

MARCH 2015

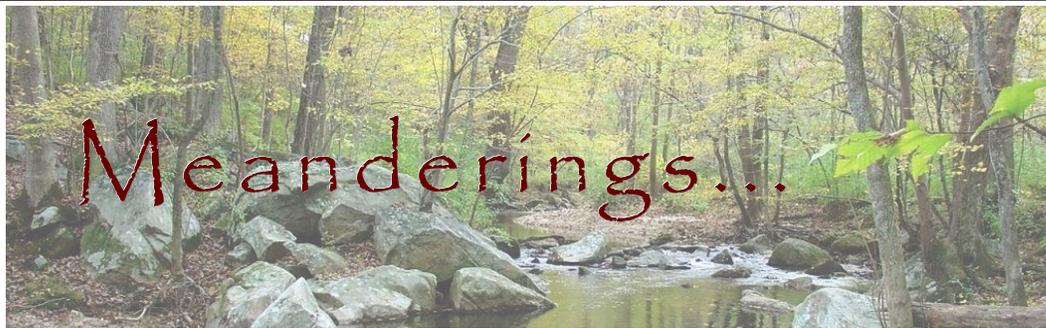


Think before you print!

This newsletter is optimized for online viewing. The appearance will change if printed.

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Hello MPEA Friends & Volunteers!

March was great. We certainly had a productive month and the stage has been set for an equally successful spring and summer. Several volunteer events transpired and two of these offerings were brand new experiences for the environmental area and our great volunteers. The icing on the cake is the fantastic news we have to pass along regarding a recent grant award. Do goats and woodcock make good neighbors?

Volunteer Events

Our joint volunteer program with the Master Gardeners began with a great start. The non-native, invasive plant presentation was well attended. Guests came from as far away as Cromwell Valley Park near Towson. The question and answer session highlighted the fact that property owners everywhere are fighting the same battles with invasive plants. A lively discussion amongst audience members took on a life of its own as opinions were expressed regarding the need for support of state legislation banning invasive plants. Coincidentally, the passing of similar legislation was announced in New York:

<http://www.recordonline.com/article/20150315/ENTERTAINMENTLIFE/150319676>

The first Conservation Stewardship Project event was cold. Volunteers worked under the possibility of snowfall which thankfully never occurred. Not much Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) was removed; mostly because the small first year basal rosettes have barely begun to sprout. Surely in the coming weeks and months much more will be available for removal. Time was spent planting native trees and shrubs instead. This workgroup will meet again on April 28th if you would like to stop by and learn more about Garlic mustard and how to remove it. For the May event we are planning to spend time planting plugs of Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) in order to benefit Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) butterflies. Our fingers are crossed for a good germination of the Butterflyweed seeds which are currently growing at Sharp's at Waterford Farm in western Howard County. The latest news is that the seeds were: planted, cold-stratified, and recently placed on the warming tables to start growing.

Springtime Fun

Twenty-four adventurous volunteers showed up to help plant trees onto snow covered ground and were rewarded by the snow melting before the planting even began! The plant materials were paid for by a grant from the Howard County Forest District Conservancy Board and they deserve many thanks for: selecting appropriate species, purchasing the plants, and assisting with the planting. This is the first time we have received this grant and we are very grateful for it. As a result, eighty-five trees and shrubs were installed with deer-proof shelters in an area previously cleared of invasives by Service-learning volunteers. One-hundred and one more trees remain unplanted and will be planted throughout the spring.



GreenFest is FREE and takes place on Saturday, April 18th
Stop by and visit our display!

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



Springtime Fun (cont'd)

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!

Logs & Goats & Birds

More than just volunteer events took place in March. Users of the Wildlife Loop Trail will notice that we are currently in the process of creating a new meadow area across from the outdoor classroom. Progress is moving in spurts; however, all of the hard work will be worth the effort. The end result should be similar to the other grassland areas in the vicinity of the entrance road. A few visitors have asked what will become of the downed wood from the clearing. Well, a fair bit of the locust wood is being set aside for trail improvement projects in the MPEA and also for use within the children's "Nature Space" activity area that is being built at the Robinson Nature Center.

At the end of the month, the MPEA took part in a unique celebration to kick-off the year's upcoming Weed Warrior volunteer activities and also to inform the public about the goat project. What goat project? In another first for us, Davey Rogner with the cooperation of the Middle Patuxent Environmental Foundation, received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. What is new is that a major portion of the grant monies goes towards a demonstration of using goats to clear invasive plants! The whole project is very exciting and it will be fun to demonstrate this methodology to our visitors.

March was also the month for witnessing the courtship displays of the American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) in the environmental area. The window of time during the year to observe this phenomenon is not very lengthy, so mark your calendars now for late February/early March 2016 (and then be prepared to make adjustments due to weather). According to Cheryl Farfaras, MPEA Manager, "This spring was one of our best on record for woodcock displaying activity." As many as 5 birds were visible displaying in the evening during the second week of March.

Interesting Link

The link this month involves a study looking at the support of conservation efforts by hunters and birdwatchers:

<http://conservationmagazine.org/2015/03/birders-and-hunters-could-be-partners-in-conservation/>

I hope to see you out in the MPEA,

Jeff



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

Save The Date!

Howard County
GreenFest

Saturday, April 18, 2015
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Howard Community College

Living With Wildlife
www.hcgreenfest.org

A colorful illustration of four animals: a raccoon, a rabbit, a fox, and a deer, standing on a grassy field under a blue sky.