

APRIL 2015



Think before you print!

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Hello MPEA Friends & Volunteers!

Every year April is when we look forward to the blooming of all the spring flowers. This year is more exciting because we have several initiatives nearing fruition in addition to getting to watch the many wonderful, native plants currently in bloom. We have an event to help butterflies upcoming, we're almost ready to seed a new meadow, our first plant sale is wrapping up, and there is still plenty to do to get ready for our special visitors next month.

Fieldwork

There has been plenty of fieldwork to do this month; so much so that it's getting harder and harder to accomplish all of it. Thankfully outdoor working conditions have been ideal, allowing us to work on many different tasks. Most apparent to visitors is the recent mowing of the meadows. Less visible is all of the prep work we do before hand to insure the mowing crews do not accidentally mow anything that shouldn't be cut. Say for example, the blue bird boxes that just received their annual maintenance too.

Progress on creating the newest meadow area is happening slowly but methodically. The next major step will be to finish removing the remaining trees. Then preparing the site for seeding can commence. Another task, which required its fair share of time this month, was efforts to control the spread of Lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*). We had our own staff spend several days spot-spraying herbicide on this plant plus we also hired a contractor to assist us. Why? Well because there is a short window of opportunity to effectively treat the plant and there is more of it than we can handle in-house. Invasive Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) shrubs also received herbicide treatments as we performed follow up work in areas where volunteers had previously cleared the plant. Additionally, we began removing more *Elaeagnus* from the route that the goat delivery truck will traverse. Yes. You read that correctly. A truck and trailer will be delivering goats into the area as well as returning about a week later to retrieve the animals (with bellies full of invasive plants). Eco-Goats is the company that provides this service and you can learn more about the use of goats to control invasive plants at: <http://www.eco-goats.com/>. There will be an opportunity for you to observe the herd in action on May 30th from 1 to 4 PM. See page 3 for details.

Milkweeds

Looking onward to May, we were delighted to receive our milkweed seedlings from Sharp's at Waterford Farm. Our Master Gardener volunteers had been assisting at the farm to grow us several flats of milkweed to be planted in the environmental area during our May 26th event. Two species, Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) are going to be planted. Although both species already occur out there having more of them is better. We are planting them primarily for the benefit of Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)



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Milkweeds (cont'd)

butterflies however they'll benefit other pollinators as well. Here's a video from an organization in Nebraska with great information about helping Monarchs:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uGZ_C6EmEI

Some of the plant information doesn't apply here in Maryland but the video is still a good introduction to the problems facing Monarchs and how you can help.

GreenFest

GreenFest was another great opportunity for us to meet with the public and interact with many of our volunteers. A lot of familiar faces stopped by our table to say hello and ask about what work we have been doing lately. It is always a busy day with more display tables to see than you have time to look at. The companies with solar panel information were definitely popular but nobody could top the popularity of the native plant vendors. Everyone was talking about the native plants! Our own Davey Rogner also led an invasive plant pulling event and later performed some music for the crowd.

Correction

Last month's newsletter contained an error. Sorry about that. Apparently a paragraph was truncated and it left at least two readers in suspense who notified me of the problem. Here is the full text of what was omitted:

Just like on the tree planting date, the recent warming and snow melting allows for vernal pools to begin filling-up, which in turn will provide a place for many amphibians to lay their eggs. With that fact in mind, Intern Maddie has plunged full steam into her vernal pool inventory and mapping project. Egg masses and tadpoles are already being found.

Interesting Link

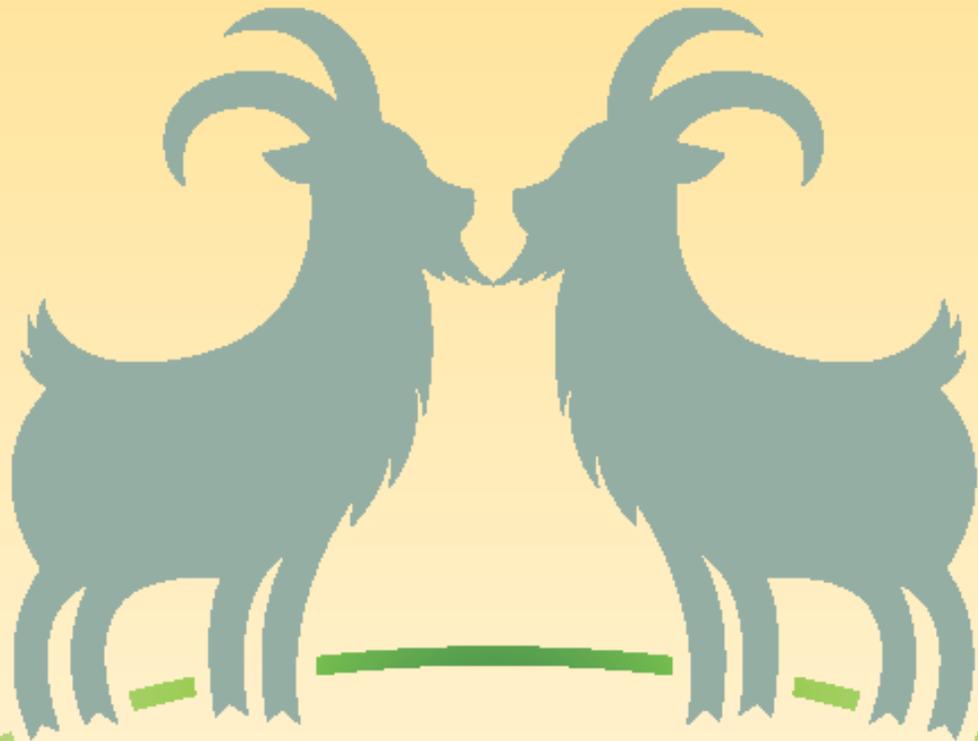
This is the opportune time to be uprooting unwanted Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). There is plenty of mustard around to keep all of us busy and on occasion it helps to have reminders of why we hate it. Even though it is full of botanical terms, helpful information like this is what keeps us motivated: <http://www.amjbot.org/content/early/2015/03/02/ajb.1500025.full.pdf>

I hope to see you out in the MPEA,

Jeff



Here are photos of the seedling Milkweeds: Common Milkweed on the left and Butterflyweed on the right. Photos by Volunteer Clare O.



Meet EcoGoats

at the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area

May 30, 2015 | 1-4 PM | FREE

5795 Trotter Road
Clarksville, MD 21029

This spring, the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) is employing a forester and his herd of goats to assist the Weed Warrior Program in their efforts to remove non-native, invasive plants from the forest's understory. The goats will be fenced into an area where there are not native plants and will then be allowed to feast on the undesired vegetation.

This event will feature a guided hike of the MPEA by Natural Resource Managers and a visit to the goat pen.

Information:

Davey Rogner, Invasive Species Project Manager
410-313-0476 or drogner@howardcountymd.gov





The Newsletter of the Middle
Patuxent Environmental Area

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The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA), established in 1996, is 1021 acres in size and contains a diversity of habitat types. There are upland and bottomland hardwood forest, fields, wetlands, ponds, and riparian (riverine) habitats. The primary components of the MPEA's mission are natural resource management, education, research and recreation. **Successfully delivering our mission depends on the efforts of volunteers such as you!**

We're on the Web!

<http://www.howardcountymd.gov/mpea.htm>

AND

www.middlepatuxent.org

Conservation Stewardship Project

No experience necessary, one-time volunteers are welcome.

MILKWEED PLANTING& BUTTERFLY TALK

May 26 / 9-11:30 AM/ Trotter Road Entrance

Come out this day to learn about the Monarch Waystation Program and help plant milkweeds, the sole food source (host plant) that Monarch caterpillars eat. Also, learn two easy things that you can do at home to help Monarchs! This event is one in a series about Monarch Butterflies that we have conducted over the past few years.

BARBERRY & BASKETGRASS

June 23 / 9-11:30 AM/ South Wind Circle Trailhead

Non-native, invasive plants are a real threat to our ecosystems and our habitat restoration efforts. Come hear Dr. Vanessa Beauchamp, Assistant Professor of Biology at Towson University, speak about the ecology of Wavyleaf basketgrass, a relative newcomer and very challenging species, and a citizen-science initiative to map its current distribution. The remaining time is spent dealing with our nemesis, Japanese barberry.