Pickering's EcoCamp and loved it!** I have always had a love for the outdoors and all of the creatures in it so being a JN seemed perfect for me.

As a JN I have done many different things. I have volunteered at the library showing kids turtles, snakes, frogs and

even Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches. We have gone on group trips, like to Delaware Bay, Blackwater Wildlife Refuge, and Jug Bay.

I really enjoy being a JN because I feel like am able to show young people the joys of being outside. Whenever a kid is able to remember something, even the smallest of things, that I taught them, it makes me feel like I'm making an impact.

The best part of summer camp is being able to see the excited smiles and hear enthusiastic talk from the campers. During summer camp I am able to teach as well as have fun myself. Being around great people and fun kids is sure to leave some everlasting memories.

Since I am thinking of becoming a teacher, these weeks of camp are important for me to learn how to deal with different behaviors of kids and will give me an experience that will help me be a better teacher. I have to be able to control the campers as well as keep them entertained. I have to be a good role model and friend to them.

Being a Junior Naturalist has been a great experience and introduced me to many smart and friendly people! I am so glad that I signed up for this, because I have had an amazing time here! Thank you, to all the employees and volunteers for such a great year!"

*Spencer Kessinger joined the Junior Naturalists in April, 2010 and will be entering Easton High School in the fall.*

**JN Spencer Kessinger holds a Sea Squirt found on a trip to the Delaware coast.**



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**The Margaret Olds Strahl Overlook**

## Where is your favorite place at Pickering Creek?

**Here are two staff favorites.  
Add your own on our  
Facebook page at  
[facebook.com/pickeringcreek](https://facebook.com/pickeringcreek)**

*Samantha Pitts, Volunteer  
Coordinator*

At the end of the Overlook Spur dedicated to Margaret Strahl. It's just the little trail that starts next to the kiosk near the Office. The trail ends with a view over the Creek. It was one of the first places I explored when I moved here. I like it because you can be almost hidden from view even though you are right up from the fire circle. I've seen the kingfisher and herons feeding and flying. Once when I was quietly standing looking over the edge I saw a muskrat swimming around the point. Earlier in the summer I was on the bench and an Osprey with a fish landed in the limb of a dead tree right over me and ate its meal. How awesome is that?



**The Pickering Pier in Fall**

*Ben Grace, Teacher/Naturalist  
and EcoCamp Director*

Overlooking the dock and waterman's shanty. This is a great place for tranquil moments. One can watch the many Barn Swallows swoop around, hear the loud call of a Great Blue Heron, or watch an Osprey swoop down to catch a meal. I have also seen the chaos here of a young student catching her first fish or of campers gingerly trying to pull up their crabbing line with a blue crab still attached. This area is also a good reminder to our connection to the Bay and our environment and a reminder that every decision we make has consequences that are far reaching.