

Dorchester Teachers Take Learning Outdoors

Now in its third year, Audubon Conservation Team for Birds (ACT 4 Birds) provides engaging, hands-on classroom lessons, field trips to Pickering Creek Audubon Center, and outdoor activities led by Pickering Creek educators and Dorchester County Public Schools sixth grade science teachers. Every sixth grade student in Dorchester County participates in the program, giving each student opportunities to explore their schoolyards and take action to improve them for birds and other wildlife.

The success of ACT 4 Birds is in part due to the excitement and commitment to the program of the sixth grade science teachers in Dorchester County – Angela Bozman, Wynne Moyers, Cheyenne Roache, and Sherry Todd. During the 2015-2016 school year these teachers took students outside at least once per month to provide students with opportunities to investigate and observe their schoolyards through bird watching, journaling, creative science writing and art. The students captured seasonal changes, such as blooming plants and calling birds, and began to feel a sense of place and ownership. Teachers helped students survey the health of the schoolyard as a bird habitat and, in partnership with Pickering Creek educators, used those evaluations to guide students in planning new schoolyard bird habitats at each of the three middle schools in Dorchester County.



Dorchester County teachers watch birds at Mace's Lane Middle School with birding expert George Radcliffe.

May of 2016 was especially exciting as the teachers took students out to plant in their very own habitat gardens at each school. Students eagerly planted elderberry, arrowwood, milkweed, and a host of other native plants beneficial to birds and pollinators. Rain, mud, and rock-hard soil couldn't deter the students' excitement on the planting days. "ACT 4 Birds was something that truly engaged my students in learning. They always looked forward to their time outside!" acknowledged Angela Bozman, "I find myself noticing birds and native plants while I am outside, driving or traveling that I have never noticed before."

Empowering teachers to engage their students outdoors and use bird friendly habitat areas at their schools have been key components of ACT 4 Birds from the very beginning. During after-school and summer professional development sessions, the middle school teachers worked closely with Pickering Creek staff to develop habitat installation and maintenance plans, recruit colleagues and personnel within their schools to support their efforts, and take ownership of the program by teaching the ACT 4 Birds classroom lessons.

In March 2017 these 6th grade science teachers will lead their own professional development session for teachers in their county and beyond, sharing their own experiences from the ACT 4 Birds program and inspiring other teachers to get their students investigating and learning outdoors. ACT 4 Birds is supported through a three year grant from the NOAA B-Wet program.

Harvest Hoedown

Sunday October 9,
11 am- 4 pm

Join us for our 25th Annual Harvest Hoedown festival at Pickering Creek!

Rain or shine.
Admission \$10 per car.
More details inside.





Pickering Creek Educators go to Bird Camp

Six birders awoke at 4:30AM and sleepily walked from their quiet cabins to meet Angelika Nelson, curator of the Borror Lab of Bioacoustics from Ohio State University. The previous afternoon, Nelson had led a workshop for the birders that focused on using sound recording equipment to better listen, record and study bird song. The birders were on a mission to record birds singing during their dawn chorus.

This sound recording workshop was a part of a week-long Field Ornithology camp at the National Audubon Society's Hog Island led by professional ornithologists. Participants from across the US were in attendance, including Pickering Creek educator Mary Helen Gillen, and recipient of a Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) scholarship.

Hog Island, situated just a quarter-mile off the coast of Maine boasts moss-covered spruce forests, rocky shorelines, a dining hall and cabins that serve as campers' quarters during their stay. A five mile hiking trail loops around the island, where eager birders and naturalists can hear songs of the Swainson's thrush, Winter wren and Black-throated Green Warbler.

Each day, campers attended birding field trips and boat trips to the mainland and out to rocky islands where seabirds nest during the late spring and summer months. In the evenings, campers were treated to lectures from ornithologists on topics ranging from bird behavior, to puffins, to learning to identify the subtle field marks—instead of “dull,” or “drab,” of female songbirds.

Field trip highlights included hiking at the Damariscotta River Association, where birders were thrilled to observe Bobolinks singing and setting up nesting territories in the hilly



meadows. Groups took boat rides to Eastern Egg Rock, to catch glimpses of Atlantic Puffins, and Roseate, Common and Arctic Terns. (Mary Helen had a chance to wave from afar at Samara Ocher, Pickering's 15/16 school year seasonal educator who was then stationed on one of the tiny rocky islands for a month as part of an internship with Audubon's Project Puffin.) Another boat trip brought the budding field ornithologists to Ross Island, where campers were able to walk onto the island and observe (and hold) Herring and Great Black-backed Gull chicks.

Over the years, most of Pickering Creek's full time staff has attended Hog Island Audubon bird camps through MOS scholarships. The scholarships play a huge role in giving educators an immersive, unique and formative opportunity to get to know birds better. Mark Scallion, Center Director, and Susanna Scallion, Office and Development Manager first attended Field Ornithology camp in 2000 through the MOS scholarships. Their experiences inspired them to encourage other staff to apply.

Hog Island Camps have galvanized Pickering Creek educators into creating updates to field trips, classroom lessons, EcoCamp activities, teacher workshops and public programs. Krysta Hougen, EcoCamp Director, remarked after attending in 2014, “An algae pressing class got me thinking about the following summer's EcoCamp schedule and, a nighttime session led me to make additions to our Twilight EcoCamp week.” Samantha Pitts, Teacher Naturalist and Volunteer Coordinator attended a different week in 2014 agreed. “My time on Hog Island proved to be a turning point in how I think about sharing the joy and wonder of birds with others.”

Water Quality Concerns Ignite Action from Environmental Science Students

More than 500 high school students in Caroline and Wicomico Counties spent their spring semester investigating water quality issues impacting their local rivers, streams and creeks through the Audubon Stream Exploration and Restoration Project led by Pickering Creek educators and funded by a Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Explore and Restore Maryland's Streams grant. Throughout the state, Maryland students were involved in various Explore and Restore Maryland Streams programs in which they worked diligently to both understand the many complex issues surrounding water quality and take action to improve the health of countless waterways on both sides of the Chesapeake Bay.

Through a series of classroom lessons, a field experience at Pickering Creek, and a survey of each schoolyard, students compared issues affecting water quality in rural, urban and "natural" locations, such as Federalsburg, Salisbury and Pickering Creek. During their field experience at the Audubon center, students acted as scientists by assessing the chemical, physical, and biological health of Pickering Creek; planting native plants along a buffer between the creek and an agricultural field; discussing management practices; and catching dozens of fish from the creek. The combination of hands-on field experiences was enough to convince one student from Parkside High School in Salisbury to join the school's environmental club the day following the field trip.

Using data collected from their field trips and schoolyard surveys, students took action to address things they thought their school could do to make a positive impact. Each school took on a different project, with students leading the charge to make a difference.

In Wicomico County, students at James M. Bennett High School organized an Earth Week. They painted rain bar-



rels, organized a school-wide trash clean-up, put posters in the hallways about water quality, and spoke on the morning announcements about things their classmates could do to improve and protect water quality. Wicomico High School ran a poster contest about ways to take action for water quality, with the winning poster printed and displayed in each room of the school. Some students even wrote letters to the school about ways the administration could work to improve local water quality, such as mowing less and planting a stream buffer.

Mardela Middle High School environmental science students built a compost bin and conducted a lunchroom trash challenge to reduce waste and encourage composting. Parkside High School did a trash clean-up and investigated the impacts of the water quality of Schumaker Pond on local birds. Under the guidance of their teacher, Deborah Casavant, Parkside High School's, AP Environmental Science class wrote a well-researched and informative letter to their principal that included recommendations for water quality-friendly improvements in construction areas.

Caroline County students also completed impressive projects. North Caroline High School students stenciled storm drains around their parking lots with the message, "Only Rain Down the Storm Drain." Colonel Richardson High School students planted almost 400 native shrubs in a buffer by the road and parking lot.

This fall, a new group of Environmental Science students will participate in the Audubon Stream Exploration and Restoration Project. They will hear about the worthy actions taken in the spring, and will be challenged to carry it forward. The ongoing creative and purposeful actions of environmental science students in our region contribute to a broad awareness of how our collective actions can make a big difference in local stream and creek health. The challenge to students to go beyond learning about an issue to actually doing something about it, builds the teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving skills needed in the leaders of tomorrow.

If you would like to support Audubon's programs in Caroline & Wicomico Counties beyond the term of this grant, please contact us!

A Tadpole Tale

*by Mary Chiarella,
2015-2016 School Year
Seasonal Educator*

The small pond that lies behind the old farm buildings is a hopping place—literally. An hour earlier, the waters were a calm reflection of the sky above and the greening cypress rimming the pool. A few ripples distorted the surface from a passing breeze; two or three little plops marked the movement of skittish leopard frogs escaping from the banks to the safety of the dark water. Otherwise, the pond was entirely still.

Not so now, as several excited little shrieks echo across the water, and the sounds of happy splashing rebound. The edge of the pond nearest the trail, where the entry is flat (if muddy) is teeming with twenty-odd colorfully clad six-year-olds, each armed with a small dip net. About half the kids are wearing tiny rubber boots, allowing little feet to explore just a little further into the pond. The other half, in sneakers, are determined to keep up with the boot-wearers—plumbing the secret depths of the pond’s edge for frogs is worth having slightly soggy socks.

A little cry goes up as a small girl peers into her net. “A tad-a-pole! I found a tad-a-pole!”

At these magic words, about half of the others crowd close to examine her slick, wiggly find. With a rapt audience watching, I remove the tadpole from the muck and leaves filling the net, and set it in the girl’s cupped hand.

I’m spending this beautiful April day with a local first grade class. For most of these kids, it’s their first time out to Pickering Creek Audubon Center, where I work and live. It’s only about ten miles outside the town of Easton, MD, but the winding drive through the surrounding fields and wooded areas give the visitor a sense of having found some place far more remote. A winding gravel drive snakes past the freshwater wetlands, agricultural fields, meadows, and forest to the creek that gives



the center its name. Six feet deep and several hundred feet wide, Pickering Creek is really much more of a small river, and it flows along the edge of the property as it wends towards the Wye River, and on to the Chesapeake Bay.

The size of the property and the diversity and quality of the habitats attract a number of residential and migratory bird species, which in turn attract a number of visitors. Many come for the birds, others just to walk the trails with their families. I love our visitors, and their typical enthusiasm for the beauty of the place. But Pickering’s primary focus—and my particular passion—is education.

My class of first graders is one of three visiting today, and now that spring has really arrived, there are field trips for different grades almost daily. Any visitor hoping to enjoy a quiet morning’s birding is more likely to see two large school buses and forty to sixty very loud, very excited students than any wildlife. It’s tough luck for these visitors, but I can’t feel too apologetic given the excitement and interest of the students. Happily, most of our regular visitors feel the same way—helping kids develop a lasting curiosity for and awareness of the natural world is worth the tran-

sient disappointment of a morning with poor wildlife viewing.

The combined effect of seeing kids anywhere between first and twelfth grade, both for in-school lessons and for field trips, is that there is no “average day” at Pickering Creek. A normal day might include time hiking the trails with a class in tow; or mucking through a field hauling plants and trowels as I simultaneously try to explain the benefits of habitat restoration and not get stuck in the mud; or sharing the education animals (typically the turtles) with a class as a part of a broader discussion on biodiversity. Perhaps it would be better to say, then, that even an average day is extraordinary.

Today’s extraordinary adventure with the first graders started with an exploratory walk through the forest before lunch. The students have already seen me once before, when I came into their classroom several months earlier to talk about different local habitats and the animals that live in them. Each part of the day spent here at Pickering Creek echoes back to that first lesson, which the kids have done a really great job of remembering when I ask.

In the forest, we brainstormed what animals we thought we might see, and

enjoyed hunting for animal “clues” along the trail. Past bird boxes (where we paused to think about different types of animal shelters), and past several piles of scat (where we paused to remember that yes, everybody poops), we eventually located a few bones from a small raccoon that had died the previous year. Six year-olds have much less inhibition touching strange, and possibly gross things than do their parents and teachers, and in the fall I had several kids excitedly bring me handfuls of dead raccoon fur that lay along the trail in tufts. Today’s class only found part of a lower jaw, and several vertebrae, but they still couldn’t be any more excited.

Our after-lunch activity finds us at the pond. It is a small pond, and not particularly deep; but as with so many other things today, in the eyes of my six-year-olds it is novel and wild and absolutely thrilling. To them, this pond could easily feed into some giant ocean (I do get asked about pond sharks), or trickle into some murky southern swamp (I also field questions about alligators). To mingled relief and disappointment, I inform them that there are no sharks (the pond is too shallow), and



“Perhaps it would be better to say, then, that even an average day is extraordinary.”

no alligators (Maryland is too cold) lurking unseen. Instead, we settle for a few frogs, tadpoles, and one fat crayfish. And they are ecstatic.

For the kids on today’s first grade field trip, this short time with me marks the very beginning of their science education at Pickering Creek. They’ll be back next year, and the year after that; I’m leaving, but these kids will return for some time to come. My work at Pickering Creek lasts just one action-packed, beautiful, crazy,

wonderful year—blink, and it’s gone.

Given how short my time is, it can sometimes be hard to see the effects of the work I do with each in-school class or field trip group—I see individual classes usually only once or twice, after all. Who will they be next year, and how will today have shaped the way they think about the natural world around them? There are certainly days when I wonder.

From what I have observed, I’m convinced that each class and field trip leaves its mark. Whether it’s a moment when a student remembers some key concept from a lesson months earlier, or one of the times that a child has run up to me in a public place because she recognized me as a “Pickering lady,” I see frequent small proofs that we’re doing something right as Pickering educators.

Sometimes—and this invariably makes me smile—I have students in their teens ask if they get to play in the pond, as they had done years ago during their first grade field trip. I love that this memory has stayed with them: the magic of that first time at the pond, and those first, wonderful tadpoles.



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

Meet the Creatures at the Library

Monday, October 3, 2016
Monday, December 5, 2016
4:00-5:00PM

Teen Junior Naturalists from Pickering Creek Audubon Center will be hosting "Meet the Creatures" at the Talbot County Free Library in Easton. The students will be sharing their knowledge about our local environment with live reptiles and a touch table filled with bones, skulls, feather, pelts, and more. Come for a close encounter with wildlife and to learn more about Pickering Creek.



Harvest Hoedown

Sunday, October 9, 2016
11:00AM-4:00PM • \$10 per car

Fun for the whole family! Enjoy artisans and craftsman, haywagon rides, a plethora of kids activities, bluegrass music all day long on two stages including Slim Harrison, puppet shows, alpacas, boat rides on the CBMM Winnie Estelle, and more!

Beautiful Birds Photo Exhibit

October 6-27, 2016
Monday-Friday 9:00AM-5:00PM
Sundays 11:00AM-3:00PM

Walk among the winning bird photographs from the 2016 Audubon Photography Awards and learn more about local birdlife at Pickering Creek Audubon Center's waterfront office. Selected from more than 7,000 entries—submitted from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Canada—the winning photos were published in the May-June 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 9.



Tales & Trails for Tots

Thursday, October 20, 2016
10:00-11:00AM

\$5 per child

Exploring the outdoors with your young one is the number one way to help them form a lifelong bond with nature. Come on an adventure of reading and the outdoors. Storytime, followed by a tot-sized trail walk will open eyes to the wonderful world of nature, while sharpening your skills to be their guide and teacher. Appropriate for children ages 2-5 with adult.

Sunset Paddle

Tuesday, October 25, 2016
5:00-6:30PM

\$5 per person

There is enough time for one last paddle on the creek as the autumn breezes cool. Bring the whole family to enjoy the fall colors, and quiet sounds of the creek by canoe as the sun sets over Pickering Creek. Lifejackets and paddles provided.

Whooo Do you Love? Owl Prowl

Friday, November 11, 2016
5:00-7:00PM

\$5 per person

The whinny of the tiny screech owl, the "Who Cooks for Yooooou" of the Barred Owl—we'll listen for these sounds and others as we wander the paths and sharpen our senses to discover nightlife along the trails at Pickering Creek.

New Moon Hike

Wednesday, November 30, 2016
6:30-8:00PM

\$5 per person

Explore Pickering Creek in darkness during the November new moon. Join Pickering Creek staff for a fun and adventurous hike on our trails while searching for nocturnal creatures, using your sense of hearing to find your way around, and identifying winter constellations.

Climate Change for the Dinner Table

Thursday, December 8, 2016
6:00-7:30PM

\$5 per person

The topic of climate change is popping up more and more in the media and popular culture. But exactly what is climate? How is it changing? Why does it matter? How does it relate to the weather as we experience it? Boost your climate IQ with this fun, accessible program clarifies exactly what climate change is and is not.

Like us on Facebook to get up to the minute info on upcoming programs, or visit www.pickeringcreek.org frequently!

Tiny Tots Winter Wonderland

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

10:00-11:00AM

\$5 per child

Bring your little one for a fun morning of stories, crafts, and hands-on activities about the changing seasons and winter animal adaptations. Appropriate for children ages 3-5 with adult.

Snow Moon Hike

Friday, February 10, 2017

6:30-8:00PM

\$5 per person

Get ready to see Pickering Creek in a whole new light - the light of the full moon! February's full moon, known as the "snow moon" is the perfect time to bundle up and enjoy a wintry evening on our trails with a staff Naturalist then warm up with a delicious hot chocolate.

Flight of the Timberdoodle

Monday, March 13, 2017

7:00-8:30PM

\$5 per person

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.

Welcome Spring! Campfire

Monday, March 20, 2017

6:00-7:00PM

\$5 per person

Ring in the first day of spring by learning about spring migrants and other harbingers of spring while sitting around a campfire, enjoying s'mores, and catching a ride on Pickering Creek's hay wagon!

Pickering Creek Birdseed Sale

Feed the birds and support Pickering! Seed selections will include Nyger, black oil sunflower, songbird mixes, several suet selections, peanut hearts, and other goodies for your feeders. All local sales benefit Pickering Creek Audubon Center. An order form is available at www.pickeringcreek.org. Anticipated order deadline: Monday 3 October. Order pickup Saturday, October 15th, at Pickering Creek Welcome Center. Contact Eastern Shore Coordinator: Wayne Bell, wbell2@washcoll.edu or (410) 820-6002.



Photo by Bill Hubick

Ponding at Pickering Creek

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

5:30-6:30PM

\$5 per child

Slippery fish, slithering tadpoles, and dragonfly nymphs! Use dip nets and buckets to discover the unique and fascinating creatures that call the Pickering Creek pond home. Fun for all ages!

Horseshoe Crabs and the Delaware Bay

Saturday, May 13, 2017

\$45 per person

Experience the mystery and magic of these living fossils during an excursion to the Delaware Bay. Pack a picnic lunch, shoes that can get wet and stay secure on your feet (no flip flops!), and a sense of adventure as we explore the Delaware Bay coast in search of horseshoe crabs and the shorebirds that depend on them. Transportation provided. Space is limited so register early!

Tour, Toast & Taste

Saturday, June 10, 2017

5:00 to 8:00PM

Mark your calendars for Pickering's gala event at Harleigh!

Summer Solstice Evening Paddle

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

6:00-8:00PM

\$15 per person

Celebrate summer on the waters of Pickering Creek during this guided canoe paddle. Look out for ospreys and eagles flying overhead and fish jumping in the water. Maybe we'll even see a ray or two cruising in the creek. Lifejackets and paddles provided. Children must be at least 13 years or older and must be accompanied by an adult.



An EcoCamp Homecoming

About 15 years ago, Annie Weishaar (Willow) was forced to come to Pickering Creek for summer camp two years in a row, because her brother absolutely loved it. She didn't. Except for fishing, the heat of the summer was not a favorite of hers, and being forced to be outside in it, made coming to EcoCamp even worse for her.

About 13 years ago, Gabrielle Leach (Luna), got to come to work with her mom Marci, and go to EcoCamp all summer. Luckily for Marci, Gabby was already an outdoor enthusiast, and was excited to go to camp every day. Convenient for Mom, and great fun for Gabby.

Ten years ago, when Spencer Kessinger (Wren) was in 4th grade, she began coming to EcoCamp, and hasn't stopped since, including 5 years as a Junior Counselor.

Three counselors, three different circumstances that initially brought them to EcoCamp years ago—yet all three returned this summer to share the wonder of nature and their own love of the outdoors with campers ages 5-13, which all three admit to Pickering Creek having helped nurture.

While favorite activities like Dodgeball have been replaced with Capture the Flag, the great Watermelon Hunt is now a hunt for Counselors, and Field Trips to places like Hope House, Tuckahoe State Park and Sandy Point are now more in-depth outdoor experiences at Pickering, some things have never changed. Catching frogs, fueling up on blackberries during hikes, canoeing on the creek, receiving Paper Plate Awards from their counselors and eating lunch and playing on the peaceful waterfront of Pickering Creek—and learning, while having fun, are still a key facet of every week.

Though “Gold Rush” and “Tie-dye Thursdays” may have been favorites of these three women when they were campers, many of those favorites in the minds of Gabby, Spencer and Annie have now been replaced with even greater memories such as seeing the sheer joy of campers as



Left to right, Gabrielle Leach Spencer Kessinger, Annie Weishaar (aka Luna, Wren and Willow)

they splash in a giant 7-inch deep puddle that just appeared following a big rain, the screams of excitement when a camper catches their first fish, and seeing the pride on their glowing faces when they try something new.

They admit that being a counselor is a good bit harder than being a camper or Junior Counselor—more responsibility, more preparation and more energy needed to keep up with the shocking energy of 12 campers AND 4 junior naturalists at once—but the perks of having the final say, hearing great feedback from kids and their parents and knowing that they have planted some of the same seeds their EcoCamp counselors planted years ago which have played a role in shaping their future endeavors is well worth it. Luna will be continuing her time at Washington College with a double major in Environmental Studies and Anthropology. Wren will be starting at St. Mary's College of Maryland this fall, expecting to major in Biology or Environmental Studies, ultimately hoping to play a role in improving the environ-



ment via research, education or restoration. Willow, who recently graduated from Old Dominion with a degree in Parks & Recreation Management, will be staying on at Pickering this coming fall and spring as a seasonal educator to gain more work experience in environmental education.

We don't expect all kids who come to EcoCamp to enter into environmental careers, though we do know that most of those who do often go on to do great things in careers of all kinds, and while they are doing it—they have childhood memories of feeling connected to the natural world—which help guide them throughout their lives. Thank you all for a great summer!

Weaving Climate into Conservation Education

In September of 2014, the National Audubon Society published the astonishing *Birds and Climate Change Report*, which warns that 314 North American bird species could lose more than half of their current ranges by 2080. As environmental stewards and bird conservationists, Pickering Creek Audubon Center staff have stepped up to the National Audubon Society charge to recognize and address the challenges associated with climate change through staff training and infusing it into Pickering's hundreds of community-based conservation education and outreach programs offered each year.

During fall of 2014 Samantha Pitts and Mark Scallion participated in a National Network of Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI) Study Circle. With support from the National Science Foundation Climate Change Education Partnership program, NNOCCI's goal is to establish a national network of professionals who are skilled in communicating climate science to the American public. A NNOCCI Study Circle is a cross-disciplinary learning group made up of peers with expertise from fields of environmental interpretation, climate and ocean sciences and communications and cultural sciences. Through a series of facilitated in-person meetings, webinars, conference calls and practical activities, participants build knowledge of ocean and climate science and communications and cultural sciences. They then apply lessons learned to communications or educational opportunities in the context of their work environment through several cycles of development, practice, sharing and reflection.

Involvement with NNOCCI has allowed Pickering to craft a locally applicable methodology for successfully sharing climate messages with the public. The training workshops and materials connect community leaders to Chesapeake Bay salt marshes, sea level rise and climate change.

This spring, along with Coreen



Environmental Science students from WorWic Community College and Salisbury University participate in a salt marsh planting at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. In the past year over 200 volunteers planted over 7,900 plants in the refuge.

Weilminster of the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve also a NNOCCI trained facilitator, Mark and Samantha presented four full-day climate framing workshops based on NNOCCI and Frameworks research. Participants in the workshops practiced connecting the mechanism of climate change to local birds and potential community-based solutions.

In addition to the climate messaging workshops, Pickering Creek has been partnering with Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge since 2013 offering tours and marsh grass plantings so local residents can better connect with the globally important saltmarshes of the Eastern Shore that are being greatly affected by sea level rise. With support from the Conservation Fund and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, over 200 volunteers planted over 7,900 saltmarsh last year. Participants of the workshops, plantings and tours included Audubon chapter members, WorWic Community College and Salisbury University professors and students as well as Pickering Creek Junior Naturalists and



volunteers. "These students always enjoy coming out and getting their hands dirty," said Dr. Michael Lewis, an environmental studies professor from Salisbury University. "They know that if they want to continue to enjoy the marshes and wildlife of the Eastern Shore throughout their lives they will have to pitch in and help make it happen."

As we consider the over 314 bird species which will be affected by climate change along with the host of other plant and wildlife that will be affected, including human life, it is critical that communities continue to "Think Globally and Act Locally" as we work towards collective solutions that can address the impacts of climate change on the Eastern Shore.

A Grand Success



The weather was breezy, Myrtle Grove location stunning, hosts extremely gracious and the benefit to the programs of Pickering Creek Audubon Center immense. Thank you to all who attended Tour, Toast & Taste on the second Saturday of June to support our work on the Eastern Shore to connect people of all ages with nature. The sounds of nationally renowned hammered dulcimer and fiddle musicians, Ken & Brad Kolodner filled the air, while guests enjoyed chatting with friends, and bidding on unique auction items and dinners. A little fishing target practice in the nearby

pond and getting a close up look at some live birds capped off the evening.

A special thanks to our hosts and Golden Eagle sponsors Herb & Patrice Miller. Many thanks to our second Golden Eagle Sponsor Bill Davenport & Bruce Wiltsie as well as our many other sponsors Cheryl Tritt & Phil Walker, Dock Street Foundation, Ken's Creative Kitchen, Bartlett Griffin & Vermilye, Bill & Mary Griffin, Chesapeake Audubon Society, Colin Walsh & Carolyn Williams, Hill Group at Morgan Stanley, Wayne & Jody Shaner, The Tilghman Family, Wilford Nagel Group at Morgan

Stanley, Easton Utilities, Ewing, Dietz, Fountain & Kaludis, Parker Counts, Catherine & George Peterson, Rick Scobey and Bruce Ragsdale, and Philip & Charlotte Sechler.

The wonderful donors of the dinners, events and auction items make Tour, Toast & Taste a one of a kind event. Thank you to Coard Benson, Allie Tyler & Cleo Braver, Annie & Richard Graham, Ryan & Vanessa Goold, Rick Scobey & Bruce Ragsdale, Dirck & Christy Bartlett, Mike & Christine DuFour, Cynthia Rickman & Joel Texter, Bill & Mary Griffin, Debra & Bob Rich, Rick Wagenblatt, Ellen & Dick Bodorff, Richard Marks & Amy Haines, Steve & Joyce Doehler, Phil Bernot, Wayne & Jody Shaner, Colin Walsh & Carolyn Williams, Cheryl Tritt & Philip Walker, Hugh Simmons, Brooke & Mike Mesko, Stuart Strahl, Wayne & Joyce Bell, Bartlett Pear Inn, 208 Talbot, Scott Beatty, DLA Piper, Scossa, The Irons Family, Silver Linings, Rathell's, Chris Gillen, Paris Foods, Marla & Harold Baines and Rio Del Mar for offering up such generous support for the event and Pickering!

By the end of the evening, the sun set over the Miles River, guests departed, enjoying another view of the beautiful tree lined drive of Myrtle Grove, and over \$100,000 was raised to make learning in the best classroom available—the outdoors—accessible to all.

Mark your calendars for June 10 for next year's event at Harleigh!

Junior Naturalists Celebrated!

This year, Pickering Creek celebrated two of our recent high school graduates, Erin and Laurel Pogue, who have been involved in the Junior Naturalist program since 7th grade. They have attended numerous field trips with Pickering Creek including places like the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Chester River Field Research Station in Chestertown, and Smith Island. As Junior Naturalists, they have also participated in citizen science projects like salamander monitoring and have helped with public outreach programs. In the summer months, Laurel and Erin have served as terrific Junior Counselors, supporting the EcoCamp staff and campers. Erin and Laurel have each earned over 800 service-learning hours through the Junior Naturalist program. We wish them the best of luck in their future naturalist endeavors!

Follow in Erin and Laurel's footsteps! Pickering Creek's Junior Naturalist Program is open to teens beginning in seventh grade through high school. To learn more contact Krysta Hougen at khougen@audubon.org.



New Scrub Shrub Meadow Makes for Very Happy Birds

Monarch butterflies float over milkweed, blanketflower and coneflower. Grasshopper Sparrows sing from tall grassy perches that sway in the breeze and a rabbit darts into the grass clumps. These are common scenes in Pickering Creek's new 25-acre shrub scrub meadow habitat. The Center teamed with its restoration partner Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage to utilize the USDA's CRP program to install warm season grasses and native flowers in two fields this past year. The fields had previously been used for growing sorghum, which had replaced soybeans that were typically devastated by hungry deer from the neighboring woods. Thanks to the Center's Master Site Plan, completed in 2014, a new vision for these fields was launched. The first two initiatives to be realized through the plan have been the installation of a new 17 acre wetland complex, featured in our Views newsletter last fall, and the installation of 25 acres of warm season grass (WSG) meadow.

In the past few years, the Center has had four small meadows sprinkled throughout the facility, none of which exceeds seven acres. Despite the relatively small size of these meadows, they have been effective in attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies and feeding and breeding grounds for a variety of birds. In particular, the meadows adjacent to more mature forested wetlands, are very attractive to singing Woodcock during their mating dance during late winter/early spring. A growing number of singing woodcock have been spotted each year – so the new 25 acres of WSG will be put to good use!

Woodcocks (aka Timberdoodles) are most frequently encountered at dusk or dawn between late February and the end of March. If you have tall grass or bottomland marsh you may very well have Woodcock on your property. The telltale sign is going out at dusk and hearing the nasally "peent", which sounds like an insect buzzing, repeated at closer and closer intervals



Above: American Woodcock;
Left: Grasshopper Sparrow

before the bird takes off in its aerial ballet. This is the male Woodcock establishing his "singing grounds," which he defends against other males in small clearings of young trees and shrubs. Different individual males may be heard calling back and forth; primarily to make sure the others stay in their own territory.

Across much of their range, Woodcocks are in a slow but steady decline. The American Woodcock has been designated as a priority species for Audubon because of its representation of a number of species that have been impacted by the decline of the mixed shrub habitat it prefers. The Woodcock's decline is likely based on the reduction of prime first growth forest and meadows, often caused by the increase of development, as well as the reduction of timber harvest in many northeastern states and fire suppression in forests. In general, Woodcock need a mixture of small, scattered openings one to three acres in size among dense stands of shrubs and young leaf-bearing trees in a moist area. As young forests mature,

breeding habitat quality diminishes for the Woodcock.

A member of the shorebird family, Woodcock population numbers are reflective of shorebird decline in general. Sixteen of the forty-one common North American shorebirds have shown steady population declines of 3-12% annually, with growing evidence that this group of birds is especially vulnerable to the threats of climate change. A shorebird relative of the Woodcock, and spring visitor to the Delaware Bay Shore, the Red Knot, has suffered cumulative reductions of more than 75%, which is the largest of any North American Bird species in the 20th century.

When you visit Pickering, be sure to follow the trail behind the farm pond at Pickering to see the newly wild scrub shrub habitat. Enjoy it as it evolves and watch for new trails through and around the habitat in the future.

Check out pages 6 & 7 for upcoming programs about birds and how they need your help!

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Details inside

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