

JUNE 2013



Think before you print!

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Hello MPEA Friends & Volunteers!

There have been virtually no work-related surprises lately. Everything has been rolling along according to expectations. This underlying element of predictability can be assuring and at the same time monotonous. Mother Nature mustn't believe in boredom though because she has been providing a few distractions to liven things up a bit: a nearby tornado scare, venomous spiders, an endangered species sighting, and even a close encounter with a skunk. But that is a story for another day. Have a Happy Summer Everybody!

Trails & Tribulations

Considering the weather over the past month our trails are in reasonably good shape. There were a fair number of very powerful storms in the region. Yet we've only found two trees that blew down across foot traffic areas. Several volunteers have been lightly pruning along the routes too which makes for a more straightforward hiking experience. One word of caution though, any trail segment along the river is currently very wet and muddy. Wear shoes you don't care about when you come out for a stroll. In the not-so-distant future you may have more company out on the trails. We were contacted by a person who wanted information on the MPEA South Wind Trail for the purpose of inclusion in a book they are writing. Of course we set the author up with all of the pertinent information but who knows how much will actually end up in print. The last time we were written about in a local hiking guide there really wasn't much of a change in visitor numbers.

Different odds and ends took place in June. An upsetting case of graffiti was discovered at a popular resting spot along the water. Luckily volunteers were quick to spot the mess and we were able to remove evidence of the crime promptly. Sadly we also had a battery stolen off of our trailer. With any luck we'll go the rest of the summer without similar incidents. The start of summer also signals the start of Wavyleaf basketgrass season. Staff has started our yearly search and spray mission against this unwanted invader. It is important that people learn to identify this plant because you may inadvertently take seeds home with you. If your pant leg touches the seed it will stick and go along for a ride.

Wildlife Sightings

Summer's not all bad news. There are plenty of good things to be finding or watching. And people have been doing just that! A couple of birdwatchers with an exceptional camera showed me pictures of what they believe to be a nesting pair of Kentucky warblers (*Geothlypis formosa*). Finding and photographing the diminutive creatures was no trivial task. Another fellow pointed out a Northern black widow (*Latrodectus variolus*) spider with its distinctive



Upcoming Conservation Stewardship Project Dates:

June 25th
Trotter Road

July
No Program

August
No Program

September 24th
South Wind Circle

All times are 9—11:30 AM

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>

Wildlife Sightings (cont'd)

black and red coloration. This is the same color scheme as the male Scarlet tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) which has also been spotted in the area recently. Rounding out the sightings is an especially exciting occurrence. An avid naturalist captured digital images of a state endangered species in the MPEA! The animal is called an Appalachian snaketail (*Ophiogomphus incurvatus*) and it is a type of Dragonfly. Here's a link to a general photo gallery, not from the MPEA sighting:

<http://www.pbase.com/rcm1840/clubtailsgenusophiogomphus>

Interesting Links

A volunteer with a fondness for Cut-leaf grapefern (*Botrychium dissectum*) shared the following article. Within it are references to the problem of invasive earthworms, so the 2nd link is about forest impacts of exotic worms.

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/wildlife/tes/ca-overview/docs/plant_Botrychium_dissectum-Cut_Leaf_Fern.pdf

<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/compass/2012/12/18/invasive-earthworms-no-joke/>

I hope to see you out in the MPEA,

Jeff



Northern black widow spider, Michigan State University, 2006



Kentucky Warbler, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Male Scarlet Tanager, Pierre Howard, Cobb County, GA



The Newsletter of the Middle
Patuxent Environmental Area

Howard County
Department of Recreation And Parks
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, MD 21046-1677

Jeff Claffy, Asst. Natural Resources Manager
Phone: 410.313.6209
E-mail: jclaffy@howardcountymd.gov

Cheryl Farfaras, Natural Resources Manager
Phone: 410.313.4726
E-mail: cfarfaras@howardcountymd.gov

Fax: 410.313.0409

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>

Middle Patuxent Environmental Area Conservation Stewardship Project

ONE-TIME VOLUNTEERS ARE WELCOME

No Experience Necessary

Please Carpool!

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

June 25th: BASKETGRASS AND BARBERRY

Trotter Road entrance

Non-native, invasive plants are a real threat to our ecosystems and our habitat restoration efforts. Dr. Vanessa Beauchamp, Assistant Professor of Biology, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Towson University will 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 will be spent dealing with our nemesis Japanese barberry.

July & August: NO PROGRAM

September 24th: TENACIOUS DE-VINING

South Wind Circle trailhead

Clegg's Meadow, our largest grassland, contains a riparian buffer planting site and a small Cedar glade that volunteers have spent many seasons nurturing and protecting. Additionally, the meadows are surrounded by mature stands of native hardwood trees. Slowly these majestic meadow neighbors are succumbing to the ill effects of invasive vines. We'll navigate the grassy edges in order to de-vine the mature trees. If the weather cooperates we'll include a guest who will talk about Monarch butterfly natural history and demonstrate butterfly capture, tagging and release methods.

October 22nd: SAVING 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 area weed-free. Decades ago this seep was rich with American woodcock activity. Today your work will aid in restoring this vital habitat that provides proper Timberdoodle feeding cover. At this event we'll continue with prior volunteers' work by cleaning off and repairing shelters and by re-checking areas previously cleared of Multiflora rose, Royal empress tree, privet, and other non-native, invasive plants.