



A Head Start Through Nature

Family members are a child's first teacher. To engage our youngest community members in the natural world, families must have the interest and tools to foster their child's curiosity and appreciation of the outdoors. Krysta Hougen, Teacher Naturalist at Pickering Creek, was recently awarded a Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship to expand Pickering's services to three to five year olds at Easton Head Start, operated by Shore Up!, Inc., with the program A Head Start Through Nature.

Starting in January 2015, Head Start joined Pickering Creek for bimonthly lessons. Students learned about wintering animals, migrating birds, and backyard critters. As the weather warmed up, students and teachers ventured into their schoolyard with lessons about pollinators and flowers. The Ruby-throated hummingbird served as a backyard garden ambassador. Students went home with seeds, feeders, and other crafts to attract our local hummingbird and other beneficial pollinators.

While students transformed their neighborhoods, their classroom also changed. Feeders attracted hummingbirds to each classroom and one classroom was lucky enough to get a daily lunchtime visitor over a few weeks. Classes also began talking about the wildlife they were seeing outside as the weather changed, which they very proudly shared at the beginning of each Pickering Creek lesson. The school year ended with the creation of a pollinator garden in their schoolyard.

The pilot year was a huge success with students, teachers, and families. Thanks to



Head Start student help each other feel comfortable playing in dirt and holding earthworms at the start of their first of many schoolyard garden lessons.

generous support pledged at this year's Tour, Toast, and Taste fundraising event, Pickering Creek will be able to continue the program throughout the entire 2015-2016 school year and expand to St. Michaels Head Start.

"A Head Start Through Nature" gives Pickering Creek the opportunity to start new relationships with families currently underrepresented in the environmental community. The family focus of the program encourages guardians to take part in their child's early environmental education so they continue to explore nature together throughout their lives. As their preschooler ages into summer camp and the teen Junior Naturalist program, we intend for families will continue to participate in Pickering Creek's programs and carry on their environmental and science education in our nontraditional and intimate setting.

Harvest Hoedown Sunday October 11, 11 am- 4 pm

Join us for our 24th Annual Harvest Hoedown celebration at Pickering Creek! Enjoy a wonderful day with your family. Hoedown has fun for every-one including live folk and bluegrass music on two stages, hay wagon rides, crafts, exhibits by artisans, children's activities, great food and boat rides on the CBMM's Winnie Estelle.

**Admission: \$10 a car
Rain or Shine.**



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



Left: Conservation Action Corps students find a shady spot to pull weeds at the Easton Elementary School habitat garden. Right: Easton High School student Jeremy Peregoy shares a reptilian discovery at the Easton Elementary School habitat garden as other students look on.

Inspiring Environmental Stewards

Local Students Take Service-Learning to a New Level

Four students from Easton High School spent the first week of their summer vacation with educators from Pickering Creek piloting a new service-learning program while learning about habitat restoration and taking action to help maintain community habitat spaces in Easton. Pickering Creek’s Audubon Watershed Experience (AWE), a program supported by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, actively connects high school biology and environmental science students with the impacts of environmental issues and land use on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Through in-class lessons, a field experience at Pickering Creek, and hands-on habitat restoration, students investigate and explore the connections between our land, water, wildlife, and human communities. The summer’s Conservation Action Corps allowed local high school students who participated in the AWE program during the school year to delve deeper into the process of habitat restoration.

Over an intensive week in June, AWE students volunteered their time to maintain community and school native habitat gardens at Easton Elementary School and the Magnolia Meadows apartment complex. Students added native plants to each space, monitored bluebird nest boxes, mulched and pulled weeds. They completed activities about the benefits of native plants and restoration efforts in these areas, often raising their own personal awareness. “Restoring and maintaining these gardens is not only hard work, but important in keeping the environment healthy,” said student Jeremy Peregoy.

In addition to in-depth and hands-on learning about restoration and native plants, the students participated in nature journaling and reflection activities, explored various habitats, and practiced their birding skills. They interacted with members of

the communities where they worked, learning about the impact of habitat enhancement within a community setting from the property manager of Magnolia Meadows and the school Manager at Easton Elementary school. After a strenuous few days, the teens joined Pickering staff for a visit to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge’s pollinator garden. There, they heard from a conservation professional about the importance of publicly accessible native habitat spaces. The success of Blackwater’s pollinator garden inspired the students to imagine possibilities around the future of school and community restoration projects.

Participating students earned up to 28 service-learning hours, a big step in helping them reach their graduation requirement of 75 hours. Most importantly, students completed the project with a great sense of accomplishment and ownership of the community restoration projects. “We worked hard to clean up the gardens and get rid of the dead plants and weeds. Although the heat was beating down, we made it through and accomplished a lot. It made me happy that we were helping the environment and that other kids were helping as well,” student Jennifer Valladares reflected at the end of the week.

The habitat spaces students worked in also benefited from their diligence. Their hard work of weeding, pruning, and mulching transformed weedy habitat areas into eye-appealing spaces attractive to birds, butterflies, and people. The success and lessons learned from this summer’s pilot AWE Conservation Action Corps planted the seeds to continue expanding this service-learning program to complement the Audubon Watershed Experience (AWE) school based curriculum during the upcoming school year.

School’s in for the Summer

While Pickering Creek is known for its excellent school programs for K-12 students, it is a lesser known fact that Center staff works closely with the teachers themselves to ensure comprehensive, well integrated programs. Collaboration with teachers and professional development workshops help the Center meet the needs of local school districts while providing learners of all ages with positive and memorable outdoor science experiences.

Summer 2015 kicked off with a day-long meeting between Jaime Bunting, Education Manager at Pickering Creek, and the sixth grade science teachers for Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS). This meeting provided an opportunity to bring all of the sixth grade teachers up to speed on the sixth-grade service-learning program that was developed and implemented in partnership with Leslie Sorrell, a sixth grade science teacher at Easton Middle School in the 2014-2015 school year. Updates to the program included an emphasis on the impacts of climate change on local wetland habitats and a field experience at Pickering Creek to plant native plants in a restored freshwater wetland. While Pickering Creek provides a local example of a habitat impacted by climate change, the TCPS sixth grade science teachers cover many climate change topics in their classrooms. Together, Pickering and teachers provide students with an overview of the mechanics of climate change and its real-world implications for life on the Eastern Shore, and students take action to help local wildlife by protecting our wetlands that serve as great carbon sinks. The long-standing relationship between Pickering Creek and Talbot County Public Schools continues to grow.

As summer marched into July, Pickering Creek’s professional development focus shifted towards Dorchester County. As part of the Audubon Conservation Team 4 Birds program (ACT4 Birds) for Dorchester County

Public Schools, a NOAA B-WET funded program, Pickering Creek staff spent three days with sixth grade science teachers in Dorchester County to improve their birding skills, hone nature journaling and observation techniques, practice activities like insect collection and pinning, and collaborate with Pickering Creek staff for the upcoming school year. ACT4 Birds is multi-faceted, built on a foundation of collaboration with the teachers in Dorchester County. In addition to co-teaching some of the lessons and leading schoolyard journaling activities, teachers assist with student-designed habitat installations at each school.

ACT4 Birds focuses on using the schoolyard as an extension of the science classroom. During the three day ACT4 Birds training teachers spent time at the three middle schools, traveled to the Dorchester County Historical Society and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to examine habitat gardens and spoke with restoration professionals about the many benefits of native plants for birds, pollinators, and wildlife. They left the training with increased ownership of the ACT4 Birds program and a greater sense of confidence in connecting students with birds, bugs, and plants, and how they all relate to building bird-friendly communities. Angela Bozman from Mace’s Lane Middle School said, “I love the exposure my students gain from this program. It helps students realize they are part of something much larger than themselves.”

The final professional development workshop of the summer was done in partnership with Donna Stotts from the NOAA Cooperative Laboratory and was funded by Chesapeake Bay Trust. Audubon staff and partners held a five-day “Investigating and Evaluating



Environmental Issues and Actions” (IEEIA) workshop in late July. The IEEIA model encourages student-driven inquiry, research, and action by equipping students with the knowledge and resources to examine an issue from all sides, present their findings to larger audiences, and create action plans to address the issue itself. The workshop drew teachers and non-profit educators from counties on both sides of the Chesapeake Bay.

The workshop took teachers through the IEEIA model just as their students would by identifying environmental issues and stakeholders in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and looking at habitat restoration as a means of improving many environmental problems within the watershed. Teachers learned about habitat restoration efforts throughout the Eastern Shore of Maryland and had an opportunity to think critically about all sides of habitat restoration projects.

The IEEIA workshop not only connected Maryland teachers with local environmental issues and equipped them with a research model to use in their classrooms, but allowed for a comfortable and fun environment to network and share ideas. Taylor Connaire, a teacher at Wheaton High School in Montgomery County noted, “Being able to share experiences with other educators I think is the best way to learn and grow to become a better educator.” Pickering Creek staff agrees, and looks forward to hosting many more teacher workshops in the future.

Sixth Graders Team Up for Bird Conservation

“What’s that black bird with a little bit of red on its shoulder?” one of Dorchester County’s sixth graders asked a Pickering Creek educator during an in-school lesson on planning healthy bird habitat this past spring. The sixth grade students spent the 2014-2015 school year teaming up for bird conservation in their schoolyards and communities through the Audubon Conservation Team 4 Birds (ACT4 Birds) program. Pickering Creek and Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS) recently completed the first year of the NOAA B-WET funded program which consists of three in-class visits to each of the sixth-grade science classes at Mace’s Lane, North Dorchester, and South Dorchester Middle Schools, and two field experiences—one to Pickering Creek Audubon Center, and another to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Through the ACT4 Birds program, students use the outdoors - at Pickering Creek, Blackwater, and their schoolyards—as a classroom for meaningful science investigations.

In the Fall, Pickering Creek educators first visit each of the DCPS science classes to teach a lesson titled ‘Building Bird-Friendly Communities.’ Students review the components of a healthy habitat, study how bird adaptations enable survival and examine how many habitats are changing faster than birds can adapt. Students are encouraged to think of ways to create “bird-friendly” communities in their own backyards and schoolyards, such as providing birds with the food, water, shelter,



Pickering Creek staff demonstrates how to plant native Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) plugs to sixth grade students during their visit to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in April.

and space they need as they stop on their migration journey or stay local through all the annual seasonal changes. Students then work in teams to research common local birds like Northern cardinals, Barred owls and Wood ducks and design a habitat for the birds in an imaginary schoolyard setting.

Following the Building Bird-Friendly Communities lesson, each DCPS sixth grade science class visits Pickering Creek for a field experience to explore and investigate the level of “bird friendliness” in different habitats at Pickering Creek. While exploring wetlands, forests, grasslands, ponds, and fields students are asked to find examples of habitat components that

would be good for birds in each habitat and to also look for components that could be improved. The students explore a freshwater wetland to examine why it attracts different birds at different times of the year; hikes through a forest and meadow while acting as birds looking for food and cover; classify habitat layers in the forests, wetlands, and fields; and use binoculars, bird calls, and bird guides to identify birds throughout the day. Students leave with a sense of the habitat requirements for many local wildlife and how some of them could be added or improved in their own school yard.

The DCPS sixth graders continue being bird ambassadors in the spring with

a visit to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. With knee-high boots and can-do attitudes, students, teachers, and Pickering Creek educators venture into the marsh for an experiential habitat adventure. After a muddy trek and observational hike into the marsh, students pair up and plant native Smooth Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) to protect the marsh and provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Late in the spring, with hula hoops, magnifying glasses, and data sheets in hand, students spend two final days surveying their schoolyards for available food and water sources and current human usage patterns. After synthesizing their data as a group, each class from all three DCPS middle schools determines the best place to build healthy bird habitat. Classes chose supportive native plants like Black-eyed Susan, Joe-Pye Weed, and Aster that benefit local birds by providing them with food, cover, or nesting locations. Using a satellite image of their school, the students then map their chosen plants in the habitat location. These maps play an important role in creating new school habitat spaces the following spring.

The ACT4 Birds program connects middle school students with their own schoolyard as a place not only used by people, but a space with potential for significant habitat for many resident and migratory birds. The program also promotes curiosity and observational skills throughout the year. Towards the end of the multiday program, students nearly fall out of their chairs to share the birds they have seen in their backyards.

The inquiry and observations made by sixth graders during the 2014-2015 school year laid the groundwork for new schoolyard habitat gardens to be planted by incoming DCPS sixth graders in 2015. These new gardens will provide many opportunities for students to observe birds and wildlife on their own schoolyards, discover the benefits of habitat restoration, and allow for students to take ownership of an on-going habitat project within their communities.

ACT4 Birds is funded by NOAA’s-BWET program, an environmental education program that promotes locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment through.

Bird Tales: A Collaborative Project Takes Flight

Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Integrate’s Bayleigh Chase in Easton have collaborated to bring a unique project, Bird Tales, to residents at Bayleigh Chase who are living with dementia. Birds are the catalyst in this program designed to brighten days and create camaraderie. Were you to visit during a Bird Tales session, you might find participants holding plush Audubon birds and listening to their songs. Pickering volunteers, guided by Bayleigh Chase staff, would be sharing personal stories of birds and encouraging conversation.

The genesis of this unique partnership began with an inquiry by Louise Montgomery, Director of Recreation and Engagement at Bayleigh Chase Assisted Living, who contacted Pickering Creek Audubon Center to find opportunities for the residents. Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator and Educator at the Center, suggested the possibility of implementing Bird Tales-- a therapeutic program launched by Ken Elkins of Bent of the River Audubon Center in Connecticut to help persons with dementia interact with their environment and share meaningful experiences with others. Ms. Montgomery and Ms. Pitts began to develop what has proven to be an exciting, cooperative venture for the Bayleigh Chase community that is fulfilling its goal of enhancing the quality of life through experiences with nature and birds.

Bayleigh Chase staff have fully taken on the program since participating in a Bird Tales training workshop along with Pickering Creek staff and volunteers, led by Ken Elkins in February. They’ve been implementing Bird Tales as a part of their regular program of sensory enhancement activities at with both assisted living and long-term care residents. Three Pickering volunteers continue to return on a regular basis: an experience that is rewarding to them as they note participants’ responses. “This is so worthwhile,” commented volunteer Alexis Lloyd, noticing the pleasure that one resident had as she held a toy bird and named it Amigo.

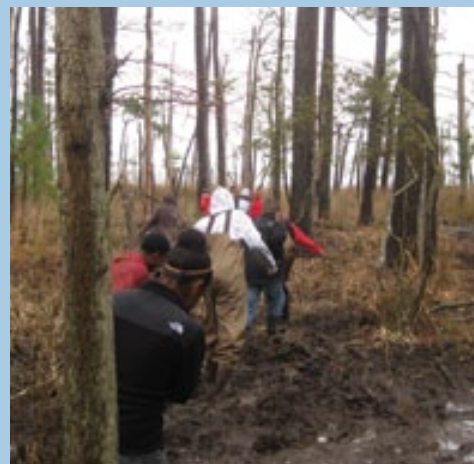
Collaborative efforts between Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Bayleigh Chase now extend beyond the Bird Tales program. With the Center’s help, Bayleigh Chase is making their grounds bird-friendly. There are plans to incorporate more native plants and increase access to wildlife-friendly green spaces, increasing opportunities for residents to see and enjoy birds as well as enjoy the outdoors with their families. Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Bayleigh Chase will be well satisfied with their project when they see children, parents, and grandparents enjoying the natural world together, and observing the birds that are enchanting to all.



Residents at Assisted Living at Bayleigh Chase enjoying Bird Tales program.



Left: Sixth grade students from Dorchester County use a dichotomous key to identify creatures they caught in a wetland at Pickering Creek.



Right: Dorchester County sixth grade students trek into the marsh at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to learn about important bird habitats and plant native grasses.

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

Marsh Explorations at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Thursday, Sept. 17, 5:30–7:30PM

Wednesday, Sept 23, 5:30–7:30PM

Pickering Creek is working with Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to restore damaged parts of the salt marshes in Dorchester County. Tour alongside neighbors and new friends to make a difference in this fragile habitat! Join us for a van tour of Blackwater and Farm Creek and a conversation about the region's salt marshes.



Magnificent Monarchs

Tuesday, September 22

5:30–7:00PM

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 that were full of milkweeds this past spring and tag the orange beauties before they migrate south. How does one tag a butterfly? Come try it for yourself!

Beautiful Birds Photo Exhibit

October 4–25

Monday–Friday 9:00AM–5:00PM

Sundays 11:00AM–3:00PM

Walk among the winning bird photographs from the 2015 Audubon Photography Awards and learn more about local birdlife at the Center's waterfront offices. Selected from more than 9,000 entries—submitted from all 50

states, Washington, D.C., and Canada—the winning photos were published in the May–June 2015 issue of Audubon magazine. A panel of five judges graded the images based on technical quality, originality, and artistic merit. *No Charge except admission to Harvest Hoedown if you visit on October 11.*

Autumn Sunset Paddle

Thursday, October 8

5:00–7:00PM

\$15 per person

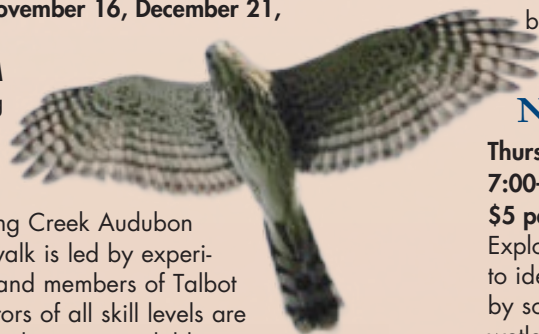
Explore beautiful Pickering Creek at dusk on this guided canoe paddle. Watch local night life come alive and take in the vivid fall colors as you meander the creek. Canoes, PFDs, and paddles provided. Children must be at least 13 or older, and all children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Spaces are limited.

Third Monday Bird Walks

October 19, November 16, December 21, January 18

8:00–10:00AM

Enjoy watching birds through out every season of the year at Pickering Creek Audubon Center. Each walk is led by experienced birders and members of Talbot Bird Club. Visitors of all skill levels are welcome. Binoculars are available to borrow. See eagles and ospreys soar over the creek, woodpeckers at work in the mature hardwood forest, sparrows flitting about in the meadows, and waterfowl in the wetlands. Sharpen your bird



watching skills, contribute your sightings to ongoing bird monitoring at the Center, and enjoy mornings in the outdoors.

Harvest Hoedown Prep Days

Thursday, October 8, 3:00–5:30PM

Friday October 9, 10:00AM–12:00PM

Welcome Center

Get the Center decorated for Pickering Creek's annual open house event. Come tie up the cornstalks, place the bales of hay and enjoy a beautiful fall day

24th Annual Harvest Hoedown Festival

Sunday, October 11

11AM–4PM

\$10 per car

Fun for the whole family! Enjoy over 16 Artisans, haywagon rides, the "Wonderful World of Birds" kids area, bluegrass music all day long on two stages including Slim Harrison, puppet shows, alpacas, mums and pumpkins, boat rides on the CBMM Winnie Estelle, and more!



Nature at Night Hike

Thursday, November 19

7:00–9:00PM

\$5 per person

Explore Pickering Creek at night. Learn to identify nocturnal animals and insects by sound as we hike through forests and wetlands and stop along the way to call in owls and light up the darkness to see who may be looking back at us. End the evening next to a warm fire with hot chocolate in hand.

Geminid Gazing and Star Stories

Monday, December 14

8:00PM

\$5 per person

Budding astronomers are invited to gaze at the stars and experience one of the most spectacular meteor showers of the year under Pickering Creek's nighttime skies. A waxing crescent moon will allow for great viewing conditions. Search the Milky Way for planets and stars. Hear stories of winter constellations and sip on hot chocolate with neighbors and friends!

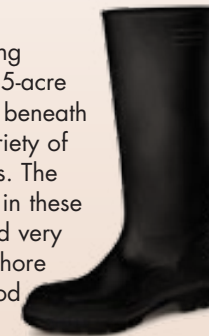
Winter Walk in the Bayou

Wednesday, February 10

2:00PM

\$10 per person

We'll explore Pickering Creek's rarely seen 65-acre wet woods and walk beneath tower oaks and a variety of buttressed hardwoods. The oak plant community in these woods are considered very rare for the Eastern Shore and host turkeys, wood ducks, woodpeckers, chuck wills widow and a host of other creatures. Half of the property is submerged under about 12 inches of water art this time of year, giving you the feeling you are somewhere in Louisiana. We'll provide rubber knee boots for those who need them.



Woodcocks and Wieners

Tuesday, March 16

6:00–8:30PM

\$35 per person includes dinner

As winter breaks and spring begins to emerge the timberdoodle awakens. 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 provide ideal habitat for this annual late winter event. But first, we'll start the evening with premium hotdogs with the Scallions' excellent homemade venison chili as a delightful topping paired with microbrew beer and appropriate wiener roast sides.

Photo by Bill Hubick



Chesapeake Audubon Birdseed Sale Comes to the Shore

Feed the birds and support Pickering! Selections will include Nyger, 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. An order form will be available at pickeringcreek.audubon.org. Anticipated order deadline: Wednesday, 7 October. Order pickup Saturday, 17 October, at Pickering Creek Welcome Center. Eastern Shore coordinator: Wayne Bell, wbell2@washcoll.edu or (410) 820-6002.

To register to volunteer, please call Samantha at 410-822-4903.

For more information on volunteer opportunities at Pickering, please visit www.pickeringcreek.org.



Birds and Students Make Good Use of Restored Wetland

If you've walked the trails at Pickering Creek Audubon Center this year, chances are you have noticed the series of shallow pools surrounded by blooming wildflowers, buzzing bees and fluttering butterflies along the wetland loop. A newly reconstructed wetland has been an epicenter of activity for all kinds of wildlife-- and students-- since its installation last July. Pickering Creek and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, through the support of USDA Conservation programs and a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, successfully



converted nine acres of marginal agricultural land into a freshwater wetland and an adjacent seven acres into a meadow and tree buffer. Several shallow pools with varying depths attract a diversity of waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds and raptors.

With construction of the restored area completed, the wetland is now a place for local youth to learn about healthy habitats on the Eastern Shore. Last school year over 350 Talbot County high school biology students participating in Pickering Creek's Audubon Watershed Experience program planted Button bush and Wax myrtle,

along with other native shrubs along the southeast edge of the restored area. While visiting the wetland, the students are able to appreciate restoration as a long-term solution to the numerous challenges facing the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Late this spring, nearly 300 6th graders planted wetland-friendly grass plugs like Monkey flower and Green bulrush along the edges of the shallow pools, enhancing the high schoolers' efforts. The 6th graders were completing a Pickering Creek service-learning program involving in-class visits and a field experience where they learned how wetlands play a vital role in mitigating the effects climate change in the coming decades. Between the middle and high school students, over 2,000 new plants were added to the restored area. Dedicated volunteers continue to contribute to the success of the newly planted shrubs by watering through the hot days of spring and summer.

Students are not the only ones making use of the habitat. Birders have been recording their observations through Pickering Creek's eBird Monitoring Program, managed by resident bird expert and board member, Wayne Bell. This data, when suntheized, will give a snapshot of how the newly restored wetland is impacting birds in the area. Seven bird species never before recorded at Pickering Creek were observed this year including the Virginia rail, Common gallinule, Hudsonian godwit, Bonaparte's gull, Acadian flycatcher, Willow/Alder flycatcher



and Marsh wren. It is reasonable to think these species may continue to be found with increasing frequency and in greater numbers as the wetland becomes established and plants are added in the coming years.

The newest avian visitors to the wetland are not the only beneficiaries. Pickering Creek's eBird data shows birds like the Glossy Ibis were recorded as flyovers only a handful of times a decade ago. Now, not only are their numbers higher, but they are landing and feeding in the wetland pools. Similarly, Snowy Egrets have been utilizing the adjacent wetlands in much larger numbers than in previous years. The expanded habitat allows birds to fly back and forth between the newest and the older restored wetland.

Community members and landowners who are interested in converting some of their space into healthy habitat for wildlife can contact Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage for assistance. Private land offers many opportunities to enhance wildlife habitat, including building forest and ditch buffers, planting natives, and reestablishing grass meadows and woodlands. Interested in helping sustain or monitor our new habitats? Give us a call!

Italian Muralist Makes Magic at the Center

Roman painter and muralist, Hitnes, is embarking on an epic three-month journey that will channel the artistic works of ornithologist, painter and explorer, John James Audubon (1785-1851). Inspired by Audubon's legacy, from late July to late October 2015, Hitnes, The Image Hunter, accompanied by filmmaker Giacomo Agnetti of the Magic Mind Corporation, will travel along Audubon's 1830s exploratory paths to retrace and rediscover the nation that he traversed in the making of his famous book, "The Birds of America."

A union through time and space, The Image Hunter seeks to answer the fundamental question of what drives a man to dedicate his life to pursue his obsession for hunting bird images. Hitnes is producing a series of public bird murals during brief emergences from the wilderness into modern American urban capitals. Contemporary methods are used to remind people of birds and nature, just like in Audubon's time. The murals demonstrate what has survived and what has been lost, giving birth to an adventure across the United States that combines ornithology, ecology and public art.

Hitnes second stop on the tour was Pickering Creek Audubon Center, Hitnes observed and learned about birds of the Atlantic Flyway while birding at Tilghman Island with Vince DeSanctis and Les Roslund. After birding Tilghman, Hitnes toured Pickering Creek Audubon Center with Trustee Wayne Bell and Director Mark Scallion, tracking Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Great Blue Heron, Osprey and Eagles. On the artist's second day he began work on a grand mural on one of the Center's barn buildings. The mural, featuring representations of Red-winged Blackbirds in their habitat, will cover the building expansive south wall. "We've been honored to have Hitnes and his team visit the Center, they are great people and truly talented," said Center Director Mark Scallion, "it is important and valuable for people to see the many connections between art and nature."



"It is important and valuable for people to see the many connections between art and nature."

– Center Director Mark Scallion

In contrast to Audubon's historic journey, contemporary America will reveal a different reality, influencing modern aviary behavior and underscoring species now lost to extinction. By interacting with local ornithologists along the way, Hitnes

will immerse himself in the local birding community of each region to decipher the common bonds that drive humans to push themselves in the pursuit of their own quest, and observe their endless obsessions.

The route will cover Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and New York with special attention paid to Audubon sanctuaries and chapters.

Follow the Image Hunter online on his travels through America at www.TheImageHunter.org



Hitnes' third mural on journey at Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary in North Carolina.

Spring BioBlitz Brings Scientists and Visitors to Pickering Creek

“I DID learn that if you smash the [tree of heaven] leaf... it smells like peanut butter... I also learned the cherry tree twigs smell like grape jam---The next time I venture out into to our wild America I will have a PB&J on my mind!” Dave Godfrey was one of 35 visitors at Pickering Creek Audubon Center on a warm Saturday morning in May to participate in the Center’s first BioBlitz. Dave is a regular volunteer with Pickering Creek’s wood duck monitoring program, but the BioBlitz was an opportunity to learn more about the diverse habitat and species that exist at the Center.

Pickering Creek hosted sixteen scientists from the Eastern Shore and beyond for a 12-hour survey of the Center’s 400 acres. While the scientists surveyed the Center for birds, insects, plants and more, skilled naturalists led guided tours on topics ranging from herpetology, birding, forestry and bees. Participants walked away with a deeper understanding of the importance of keeping some spaces- even among rural and urban development- natural and



Sam Droege shares a bee.

Mary Helen Gillen

wild for the array of species that need the habitats to survive.

Over 300 species were recorded at Pickering Creek and some data is still rolling in, as—especially the invertebrates and mosses—findings take time to be examined and identified. Knowing the richness of Pickering Creek’s diversity will enrich the public and school programs and guide the Center’s continued conserva-

tion efforts. The data has been shared with Maryland Biodiversity Project, a nonprofit dedicated to cataloging all the living species in the state.

Enjoy more of the incredible photographs of the day’s findings by visiting: <http://www.pickeringcreek.org/news/bioblitz2015>



For more colorful photos from BioBlitz, visit our newly renovated website! www.pickeringcreek.org



The Joy of Birding with Students



Students mastering the use of binoculars is often the first step on the ladder of becoming a birder.

A high pitched, whistling call rings out over Pickering Creek and EcoCampers paddling in their canoes feverishly search for the source of the sound until Wyatt Keil calls out, “There’s an Osprey, one of my favorite birds!” Keil, a rising 6th grader has been coming to EcoCamp at Pickering Creek for four years. Wyatt’s interest in birding stemmed from spending time with his grandmother, who loves watching birds at feeders in their backyard. His interest mirrored my own. Growing up I paged through my mother’s colorful bird books fascinated by the diversity of bird species. It was many years later that the spark ignited by those field guides grew into a lifetime affection for birds. That week at camp Wyatt spotted his first indigo bunting; his excitement was similar to my own when I discovered my first golden eagle as a teen. This summer witnessing Wyatt spend his week at camp with a pair of binoculars strapped around his neck and even borrowing a bird guide to do some overnight research brought me back to my youth.

by Kyle Autrey,
Summer Camp Counselor

During the school year, not every student arrives at the Center as eager to bird as Wyatt. Pickering Creek’s educators create exciting bird-related lessons for Talbot County middle and high school youth participating in service-learning programs with the Center. Each year these students study bird biology, migration, and threats to birds like climate change and loss of habitat.

During field experiences students have found everything from Downy Woodpeckers, Ospreys, Brown Thrashers and Black-capped Chickadees. A favorite activity of many students is a competition that tests the students’ bird identification knowledge, asks them intriguing bird trivia, and requires them to listen to the differences in bird songs, calls, and alarms. The students often get quite involved in this competition while sometimes unknowingly learning more about birds.

Other students prefer practicing with

a pair of binoculars while focusing on pictures of birds hidden along a tree line. It can become competitive as pairs race to identify all the pictured birds before their peers. The excitement and curiosity often picks up during an in the field experience and is often the highlight of the trip.

Indeed, exposing youth to birding and other nature-inspired outdoor activities can have significant impacts on their overall health and well-being. According to a recent Huffington Post article, research shows that people living in an urban environment that spend 90 minutes a day hiking display fewer behavioral and emotional problems (Carolyn Gregoire huffingtonpost.com). Access to nature also builds an ethic around conserving wild spaces and resources. Whether it be a student discovering the excitement of finding a new bird, or just having the opportunity to get out of the classroom, every year students visiting Pickering Creek Audubon Center experience the joy of connecting with the natural world through birding, hiking, games and much more.

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Audubon CENTER

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Time And Thyme Along Audubon Lane A Very Special Sundial Recreated Beside the Herb Garden

Walk along Audubon Lane and you will see a newly installed analemmatic sundial nestled between the Herb and Settler's Gardens. Created by the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society, it invites you to stand upon the month of the year and let your shadow fall upon the time of the day.

Perhaps you've seen such an analemmatic sundial at Longwood Gardens, or at the Cathedral of Brou in France where it is believed the first of its kind was built in the early 16th century.

When Spencer Garrett, President of the Chesapeake Bay Herb Society, found buried stones that told the tale of an overgrown sundial, he began the task of recreating it with a more permanent substrate. Digging began last fall and, with help from dedicated volunteers, the remarkable new structure now welcomes visitors to identify the time and seasons that the birds flying above know with sure instinct.

Come help us celebrate its completion and



thank those responsible for its creation at a ribbon cutting on October 11th as part of Pickering's annual Harvest Hoedown!