

AUGUST 2014



Think before you print!

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Hello MPEA Friends & Volunteers!

The impending change of seasons is close and a calendar wasn't necessary to figure it out. There has been an increase in birdwatchers frequenting the environmental area as well as an influx of volunteers from the managed hunt program. These activities don't occur during the dead of summer, so put two and two together and you know autumn is coming. Who knew you could predict the future based on watching who comes and goes from the parking lot? Finding out specifically who visited and what they did is more difficult, but you can find out by reading this newsletter.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

The fall migration of birds has begun. Long distant migrant birds will avoid our winter by heading south to Central or South America. Short distant migrant species may fly a few states south of here. However, don't forget that some short distant migrants from up north may show up and stay put in Maryland during a mild winter. As different species pass through or arrive you can imagine that this is an exciting time for Birders. If you ever wanted to give bird watching a try, this would be a fun but potentially confusing time to start. Speaking of interesting bird news, an American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) was sighted in the MPEA earlier this month. We do know that this is not normally a migration period for the American woodcock so it is possible that this was a resident bird.

Coming Soon

The bright yellow markers on trees that visitors frequently inquire about have been refreshed for the upcoming White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) managed hunt season. The markers are put in place by hunt program volunteers to help them navigate to the assigned hunting locations. Other preparations for the hunt program include mowing of parking areas and sprucing up of the inside and exterior of the check station. The exact dates of the managed hunt in the MPEA have not been fully certified but when they are we'll share them here. Expect the first date to be in mid-October.

They're Back!

More items to look forward to this fall season include the resumption of the monthly Conservation Stewardship Project series of events PLUS more bi-weekly opportunities for afternoon "Weed Warring". Davey Rogner will host interested volunteers to assist with removing invasive plants each Tuesday and Friday afternoon from 3:30 until 6 between the dates of September 9th and November 14th. Davey has rounded up some interesting incentives to encourage participation, so send him an email (drogner@howardcountymd.gov) if you're interested in learning more.



Conservation Stewardship Project:

Meadowside Vine Cutting
Sept. 23rd, 9:00 AM
South Wind Circle
Entrance

Seep Area Maintenance
Oct. 24th, 9:00 AM
Trotter Rd. Entrance

If you would like to sign up to receive email updates and our monthly newsletter, or if you want to request to stop receiving them, please send a brief email to

jclaffy@howardcountymd.gov

Check out the Howard County page for the Maryland Amphibian & Reptile Atlas (MARA) 2010-2014

<http://www.howardbirds.org/herpatlas/index-MARA.htm>

Changes

Field work of special interest to hikers includes the recent mowing of all the meadow trails, removal of multiple blockages along the section of the South Wind Trail parallel to Cricket Creek, and a 15-ton pile of soil partially obscuring the last few feet of the main entrance gravel road. Don't worry; we made sure you can get by easily. Finally, please be aware that we have added another part-time staff member. Sarah Causey comes to us from the Maryland Conservation Corps and has plenty of relevant trainings and experience. Welcome Sarah!

Interesting Link

The feature this month is a transcript of a fascinating discussion about US forests, forest pests, and forest health. It is a long read though....

<http://thedianerehmslow.org/shows/2014-07-21/us-forests-and-trees/transcript>

I hope to see you out in the MPEA,

Jeff



After last month's edition I thought it might be a good idea to explain what a Pipevine Swallowtail is. *Battus philenor* aka Pipevine Swallowtail is a butterfly! The adults eat nectar from a variety of flowers. Here, on a photo by Chris Evans from the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, the Pipevine Swallowtail is feeding on a *Phlox* sp.

Also shown is the food source for the caterpillars. It is named Pipevine (*Aristolochia macrophylla*). The photo is from the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station.



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

Middle Patuxent Environmental Area Conservation Stewardship Project 2014

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

One-time Volunteers are Welcome

Meet on the 4th Tuesday each month from 9–11:30 AM

Please Carpool!!!

September 23: MEADOWSIDE VINE CUTTING

South Wind Circle trailhead

Clegg's Meadow, our largest grassland, contains a riparian buffer planting site and a small Cedar glade that volunteers nurture and protect. The meadows are also surrounded by mature stands of native hardwood trees. Slowly these majestic meadow neighbors are succumbing to the ill effects of several different invasive vines. We'll navigate the meadow border and de-vine the mature trees. Weather permitting we'll provide a guest to talk about Monarch butterfly natural history and demonstrate butterfly capture, tagging and release methods.

October 28: SWEEPING THE SEEP

Trotter Road entrance

For many years volunteers have been removing unwanted plants and replacing them with native varieties in the spring seep portion of the Woodcock Habitat Management Area. Much more effort has gone into maintaining the deer-exclusion tree shelters and in keeping the planting sites weed-free. Today your work will aid in restoring this vital habitat that provides proper American woodcock feeding cover. During this event we'll continue with our prior volunteers' work by cleaning off, repairing, or removing shelters and by re-checking areas previously cleared of Multiflora rose, Royal empress tree, privet and other non-native invasive plants.

November 25: AUTUMN OLIVE

South Wind Circle trailhead

Autumn olive is an unwelcome remnant of the game farm that once existed in the environmental area. We will continue our efforts to rid the trail corridors of this woody invader and revisit a site we last worked six years past. Yearly we see less olive in the trail corridors, but plenty still remains.