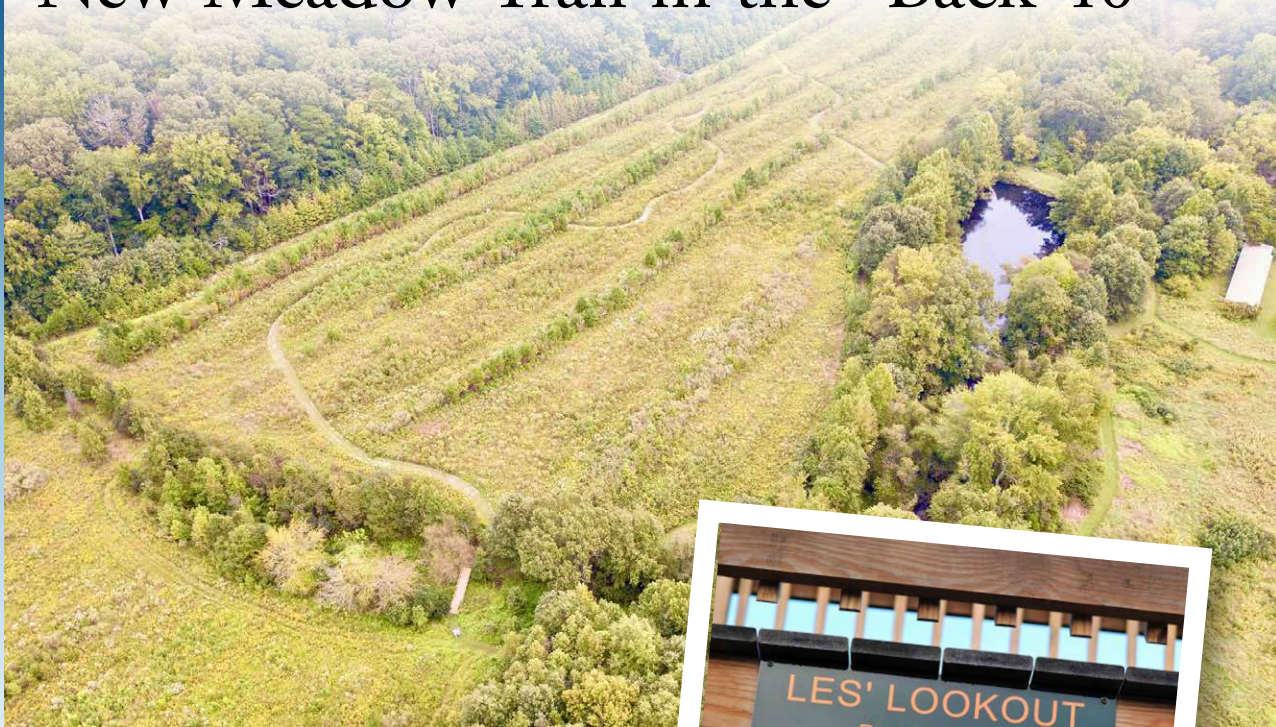


New Meadow Trail in the “Back 40”



Aerial photo of the New Meadow Trail.



Pickering Creek completed a new meadow and wildflower trail earlier this fall. The new trail is just under a mile long and weaves through emergent meadow habitat on the far side of the farm pond and opens up more space to explore at Pickering.

In 2016 Pickering converted two agriculture fields totaling 25 acres to meadow habitat thanks to the USDA's CRP program and the technical expertise of local non-profit partner Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage. Prior to being converted, deer consistently took a heavy toll on soybean crops in the two fields, so when the Center decided on the change Pickering's tenant farmer was willing to let them revert to a more natural state. Now well established, the fields feature native warm season grasses, an assortment of wildflowers like white snakeroot and goldenrod, shrubs like marsh elder and a fairly persistent invasion of sweet gum and loblolly pine trees from the neighboring forest. The fields are managed annually by mowing about 1/3 of their area to keep the fields in a permanent emergent meadow state.

In 2018, Pickering Creek received a Recreational Trails grant from the Maryland State Highway Administration and began planning and the development of the new trail system including the installation of a viewing platform highlighting the meadow habitat. The results of the project

are a delightful winding trail through one of the two meadows with two interpretive panels illustrating the many creatures that call this type of meadow their home and another panel describing the seasonal beauty of the meadow through all four seasons.

As part of his Eagle Scout project, Sam DenHerder replaced one of the bridges along an existing trail segment, linking the meadow trail parts together. At the farthest point along the new trail, visitors will arrive at “Les' Lookout Viewing Platform.” The 20' x 30' ft platform is dedicated to longtime birder, volunteer and friend of Pickering Creek, Les Roslund, who passed away in 2020. As an avid sharer of nature with Pickering staff and visitors, the platform carries Les' spirit of being a great place to soak in the beauty of wild nature. The platform sits at the far end of the second meadow field and features a tall lookout that gives a great view of the meadow and a bird's eye view of the importance of size in meadow habitats. The lower platform features gathering space for school groups, chairs and an interpretive panel highlighting the birds you will most likely see from the platform.

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

Building a Better Bay:

Talbot County 7th Graders Make the Mid-Shore More Biodiverse

“1...2...3...pull!”

All ten hands grabbed the fallen log by the bark and pulled hard. The old and weathered log was stubborn at first, even shedding bark rather than rolling over. But eventually it relented and rolled towards the students, exposing the network of fungus and insects underneath.

“Whoa,” said one kid as he peered over the log into the damp depression, “what is that thing?”

“Isn’t that just an ant?” replied another student as she leaned forward to get a better look.

“No, no, no, that thing! That big thing digging into the dirt!” the first student exclaimed.

“Ewwww, I have no idea,” said another student as they backed away from the scene, eyes wide.

A hand reached into the dirt and gently plucked up the insect off the ground. Holding it in their palm, they could see the beetle was about 2 inches long and black with a shiny iridescent exoskeleton and one stubby horn on its head. A few of the students leaned in to get a better look, while others took a noticeable step back.

“This,” explained the Pickering Creek educator “is a Horned Passalus Beetle. They mostly live under logs like this one and really only feed on decaying wood.”

“A what what beetle?” asked another student, now eye level with the beetle crawling around the outstretched hand, “Can’t say I’ve ever heard of that...”

How many species can you name? 50? 100? For the past few years Pickering Creek Audubon Center educators have been working with Talbot County 7th grade students to perform a bioblitz every spring to help identify as many different species of wildlife as possible during their field trip visits to the Center. The students get a chance to catch fish off the dock, put



Students take a closer look at Horned Passalus Beetle.

on waders and go seining in the creek, use binoculars and their own ears to find forest birds and flip over logs and explore the forest in search of insects. After all, biodiversity makes the bay and its watershed a better place to live. This full day exploration of nature allows students to understand just how many different species and habitats there are in their mid-shore home. And while this yearly bioblitz tradition has been both fun and educational for hundreds of Talbot County 7th graders, this year marks a new chapter in this partnership.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Pickering Creek Audubon Center is working with all Talbot County 7th grade science teachers to help implement a new Meaningful Watershed Education Experience curriculum designed to answer the question “How can students in Talbot County boost biodiversity in public spaces?”

Through a Maryland Department

of Natural Resources grant from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund, not only will the students still get a chance to come out to Pickering Creek to learn and explore, but they will also visit local natural areas to see more biodiversity and get in-class lessons to learn about what species live here and why. Finally, in the spring, the students will design and implement an action project to boost biodiversity right here in the county. Throughout the course, students will get a chance to learn new skills, including using field equipment, interviewing stakeholders, analyzing data, researching issues and working as a team to accomplish project goals.

Pickering Creek is thrilled to be able to expand this already amazing program and to support local teachers and students as they work together to improve local biodiversity in Talbot County!

Sharing the Joy of Native Plants at Home in the Garden

Nora Skiver has enjoyed gardening for many years and it shows. Her yard is an oasis of color and calm. The short walkway to her front entrance is graced by garden beds filling her entire front yard. A variety of birds and butterflies can be seen visiting the native plants that flower there throughout the growing season.

While gardening has been a long-time passion of hers, Nora completed the transformation of her front yard only three years ago during her collaboration with Pickering Creek Audubon Center. As a participant in Pickering Creek's Native Habitat for Habitat project supported by the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT), Nora was part of a cohort of six Habitat for Humanity Choptank homeowners that added native plant garden spaces to their yards.

This year, Nora is partnering with Pickering Creek staff in a new way. She is one of two gardeners from the original cohort of Habitat Choptank homeowners who have stepped up to be peer mentors for a new group of homeowners participating in phase 2 of Pickering's Native Habitat for Habitat project also supported by CBT. These mentors directly assist new homeowners by regularly communicating with them about using native plants to garden for the first time. They share their experiences, work along side them, cheer them on, and help Pickering Creek staff address the needs of each.

Mentors provide a one-on-one layer of support for new native habitat gardeners that works because of the rapport they have with others who have shared similar experiences. A stipend is paid to each mentor in acknowledgement of their particularly valuable time, and their patience and enthusiasm for helping to build habitat for wildlife, just as Habitat Choptank helped them build their homes.

Amy Nichols, a new habitat gardener and one of Nora's mentees, spoke effusively about Nora's garden after she was invited to drop by for a visit, and now she has a



Amy Nichols & Nora Skiver 'dig in' to planting native plants for wildlife at Amy's new home in Hurlock.

real impression of what she can accomplish over time in her own yard.

From the start, Nora has been there for Amy, working alongside her during the installation of her garden last spring. Amy readily expressed her deep appreciation for Nora's time, assistance, and generosity.

"...Helping others to begin the process of their first garden and then seeing them nurture their plants is a joy. The end result is to see their sense of accomplishment as they smile."

In turn, Amy's success has been evident. She worked hard over the summer, learning how much to water and weed her habitat garden and care for her new maple tree. Her Black-eyed Susans and Butterfly Milkweed thrived and bloomed prolifically during the hottest part of the summer. Amy, rightfully proud of her efforts, commented that her flowers looked better than some of the same plants she saw in public gardens areas.

"When asked why I chose to be a Pickering Creek Habitat Garden Mentor the answer was an easy one." Reflects Nora. "As a beneficiary of this same program, I have had the pleasure of learning how native plants affect our local environ-

ment in a positive way. Gardening gives me pleasure as I watch the plants grow. With care, love and nurture we see the plants growing and flowers blooming. Thus gardening gives me a sense of pleasure and enjoyment... gardening helps me. Helping others to begin the process of their first garden and then seeing them nurture their plants is a joy. The end result is to see their sense of accomplishment as they smile."

Meanwhile, the birds and beneficial insects using these new native habitats are also benefitting from Pickering's Habitat for Habitat project and greatly enjoying the increased food and shelter!

*Visit us at
pickeringcreek.org
for upcoming programs,
webinars and events.*



Our Commitment to Community:

Getting Kids into Nature During COVID

Pickering Creek's mission is to conserve natural habitats on Maryland's Eastern Shore by engaging and empowering our community through exploration, education and stewardship. Throughout this challenging year, our center and staff have remained committed to providing education and outdoor experiences for our community. During our second summer without our beloved in-person EcoCamp, Pickering educators used all the creativity and resources at their disposal to make sure children in the communities we serve still had fun and meaningful connections with nature.

Highlights of the Summer:

- In April, we opened the Spring Nature Play Trail. Visitors were invited to hop like a rabbit and twirl like a seed down our trails, led by a series of colorful signs full of information and games. In June the Pollinator Nature Play Trail debuted, focusing on butterflies and other native pollinators.
- EcoCamp Backpacks for Talbot County students were full of supplies to explore



Outreach Coordinator, Harrison Jackson, helps a volunteer Susan Abrahams pack EcoCamp Backpacks for Talbot County students.



Volunteer Coordinator, Samantha Pitts goes ponding with a group of students from the Empowerment Learning Center in Cambridge.

Backyard Bugs. We provided lessons, workbooks for journaling and information, as well as two sessions of online instruction for many of the crafts contained in the backpack kit.

- Pickering's Trailblazing Women and Girls group visited Pickering Creek to go ponding and bug collecting and returned in the early fall for a day of canoeing.
- Our staff presented in-person for summer classes at Easton Elementary School. Students were invited to learn about the ways animals, birds and reptiles are specially adapted to live and thrive in our local Chesapeake Bay ecosystems. They were introduced to our Animal Ambassadors so they could observe these characteristics first-hand.
- Empowerment Learning Center of Cambridge was welcomed as our first in-person group field trip of the year. Three separate age groups had a one-day camp including fishing and catching insects and getting a ride in our camp wagon!
- Our Animal Ambassadors were in the spotlight with visits to the Oxford Kids Camp and Talbot Country Club Camp,



Education Director, Mary Helen Gillen, shows Talbot Country Club campers how to use a butterfly house.

where students made origami frogs, learned to mimic local frogs in a "Frog Chorus," and observed the differences between a turtle adapted to land and one adapted to water. Our Diamondback Terrapin and Eastern Box Turtle greatly enjoyed seeing kids after a year of not seeing any! Our two colorful Corn Snake ambassadors we met with excitement as well!

Taking Flight Together



The Chesapeake Bay Watershed, the birds in the skies above it using the Atlantic Flyway and people are intricately intertwined. Dorchester County's tidal and non-tidal waters, it's landscapes that support hundreds of migratory and non-migratory bird species, it's rich and diverse human history, and it's well reputed fishery that supports iconic species such as blue crabs, rockfish and oysters provides a hands-on, place-based laboratory like none other where students can see, touch, and learn about the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the greater environment, and human impact that all begins right in their own schoolyard.

Together, Pickering Creek Audubon Center and Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS) are launching a new multifaceted program that systematically engages seventh grade students and teachers in investigative outdoor experiences, preparing students for taking action within their own schoolyard or community in the Bay watershed. This project is supported by a grant from the NOAA Chesapeake BWET program which supports school district programs that provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for students and appropriate training for teachers. Presented to students through the lens of improving bird migration routes along the Atlantic Flyway, Chesapeake Linked: People, Skies, Water & Place (LINKED), will connect students to birds, Chesapeake Bay water quality and the aquatic life it holds, and the ever-evolving human history so intimately connected to each in Dorchester County, engendering discovery and wonder beyond what students may see every day.

LINKED is comprised of multiple in-school lessons that include schoolyard investigations, one field experience at Pickering Creek, a visit to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Park, and a student-driven stewardship action project. All programming leading up to and including the stewardship action project will align with school science and social stud-

ies curriculum, the social studies framework, Next Generation Science Standards, and employ STEAM best teaching practices.

At the core of this project-based program is teacher professional development to ensure effective Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences (MWEEs) for students in Dorchester County Public Schools. A MWEE is a learner-centered framework that focuses on investigations into local environmental issues and leads to informed action. *LINKED* will include sixty hours of teacher professional development for DCPS classroom teachers over the course of three years including year-round support and technical assistance from Pickering Creek staff will complement the student's experience and enable teachers to support students as they plan and execute a stewardship action project at each school.

Partnerships with organizations within the local community including the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park will connect teachers to people, places and resources for student investigation of the human experience within the natural landscape and within the context of the wider community.

This winter Pickering Creek educators are looking forward to and planning teacher professional development sessions with Dorchester County 7th grade science and social studies teachers and introducing them to the elements of integrating this MWEE into their existing curriculum. Pickering educators we will introduce teachers to partners and places within the county that will help their students explore and weave together their understanding of the interconnections between human and natural systems and collaborate with the teachers to co-develop effective, engaging lessons that will give students skills, understanding and resources to use their voices, make decisions, and take action.



APPRECIATION

Gratitude and Grub

A grand time was had by all on October 14th as 80+ of our hundreds of supporters who have ensured students of all ages interact with science and nature, assembled under the large red oak tree in Pickering's garden area to enjoy home cooked pork by Master Pig Roaster and former Board member, John Trax. Delicious sides and homemade brownies and cookies for dessert rounded out the meal. The sounds of local musician Justin Ryan, combined with the honking of Canada geese flying overhead provided a great backdrop for supporters to reconnect with staff, neighbors and friends, old and new. The Board of Trustees and staff of Pickering Creek were thrilled to have an opportunity to thank our generous donors in person! For all of those who have supported Pickering Creek over the years—THANK YOU—and we hope to see you at our next invite only thank you event!



Caroline County Environmental Earth Science and American Government teachers grab their nets to explore Pickering Creek's wetlands.

Crossing Curricular Lines with Nature

On a sunny morning in mid-May, eight Caroline County (CCPS) high school teachers and one Science Supervisor arrived at Pickering Creek Audubon Center. It was the first school-centered program hosted on-site at the Center since the pandemic began in March 2020. Although the visit wasn't with students, the opportunity to connect in-person with teachers was positively energizing.

On site that day, Pickering educators led the four Environmental Earth Science and four American Government teachers through environmental investigations that students would experience when they returned to in-person instruction in the fall. Pulling on rubber boots, teachers rolled up their sleeves, waded out into the wetlands, getting FAR away from the Zoom screens that populated most of their days, and they searched for dragonfly larva, snails, crayfish and tadpoles living under water.

It was no accident that the science

and social studies teachers had come together for a field trip. They had been connecting virtually since February for a multi-part, teacher-led professional development workshop designed in partnership with Pickering staff and led by the science teachers.

...government teachers reflected that the sessions helped to give them ideas and understanding on incorporating environmental topics and student action into their curriculum...

With initial funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and additional support from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Explore and Restore Habitats (ERH) program was developed as a Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE), systematically engaging all 9th and 10th graders in Caroline County. The teacher-led work-

shop introduced government teachers to the ERH program, including the investigation of wetlands, forests, waterways, meadows, and schoolyards, introducing them to what students participating in the program do during the MWEE, and how they use their findings and supporting research to develop and carry out action projects that improve the health of local habitats.

Since the program launched in 2018, Pickering educators and CCPS teachers have worked together to develop lessons that give space for student voice in decision-making around action, and allow for students to consider influencing policy change as a way of tackling local environmental issues. Involvement of the American Government teachers seemed to be a natural place where cross-curricular support could wholly elevate the experience for students.

Throughout the three-part training workshop, government teachers learned about the components of the MWEE



Standing Strong on Our Own

We informed you in July of our decision to amicably separate from the National Audubon Society. Bryan MacKay, longtime Chesapeake Audubon Society Board member, former Pickering Board member, author, former biology professor and one of the first people to do programs at Pickering in the early 80's captured the new beginning with these words:

“Without a vision, the people perish” ... *Book of Proverbs*

It's been almost 40 years since Pickering Creek was established as an environmental education center serving the students of Talbot County and the mid-Shore.

Over that period of time, a lot has changed. Farmland has been converted to wetlands, programming has evolved, budget and endowment have grown, staff and volunteers have made valuable contributions and then moved on, thousands of students have had exceptional experiences with nature, for some of them life-changing.

But far more important is what has *not* changed.

At Pickering Creek, each spring brings birdsong that enlivens the forest again after so long an absence, the evensong of Wood thrush in the gloaming, the remembered beauty of a newly-blossomed bloodroot. Summer brings fields of ripening grain dancing in the breeze, and the anticipation of rain as thunderclouds billow across the sky. A meadowlark joins the dawn chorus as the first rays of sunlight glint jewel-like off the morning dew. Autumn is all color and wistfulness, the silence of a smoky dusk, goose music on the dawn breeze. Winter brings the rare slick calm of the Chesapeake in winter, and a clarity of light that cleanses and purifies.

And most importantly, what has *not* changed is the vision. The vision of a place where children can experience nature on their own terms, on *its* own terms, at a place close by, on our Chesapeake shore that oozes and insinuates itself into our psyches to become a landscape of memory and peace that we call home.

That vision resulted from a fortuitous partnership between the Olds and Strahl family, and members of Chesapeake Audubon Society, first discussed four decades ago. It was brought to fruition by hard work, tempered like steel made stronger by some difficult times, and by people from the local community who have served selflessly and with competence, all because they realize in their hearts and minds that the vision is good and strong and worthy. **The vision endures.**

Today we embark on another phase in what will become the history of Pickering Creek. We begin with much experience, great strengths, a firm financial footing, remarkable staff, and dedicated Trustees. But most importantly, we all support that vision from more than a generation ago.

Without a vision, the people perish. But with a vision, the people prosper. Our vision, our shared vision, has been entrusted to us for a reason, and will unite us as we move forward together into this new phase of Pickering Creek.

With a vision, the people *will* prosper.

If you have questions about Pickering's new structure, don't hesitate to contact Director Mark Scallion at mcallion@pickeringcreek.org.

program with Pickering Creek, background on environmental issues facing the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and how policies influence local environmental issues and decision-making. The science teachers prepared activities for the government teachers that complimented the students' MWEE experience in science, and supported social studies curriculum needs around civics, the role of government in shaping policy, land use, and taking informed action. Afterward, government teachers reflected that the sessions helped to give them ideas and understanding on incorporating environmental topics and student action into their curriculum, and all teachers indicated they would incorporate several of the demonstrated activities and tools into their lesson planning, especially on lessons focused on urban sprawl, smart growth, zoning, and interest groups.

The teachers' visit to Pickering Creek in May personalized the connections made throughout the spring semester between the teachers through active experiences together. Government teachers visited the native plant garden planted by environmental students, and canoed the creek while discussing buffer policies, farming practices and water quality. By building in lessons that echo the environmental and civic themes as well as action-project planning between both required classes, students' knowledge of environmental issues will go deeper and their skills will be sharpened.

Beyond bringing the American Government team to the table, the planning process for this professional development training reinforced the science teachers' practices with the Explore and Restore Habitats program and their own confidence in their role as experts of their own experience. Over the summer, Caroline County Environmental Earth Science teachers supported Pickering Creek educators during two additional workshops, including the Mid-Atlantic Climate Change Education Conference in June and offering advice and support for Wicomico County Public School teachers as they begin their own similar development of a workshop to take place in the coming year as part of its Chesapeake Exploration MWEE with Pickering Creek.

Board of Trustees 2020-21

Dirck Bartlett, *President*
Tom Sanders, *Vice President*
Ron Ketter, *Treasurer*
Esther Fleischmann, *Secretary*
Coard Benson
Cemmy Peterson
Thomas Kimbis
Matthew Miller
Carol Thompson
Cheryl Tritt
Anne Walker
Mark Scallion, *Executive Director*



11450 Audubon Lane
Easton, MD 21601-5211

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage Paid
Easton, MD
Permit No. 27

Staff

Mark Scallion, *Executive Director*
Susanna Scallion,
Director of Operations
Mary Helen Gillen,
Director of Education
Samantha Pitts,
*Community Partnerships
Coordinator/Teacher Naturalist*
Harrison Jackson,
*Public Programs Coordinator/
Teacher Naturalist*
Alex Lloyd, *Seasonal Educator*
Jessica Elliott, *Seasonal Educator*
Cara Schaefer, *Seasonal Educator*
Abby Hileman,
Part-time Seasonal Educator
Kathy Pearson,
Part-time Seasonal Educator

Find us on Facebook
at [www.facebook.com/
pickeringcreek](https://www.facebook.com/pickeringcreek)



If you have named Pickering Creek Audubon Center in your will or trust, THANK YOU!

Don't forget that Pickering Creek's operations are no longer under the umbrella of the National Audubon Society, or its tax id number, and we are now operating as Chesapeake Audubon Society (Tax- ID 52-1038833). Please be sure to update your accounts!

If you are considering making an impact for decades to come by including Pickering Creek Audubon Center as a beneficiary in your will, living trust, insurance or retirement plan, or would like more information, please contact Susanna Scallion sscallion@pickeringcreek.org

You can light the spark for science and nature for our next generation of leaders!

Have an IRA? Consider this.

If you are over the age of 70 ½, you can easily make a tax-free charitable gift in the form of a cash distribution from your IRA. Contact your IRA custodian today to find out how you can transfer your desired gift amount in support of getting kids outside and connected with nature at Pickering Creek.

