



Wood Thrush
Photo by Will Stuart

Celebrating the Year of the Bird

We never need a reason to celebrate birds at Audubon, but in 2018 we're making an *especially* big deal of them. That's because not only is it the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)—a pivotal piece of legislation that continues to save countless birds' lives—but birds are also facing many new and serious threats, including attacks on the MBTA itself. And so it's with great excitement that we've teamed up with National Geographic, BirdLife International, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to officially make 2018 the Year of the Bird.

At Pickering Creek Audubon Center we've been connecting people with birds and birds with people for over 35 years. As a sanctuary for birds, the Center has improved notably over the years with the addition of hundreds of acres of wetland, forest and meadow habitat. We've had rarities like the Virginia's Warbler and Northern Shrike, unique seasonal visitors like the Golden Eagle and Glossy Ibis and some of our annual favorites like the Wood Thrush, Wood Duck and Great Blue Heron. Both seasoned birders and those seeing their first eagle overhead enjoy the wildlife viewing bounty the Center offers.

We encourage you, believers in the outdoors, birds and Audubon's work, to step outside and enjoy the birds around you. We hope that as you finish celebrating the Year of the Bird with us you will continue these sentiments into 2019 and consider how closely aligned

the health of birds are to our own health, the communities' health and the planet itself.

Underscoring their importance in our landscape, Governor Hogan has declared 2018 the Year of the Bird in Maryland as has our own Talbot County Council. I hope you'll join us at our 2018 Year of the Bird themed Harvest Hoedown on October 14. You'll have an opportunity to learn about how using native plants in your landscape help birds and can take a plant home to place in your own yard. We look forward to seeing you there.



Local, State and National staff and Auduboners, accept a Year of the Bird proclamation from Governor Larry Hogan's Deputy Chief of Staff, Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio.

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

Native Habitats for Habitat:

New Homeowners Install Bird and Bay-friendly Gardens

A house is incredibly important to a family. It is a place to be rooted, a foundation on which children can grow and develop.

—Millard Fuller, Founder,
Habitat for Humanity

The same is true of wildlife habitat.

Orange Butterfly Milkweed blossoms were beginning to open on a hot Saturday in June as Tynita Cummings planted her new Bay-friendly garden at her home in Hurlock. Tynita is one of six Habitat for Humanity Choptank homeowners partnered with Pickering Creek Audubon Center in the Native Habitats for Habitat program, which works with homeowners to install native plant gardens at their homes. Each garden serves multiple purposes: landscaping the home with beautiful plants; providing nectar, seeds and fruit for birds and pollinators; helping to clean our local waterways; and showing neighbors that everyone can play a role in creating healthy habitat for all.

The Native Habitats for Habitat program, supported by a Chesapeake Bay Trust Outreach and Restoration Grant and Audubon, kicked off in March with a gardening workshop led by Pickering Creek's Krysta Hougen and Jaime Bunting. The workshop was open to current Habitat for Humanity Choptank homeowners or homebuyers who wanted to learn more about landscaping for wildlife with native plants and are interested in attracting birds to their yards. Ultimately the program envisions homeowners being ambassadors for native plants and habitats in their communities. Workshop participants learned gardening and landscaping basics, such as preparing a site for planting, choosing native plants that will be successful at a given site, suggestions for tools, and how to properly plant, weed, and maintain a landscaped yard.



Top: Easton homeowner Keisha Temp poses in front of her newly planted Bay-friendly garden; Above: Habitat homeowners plant native plants during a Native Gardening workshop in March; Right: Cambridge homeowner Nora Skimmer poses with her newly planted and blooming Bay-friendly garden.



Pat Ingram, Program Coordinator for Habitat for Humanity Choptank shared the importance of homeowners participating in 'sweat equity' hours at the workshop. "The culminating event was digging in the dirt and actually planting pollinator-friendly perennials. All our homebuyers and their coaches attended, earning three 'sweat equity' hours toward their individual goals. Sweat equity takes the place of a

down-payment on their homes. It is usually accumulated by building on the job sites, but workshops that provide information enhancing their ability to be successful homeowners are vitally important. The Native Gardening workshop more than lived up to this mandate!" said Ingram.

Beyond the March workshop, which drew nearly forty Habitat for Humanity Choptank participants, Pickering Creek continues to work closely with six homeowners selected for the Habitats for Habitat program. Homeowners surveyed

PCAC...the Natural Choice

their yards and considered a variety of factors, including preferred size and location of a garden, sunlight, soil moisture, color preferences of blooming flowers, and desirable wildlife, such as birds and butterflies, they'd like to attract with a garden.

The homeowners and Pickering Creek staff collaborated to finalize plans and each homeowner prepared their site by turning over the soil and adding compost. Homeowners invited friends and family members to help on their planting day when Pickering Creek arrived with plants and mulch.

"I was not unhappy to get rid of the wire grass that was once my 'front lawn,'" commented homeowner Nora Skiver. "The work was difficult at first, spreading new topsoil and compost, but planting day finally came. I was like a kid on Christmas morning. It was hot when they arrived; we placed plants and then planted. Then the rain poured and we were all soaked, but what fun! My mailman commented several times as the garden progressed and said he could not wait to see the end result. It is truly a beautiful transformation."

Pickering Creek staff will continue to consult one-on-one with each homeowner every month through summer and fall and will help to prepare the gardens for winter. Next spring, homeowners will have the opportunity to expand their garden or add new features.

"Working with Habitat for Humanity homeowners is a natural fit for us," said Krysta Hougen of Pickering Creek. "We enjoy the opportunity to share the benefits of using native plants with a new audience and we are so excited to connect Habitat for Humanity Choptank homeowners with plants that will become beautiful features of their homes."

Pickering Creek Audubon Center will be offering native plant gardening tips for Habitat Choptank ReStore customers in the fall. Habitat homeowners will be able to earn sweat equity during short presentations and Pickering staff will be available to answer questions and offer suggestions for anyone who stops by. The ReStore location is 8610 Commerce Drive Easton, Maryland.

By Tyler Redman,
Junior Naturalist

Ever since I was young, I have loved the outdoors. The animals, plants and overall atmosphere that came with it captivated me. So, when I heard I could help out at Pickering Creek as a Junior Naturalist (JN), I was elated. I had visited for school trips, so I was eager to start as a JN in 7th grade. The staff at Pickering Creek offers JNs Citizen Science classes throughout the school year, where we learn about the habitats of Pickering Creek, outdoor safety, and about nature in general. We also go on several field trips to other natural areas like Patapsco State Park, Calvert Cliffs Park and Cunningham Falls State Park. In addition to field trips, we volunteer at events, including at the public library and at Pickering Creek itself, where we teach the community about an assortment of turtles and share information about nature and conservation.

One thing I love about Pickering Creek is that there is a heavy focus on helping the environment we live in to thrive. I have participated in bird-banding and Monarch tagging to collect data for research being done on migration patterns. Pickering Creek also encourages JNs to invite their family to help volunteer at events organized by Pickering Creek such as marsh grass planting in Dorchester County.

Pickering Creek has prepared me well to instill my love for the environment in the youth who attend Pickering Creek EcoCamp. It's thrilling to see the young campers just as excited about nature as I was at their age. Whether showing them an animal or playing a game, there is always something to do that teaches them more about the environment. It is fun to see the same campers year after year and meet new ones because that means they are having fun, want to keep coming back, and are telling others about their experiences. The summer ends on a sad but extremely fun note. Even though we have to wait another year until the next EcoCamp, all of the JNs are invited to one big campout where we share fun sto-



ries about the past weeks, develop lasting bonds, and enjoy the great outdoors at Pickering Creek.

After all of the amazing experiences I've had at Pickering Creek, I began to wonder, "What could I do to give back to a place that has taught me so much and helped me develop so many life skills?" That is when I decided to do my BSA Eagle Scout Project at Pickering Creek. So, after reaching out to the Pickering Creek staff, I chose to re-route and create new trails. During my time as a JN this July, it was fun to see the campers enjoying the new trails I built and it felt great knowing that I had given something back to Pickering Creek. I constructed two benches for ends of the trails overlooking the creek. The views from each bench are serene so people will be able to rest and enjoy the beauty of Pickering Creek.

I know I'll always love the outdoors, whether it means pursuing a career that relates to the environment and animals, or just exploring and going on outdoor adventures. I am grateful for the opportunities I've had in both Boy Scouts and Pickering Creek, which have increased my love and appreciation for nature. I'm excited to make more memories at Pickering Creek. This exceptional place has impacted my life in such a positive and incredible way and I will always remember it. If it hasn't already, I hope someday Pickering Creek will impact yours as well.

Seventh Graders Search for Species at Pickering

Ten seventh grade students line up along the edge of Pickering Creek's Farm to Bay loop, peering into the forest edge across the creek. An Osprey nest sits near the top of a Virginia pine tree, and students are waiting to see if they will catch a glimpse of the powerful fish-eating raptor, or perhaps a chick peering over the edge of its nest. Each year seventh graders come to Pickering Creek for a field experience called "Biodiversity Makes the Bay Better," and spend the day searching for and counting as many different species of animals they can find within the mature forests and creek waters of the Center's 400 acres.

There are over 3,600 species of plants and animals found in the Chesapeake Bay, from tiny grass shrimp to Great Blue Herons, from swaying cattails to towering tulip poplars. Described by one student as "the study of the complexity and diversity of living things," biodiversity is a theme all 350 Talbot County seventh graders have focused their attention on in their classrooms. Funded by the Mid Shore Community Foundation, Pickering educators lead a 7th grade program that includes an in-school lesson about taxonomy, or the way organisms are classified. Working in pairs, students make observations on different physical features and adaptations of plants and animals and discuss the advantages of high species diversity, such as a greater amount of food being available for humans and other animals. Students learn that the more biodiversity in an ecosystem, the better that ecosystem can withstand change or disaster.

During their field experience at Pickering Creek the 7th graders get to discover for themselves many species found locally. Each activity students complete—fishing on the dock, hiking the trails with binoculars, pulling seine nets through the creek—is designed to bring them into contact with a new group of organisms. The species list—student-generated proof of local biodiversity—grows as each group adds their new finds to it.

Leading seventh grade trips focused on biodiversity has multiple benefits: students



Above: Two of Bethany Haas' 7th grade students work together to dissect and identify the parts of a lily during an in-class lesson about taxonomy and biodiversity; **Right:** A 7th grader holds up a fish he caught during a biodiversity field trip.



build significantly on their knowledge of ecology, but also get the chance to experience nature in an active way. Activities such as combing the forest for insects and seining in the creek are loved by students because it engages them fully, and it is fun! In the forest, students spread out to look under leaf litter, roll over decaying logs, and catch scurrying beetles in bug boxes. Often students find small worm snakes, toads, beetle larva and spiders on the forest floor. The experience is new for many of them, and they find the freedom to explore and catch things exciting. "I can catch that toad? Really?" asks one student. Similarly, seining in the creek is a chance for students to find something new, unexpected, or

often unnoticed. One day in May students found over 40 individual grass shrimp in about ten minutes. "That was really fun," another student added after reluctantly leaving the creek and pulling off his waders.

Easton Middle School teacher Bethany Haas appreciates the opportunity for her students to learn about and experience biodiversity in a real-world way. "The students really enjoy experiencing Pickering Creek and having them come in to our classroom. The lessons are always hands on and get them thinking more about the unique and diverse area where we live. It's nice to see young people out learning and enjoying the wonders of outdoors rather than sitting inside staring at a screen."

At the conclusion of each field trip students review their species totals. The Osprey did not appear at the nest as hypothesized, but one was spotted soaring overhead while the group was fishing off the dock. "Add it to the list!" shouted one seventh-grader after seeing it fly around the creek's corner. Students have found as many as 51 animal species in a single morning—proof of not only local biodiver-

Learning Through Play and Exploration

Pickering Creek Audubon Center has offered the highly popular summer EcoCamp for three decades. Campers, ages 4 to 12 years old, explore every nook and cranny of Pickering's 400 acres alongside teen Junior Naturalist volunteers and Camp Counselors. To an outsider, campers may appear to be "running wild" but Camp Director Krysta Hougen has been gradually working towards the new camper-led format since 2013.

"I've been inspired by the "forest schools" found throughout Europe that are gaining popularity in the United States", says Krysta. "Play is a powerful learning tool. Campers practice social skills as they recruit others to build forts or invent new games. We watch them closely as they test their physical abilities while balancing on fallen trees or working together to move logs. We offer guiding questions as they solve problems like identifying an animal or designing an animal home."

At times, leading a camper-led camp

sity, but of the students' engagement and persistence in finding all kinds of wildlife while visiting the Audubon Center.

Collaborating with classroom teachers is essential in creating and maintaining meaningful environmental lessons and experiences. "We strive to work closely with teachers to develop our programs," says Jaime Bunting, Pickering Creek's Education Manager. "When teachers can incorporate the program directly into their curriculum, the visit from our educators and the field trip to Pickering Creek are not seen as separate and apart, but rather as an experience that harmonizes with what the students are already learning."

In May of 2018, Bunting met with the seventh grade teachers to partner on updat-



Above: Campers collect bait for fishing; Right: Campers found a deer skull along the creek and decided to spend their afternoon looking for the remaining bones and recreating the skeleton

can be challenging for the adults in charge. Camp Counselors Julia Jester, Miranda Moss, and Alex Welch had to learn how to take a step back from directing play and allow campers to truly explore for themselves. Initially campers were confused because they are used to schedule-filled days but they soon discovered their own activities or joined in with others as they dip-netted for aquatic creatures, created traps for the camper-imagined "toad monster," built forts, discovered a muddy slide down an old tree stump, made pots



from "mined" wetland clay, and an endless number of activities created, organized, and loved by campers.

EcoCampers spent their week rotating through three different campsites at Pickering – freshwater wetland, forest, and shoreline (aka "Muddy Waters"). Each campsite had a bin of tools to help in play like buckets, shovels, magnify lens, containers, and rope. Counselors started each campsite visit with an activity based on that week's camp theme but then they let it naturally transition to camper-led play.

EcoCamp 2018 was a huge success according to Krysta. "When we made the switch to fully camper-led activity to encourage play and creativity, I wasn't expecting all the other positive changes" says Krysta, "Campers seemed more engaged, they played better with each other and there were fewer discipline issues. I am anxious to see how we can continue to improve for next summer!"

Advance registration required for all programs
by calling 410-822-4903.

Welcome Fall Campfire

Friday, October 5, 2018

6:00PM – 7:30PM

\$5 per person

The temperatures are slowly cooling, and soon the leaves will be falling! Bid farewell to summer and welcome autumn with a wagon ride and campfire at Pickering Creek Audubon Center! We'll meet at the Pickering Welcome Center before catching a wagon ride to the campfire pit by the creek. Enjoy s'mores and a short seasonal program led by Pickering Creek staff.

Fall Garden Plan and Prep at Habitat ReStore

Saturday, October 6, 2018

10:00AM – 2:00PM

Free

Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Habitat for Humanity have partnered this year to bring native plants to more gardeners on the Eastern Shore. Stop by the Audubon table at the Habitat ReStore in Easton this October to learn about great native fall flowers, preparing your garden for winter, and protecting wildlife and water quality in your yard all year.

Year of the Bird Celebration Brunch

Saturday, October 13, 2018 Noon

Space is limited, advance reservation required.

\$125 per seat

The National Audubon Society has teamed up with National Geographic, among others, to declare 2018 the Year of the Bird. Have a scrumptious brunch overlooking the Wye River, accompanied by a lecture by an ornithologist Dr. David Curson on the importance of birds to the society's general well being, and actions you can take to ensure the health and safety of birds in your neighborhood. A van will then transport you to Pickering Creek, five minutes away, to view and identify migrating birds that will be passing through the flyway above our homes during the fall.

Harvest Hoedown

Sunday, October 14, 2018

11:00AM – 4:00PM

\$5 per car

Pickering Creek Audubon Center will celebrate birds and fall on the Eastern Shore at this year's Year of the Bird themed Harvest Hoedown. Harvest Hoedown features music at three locations, unique craftspeople, nature walks, wildlife exhibits, boat rides on the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Winnie Estelle and entertaining kids and adult activities about birds as well as food prepared by the Easton Lions Club and new local food vendors. Activities and vendors will be found throughout the Center. Explore the property with wagon rides or take a stroll on the forest trail for a sampling of the Eastern Shore's natural beauty from wetlands to 100 year-old trees, all highlighted in vibrant fall colors.



Barred Owl
photo by Benjamin Olsen

Bring birds to your home today by growing native plants

With Audubon's Native Plant Database, you can find the best plants for the birds in your area.

www.audubon.org/native-plants

Batty for Bats

Friday, October 19, 2018

5:30PM – 7:00PM

\$5 per person

Birds and butterflies aren't the only winged creatures flapping and flying around at Pickering Creek Audubon Center! Learn more about these often misunderstood flying mammals and join us for a fun exploration through the forests and fields at Pickering while we search for bats and other animals of the night.

Hoot and Holler Owl Prowl

Friday, November 9, 2018

5:30PM – 7:30PM

\$5 per person

Escape the Waterfowl Festival crowds in town and use your senses to discover night life on an evening hike at Pickering Creek Audubon Center! Listen for Barred Owls calling, "Whoooo cooks for youuu," identify the rambunctious hoots of the Great Horned Owl, and awe at the whinnies coming from our smallest, the Eastern Screech Owl.

Fresh Air Family Craft Night

Friday, November 16, 2018

4:00PM – 6:00PM

\$5 per person

Autumn brings cooler temperatures, shorter days, and an abundance of natural goodies to decorate our homes for the season! Come out to Pickering Creek Audubon Center for an evening of exploring, collecting, and making! We'll start by searching our trails for pinecones, beautiful fallen leaves, dried flowers, seeds, and more, before taking our treasures inside to transform them into festive seasonal decorations.

Reptiles in Winter

Friday, December 7, 2018

4:30PM – 5:30PM

\$5 per person

Why did the turtle cross the road? To find a good place to brumate for winter! Join Pickering Creek Audubon Center staff for this family friendly indoor program to meet live turtles and snakes, discover where reptiles go in winter, and how they survive the cold winter months.

Chesapeake Audubon Birdseed Sale Comes to the Shore

Feed the birds and support Pickering! Seed selections include Niger thistle, black oil sunflower, songbird mixes, several suet selections, peanut hearts, and other goodies for your feeders. All local sales will benefit the education programs at Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Order forms are available at pickering.audubon.org. Deadline for orders is October 8th. Order pickup is October 20th from 9 – 11AM at the Pickering Creek Welcome Center. Contact Eastern Shore Coordinator, Wayne Bell, wbell2@washcol.edu or 410-820-6002.

Photo by Bill Hubick



Photo by Royce Ball

Winter Landscape and Wildlife Photography

Saturday, January 12, 2019

10:00AM – 12:00PM

\$20 per person

All levels welcome! Join Pickering Creek's "unofficial photographer," Royce Ball for a morning at Pickering Creek Audubon Center practicing new skills with whatever camera you use (Yes, even the camera on your phone!) to capture great moments outdoors. Wander the trails with your camera in hand, looking for new perspec-

tives and new ideas for your nature photography hobby.

Royce Ball has been photographing nature since 2003. He began with no experience or knowledge of photographic methods, and 15 years later is proud to say he is self-taught through experience. Royce has had his photographs featured in What's Up Annapolis and Eastern Shore magazines, more than two dozen covers of the Talbot Guide, and won two honorable mention awards from the photography portion of Plein Air Easton in 2011.

New Trail Amenities Connect Visitors with Nature

With four miles of trails covering more than 400 acres of waterfront, meadows, forests, agriculture, and wetlands, Pickering Creek Audubon Center provides residents and visitors a unique landscape to wander, hike, and explore. Pickering Creek recently introduced new amenities to one of its most popular walking trails, the Wetland Overlook Trail, with funding provided by Waterfowl Chesapeake.

The one-mile Wetland Overlook Trail is a flat, wide trail that meanders around the perimeter of several restored freshwater wetland pools. Before European settlement, those pools were prime wetland habitat – a wet forest with sticky clay soil that held water. The introduction of agriculture dramatically changed wetlands across the region, with ditching and draining to increase crop yields. Hundreds of years after being converted to agriculture, the fields were restored to wetland habitat, in partnership with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, from 2005-2014.

“These wetlands showcase Audubon’s habitat restoration efforts for birds on the Eastern Shore, and the Wetland Overlook Trail provides us with an opportunity to share that story with visitors,” says Jaime Bunting, Pickering Creek’s Education Manager.

The wetlands themselves are excellent bird habitat. Located in the middle of the Atlantic Flyway – a super-highway for birds in the sky – wetlands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, like the ones found at Pickering Creek, provide critical nesting habitat and migratory resting points for millions of birds each year. “Our bird monitoring data shows us that when habitat is improved, the birds show up. This trail is one of the best places on the shore to observe birds throughout the year. The two viewing platforms are especially great for seeing waterfowl in fall and winter,” says Bunting.

Not only wanting to attract birds and wildlife, Pickering Creek is hoping to draw



Top: Meghan Tait, a Pickering educator, takes in the sights with the new seasonal brochure along the Wetland Overlook Trail;

Bottom: Viewing platforms along trails at Pickering Creek provide fantastic opportunities to observe wildlife throughout the year.



Photo by Richard Orr

more visitors to the Wetland Overlook Trail year-round. Throughout the late summer of 2017 and early fall of 2018, Bunting worked closely with Pickering Creek volunteers, Board members, staff, and frequent visitors using interpretive planning methods to determine how, when, and why visitors to Pickering Creek use the Wetland Overlook Trail. Bunting explains interpretation as “connecting people with the resources around them in ways that are both meaningful and relevant to their lives. It’s storytelling that weaves together people, culture, history, and landscape.”

After a series of interviews, walking countless loops around the trail, and reviewing the interview data in a process called “coding,” Bunting teased out the important stories and themes of the trail,

effective methods for communicating those stories with guests, and desired amenities, such as additional directional trail markers. Two things became very clear throughout the planning process – first, nearly everyone interviewed felt strongly that the wild feeling of the trail remain and not be overshadowed by new, built structures or overwhelmed with large displays at every turn. Second, most people interviewed felt that the trail was not quite hitting the mark from an education perspective. The goal? Maintain the feeling of the trail, while making it more visitor-friendly and effectively used as a medium to showcase the Center’s mission of community-based conservation through environmental education and outreach.

Trail amenity implementation was underway by early spring. With updated interpretive signs in thoughtfully chosen locations, additional viewing and access points to the wetland pools (the new “wetland windows”) and a seasonal trail spur, visitors have ample opportunities to take in the sights and connect with the landscape.

Visitors will see knee-high, numbered posts along the edges of the trail that correspond to a professionally designed interpretive brochure highlighting seasonal wildlife and plant attractions, the important role local students and volunteers play in the wetlands and the wetland restoration process. The winter brochure was displayed through late winter and early spring; brochures for spring/summer and summer/fall are currently in the works.

“We really want visitors to feel like part of Pickering Creek and that it is a place for all seasons for all people -where every visit is a new adventure” says Mrs. Bunting.

New Trustees Welcomed to the Team

At Pickering Creek Audubon Center's August Board of Trustees meeting Esther Fleischmann, Dorothy Whitcomb and Andrew Smith joined the Pickering Creek Audubon Center Board of Trustees as new members, elected to a three year term. They join recent addition Ron Ketter and current trustees Dirck Bartlett, Dave Bent, Tom Kimbis, Cemmy Peterson, Tom Sanders, Stuart Strahl, Carol Thompson and Cheryl Tritt.



Esther Fleischmann has been teaching Human Anatomy and Physiology at UMBC for over 20 years where she has been privileged to work with curious and highly motivated

students. Her academic roots stem from time living on Guam where she learned to scuba dive and decided to become a marine biologist.

Regrettably, Esther only started birding seriously in the last 5 years and can only imagine what her life lists would look like if they included Guam and other places she has traveled. Birding and an invitation from long-time colleague, Bryan Mackay, led to her serving on the board of the Chesapeake Audubon Society for the last two years. It is all she can do to get to work on time during the spring migration, wiping off her muddy boots on the way into the classroom. Esther is committed to being an educator and a life-long learner herself.

Dorothy Whitcomb worked in the Home Furnishings Industry for over 30 years. As a contributing editor and freelance journalist, she covered business and design trends, as well as a diverse range of products. In addition to her work in the Home Furnishings Industry, she is the owner and president of Quarter Cove Associates, a consulting firm that provides communications and business strategy services to small businesses and non-profit

organizations.

In 1997, Whitcomb began living part time the Eastern Shore. Two years later, she and her husband, Don Whitcomb, moved full time to a home they built on Presquile Point, just down the road past Pickering Creek. They lived there for seventeen years before moving in 2017 to the town of Easton.

Andrew Smith's family moved to Easton when he was 14. He grew up on the Miles River where he developed a love for the outdoors. He met his future wife, Sally, in high school, and together they have raised three beautiful children and



five wonderful grandchildren.

Before moving back to Easton, Andy spent from 1970-1980 at a family lumber business in Baltimore. He retired four years ago from

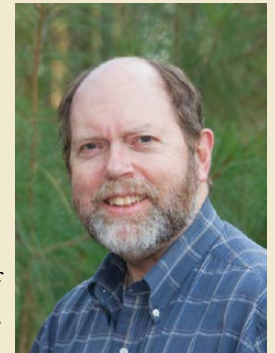
a twenty-eight year career with O.N. Andrew and Son, a local roofing contractor. Andy has been on the board of the Chesapeake Center, and delights in seeing the accomplishments of the clients there!

Andy enjoys being involved with the wood duck monitoring program at Pickering Creek for several years. It is truly a treat to have seen Pickering Creek



develop into an educational asset for the community for young and old.

Ron Ketter and his wife, Janet, moved to the Eastern Shore in 2016, where they live just outside of Easton and enjoy bird-watching, gardening, camping and hiking. Ron has a lifelong interest in nature and conservation, both in his personal and professional life. He retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 2016, where he served in the



national office in Washington DC as Director of Strategic Planning, Acting Budget Director, and Chief of Staff to the Chief Financial Officer. He also spent

over four years in California as Deputy Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region. In addition to volunteering at Pickering Creek, Ron's other volunteer activities include assisting with biological surveys and monitoring at Blackwater National Refuge, serving on the Board of the Friends of Blackwater as their Treasurer, monitoring the Tred Avon River quality for ShoreRivers, and serving as a mentor with Talbot Mentors.

A key part of the National Audubon Society network, Pickering Creek Audubon Center funds it's budget through contributions and fees secured by the Pickering staff and board. This local funding directly supports science and environmental education programs for students and residents in Talbot, Dorchester, Caroline and Wicomico counties.

In Memory

Much loved, former Pickering Creek Board of Trustee, Dick Welch passed away in August. Dick served on the Board from 2003-2009 as both the Treasurer and President. He demonstrated strong leadership during a pivotal time of the Center's growth and continued his support of Pickering Creek long after his service on the board. He will greatly missed by the Pickering family.



Volunteering at Pickering Creek

Since its inception over 100 years ago, volunteers have been integral to Audubon. For over 35 years, Pickering Creek Audubon Center has offered a wealth of volunteer opportunities ranging from ongoing trail and bird box monitoring to as-needed projects and special events. Samantha Pitts, the Volunteer Coordinator, works to find activities that best fit the interest of each person with needs at the Center.

While every volunteer experience is as unique and personal as the individuals who support our work, there are some common themes that persist—feeling welcomed and valued, exploring their own interests, sharing their skills with others, and simply connecting with like-minded individuals and nature. Here is what five dedicated volunteers shared with us.

Vanessa Goold

Vanessa fell in love with Pickering in 2013, the first time she ventured down the lane all the way to the end and met Samantha, who welcomed her with her characteristic friendly enthusiasm. Since that time, Vanessa has gradually become involved in a number of volunteer activities, from gardens and grounds maintenance, to eBirding and wood duck nest box monitoring. Vanessa enjoys connecting with nature and connecting with other people through shared nature activities. “It’s easy to become partial to Pickering Creek both as a site and an organization,” notes Vanessa. “The variety of habitats to be found on the grounds never ceases to offer up fascinating experiences. The staff people are wonderful educators who strive to welcome volunteers and enhance the volunteer experience by sharing their enthusiasm for their work. Volunteering at Pickering is an honor and a joy!”

Mary Ann Ray

Mary Ann Ray started volunteering in 2009 after participating in the LIFE program, a joint lifelong learning program offered at the time by Pickering Creek Audubon Center, Adkins Arboretum and



Volunteers including Linda & Peter Yungbluth, David Bent and Wayne Bell help pilot a new national community science program called ClimateWatch which explores how North American birds are responding to climate change. To read more about ClimateWatch visit Audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch

Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center. “The LIFE program was very beneficial to me as I learned so much about our local environmental organizations. PCAC seemed best suited to my volunteering efforts, so I decided to concentrate my environmental volunteering at your wonderful facility”.

Mary Ann contributes her time to many worthy organizations including Hospice, the hospital, St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. However, she makes time for Pickering whenever she can in her busy schedule gardening, working on the trails, monitoring wood ducks and more. “I find a great deal of satisfaction and solace when I visit Pickering to help with various duties there. Time spent in the lovely surround-

ings let me unwind from other more intense volunteering.”

Richard and Cindy Chirumbole

Richard and Cindy Chirumbole began volunteering with the Center in 2013 by making observations for Project FeederWatch at the office. “Not long after I registered for FeederWatch at my home, an opportunity to participate in FeederWatch at Pickering was offered. Pickering had become a favorite place for birding, so I thought this would be a good way to “give back” as a volunteer,” noted Cindy. She and Rich have since branched out into numerous other activities. Rich is the wood duck nestbox monitoring program coordinator. He diligently prepares

the nestbox trail and organizes monitoring program activities for each nesting season. Throughout the season he supports and inspires an enthusiastic team of nestbox monitors, including Mary Ann and Vanessa. “My motivations for volunteering at Pickering Creek can be boiled down to three basic things: my desire to support an organization whose mission I believe in, engaging in activities that support my desire to learn and discover new things about our natural world, and working with and for others in a positive atmosphere. Pickering Creek fulfills each of those things in spades. It’s been such a positive experience over the years”, reflects Rich.

Cindy recalls, “What a wonderful experience it was to observe and learn about birds at the Center, in a habitat very different from my home, while also contributing to the bird database for Pickering. When Samantha noticed how much I was enjoying FeederWatch, she invited me to join her on Bird Tales presentations, a new project at a local nursing home. Over the years, this has become a very special time for me to be with my resident friends as we share our love for birds and their interesting behaviors.” Cindy also spends time gardening at Pickering. “This commitment is totally selfish on my part because it has become a rewarding learning experience working alongside others so easy-going and willing to share their gardening expertise and stories! It has also given me more confidence to help develop and maintain bird-friendly gardens for the nursing home residents to enjoy.”

David Bent

Dave Bent can frequently be found along the trails at Pickering Creek introducing fellow volunteers to bird monitoring or engaged in a weedwhacking. Cheerful, hardworking and dependable, he’s quick to step up to the plate to support activities at the Center. Yet shortly after retiring he imagined himself having a little time off from hard work. “When I retired my wife asked me what volunteer work I was interested in doing. I answered her that I was taking a year off before getting into volunteer activity. Actually my

plan was to fish, golf, tennis, crab, and have a beer with the boys,” he jokes.

Dave began his volunteer experience with Pickering Creek by answering an ad for volunteers for the Shehan Audubon Sanctuary to do bird surveys. “I knew nothing about birds, but was told they would train me. The property had 27 bluebird houses not being maintained.

I cleaned them, made repairs and the first year, we fledged 101 bluebirds.” From that start his involvement with Audubon has continued to grow. He is currently a lead monitor for the ongoing e-Bird monitoring surveys at Pickering Creek, the bluebird nestbox monitoring program coordinator and a member of Pickering’s Board of Trustees.



Get involved and Volunteer!

Start your own volunteer adventure at Pickering Creek Audubon Center.

Sign up online at pickering.audubon.org and check back regularly for new opportunities.



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