

The Rookery



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Winter 2011

Come on Down! to the Second Annual Refuge Open House Saturday, December 10

After an extremely successful First Annual Open House last year, the staff and Friends agreed that there should be a Second Annual one this year. Plans include displays and activities that will be continuous from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. as well as a schedule of special walks, tours and other programs that were popular last year.

ALL DAY ACTIVITIES include a real coup to add to the festivities: Thanks to some "inside the FWS" work by Visitor Services Specialist Colby Hawkinson, this Open House will include the **2011 Federal Duck Stamp Art Exhibit** and the **Federal Junior Duck Stamp Art Exhibit**. These original paintings are always exquisitely beautiful, so the opportunity to view these masterpieces could be the only reason you need to visit the Refuge on December 10.

Another new all-day activity this year will be an **archery range (see page 4) for kids** as well as **art activities**. In addition, under a big tent in front of the lodge, partner organizations such as the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the Maryland DNR and Washington College's Center for

Birds of a feather flock together!
You're invited to explore Eastern Neck Island and parts of the National Refuge that are normally closed to the public



Wildlife Refuge OPEN HOUSE

Sat., December 10, 2011
9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge
1730 Eastern Neck Rd, Rock Hall MD 21661

*Bird walk begins at trail head. Nature walks start at Refuge Office.
Most walks average 1 to 1.5 hours in duration. Dress warmly!*

Join your guides from Friends of Eastern Neck, Ducks Unlimited, Kent Co. Bird Club, Center for Environment & Society at Washington College, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

9:00 AM - Tubby Cove & Boxes Point bird walk
10:30 AM - Cedar Point Wildlife Walk
11:00 AM - Green Tree Reservoir tour
11:30 AM to 12:30 PM - Music by Ben & friends
11:30 AM to 1:30 PM - Lunch under the big tent
1:30 PM - Shipyard Creek wildlife walk
2:30 PM - DU Impoundment / Cedar Pond tour

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Environment and Society will have **displays** showcasing their programs and, of course, the **bookstore will be open** for early holiday shopping.

ACTIVITIES WITH SPECIFIC SCHEDULED TIMES include a 9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Tubby Cove/Boxes Point **Bird Walk** led by expert birders Dan Small and Maren Gimpel. Meet at the Tubby Cove kiosk. For many visitors, a major draw is the **opportunity to tour areas on the Refuge that are not usually open to the public**. This year four such opportunities will be available: (1) **Cedar Point Wildlife Walk** (10:30 a.m. - 12 noon.) Join us for a walk

'behind the scenes' to the southernmost point of Eastern Neck Island. (2) **Green Tree Reservoir Tour** (11:00 a.m. - 12 noon) Eastern Neck has many seasonally flooded woodlands created by Green Tree Reservoirs (aka: 'GTRs'). Ducks Unlimited staff will guide visitors on this walk. (3) **Shipyard Creek Wildlife Walk** (1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.) This walk represents another special opportunity to experience wildlife in areas of the Refuge that are normally not open to the public.
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President's Message**Winter 2011****HELP WANTED!**

More volunteers needed to staff the Friends bookstore
and the front desk at the Lodge!

Welcome visitors! Answer questions about the Refuge (with backup by FWS staff members)! Sell merchandise! Answer the telephone! You can sign up for whatever time you can afford to volunteer, be it one day a week, or half-a-day a week, or a day every other week, or one day a month, etc. It's easy and fun, and it's how Friends volunteers really help the Refuge every day. If you have questions, give me (Gren Whitman) a call at 410-639-7551. If you want to volunteer, call Leann Miller at 410-639-7760. If you live in Kent County, or Queen Anne's County, or anywhere else locally, we're waiting to hear from you!

On another topic: With respect to two commercial oyster leases that might have negatively affected wintering waterfowl, FOEN, the FWS, and nearby landowners recently convinced the Maryland DNR and a local waterman not to conduct oystering activities in an area preferred by Tundra swans and other waterfowl. We thank DNR and the waterman for accommodating the birds and the Refuge.

If you love our Refuge ... Considering the current impasse in Congress over national debt, budgeting, taxes and spending -- the next time you enjoy Eastern Neck NWR, keep in mind that the bridge, the roads, the boardwalks, the trails, the overlooks and the Lodge are built and maintained with federal tax dollars. Consider also that the Refuge is staffed by federal employees and is part of a larger federal administrative unit, the Chesapeake Marshlands Complex. Consider finally that too many in Congress — including the congressman whose district includes Eastern Neck NWR — want to reduce or eliminate spending for such places as our Refuge, and other refuges around the country. Note: This is a non-partisan educational message for FOEN members and the general public.


OUR MISSION

The mission of the Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc. is to provide support to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge through educational outreach programs and volunteer service on the refuge, including the operation of the refuge bookstore.

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Friends of Eastern Neck

Memberships

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

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and Kay Snelson:

Bookstore

REFUGE UPDATE

What's Happening on *Your* Refuge by Colby Hawkinson, Visitor Services Specialist

Kent County Fourth Graders visit Eastern Neck for a Day of Hands-on Science

Fourth grade students from Kent County School District experienced field science firsthand in a variety of settings at Eastern Neck in September. A total of 135 students and 11 teachers from elementary schools in Rock Hall, Worton, Millington, Galena and Chestertown worked at field science stations which included botany and production of seeds (run by University of Maryland Extension Service,) agriculture and 'Farm to Fork' (also by the Extension Service,) soil science (run by the Kent Soil Conservation District,) fisheries (run by Maryland DNR) and forestry (run by Eastern Neck NWR.) The fourth graders thoroughly enjoyed getting outside and learning through hands-on experience.

Colby's forestry station started with an exploration of the new tree buffer strips that have been planted this year in the cooperative agricultural program fields near the Ingheside area (see page 7). Kids were able to understand that trees not only help organisms living on Eastern Neck but also help the Chesapeake Bay and its inhabitants by reducing sediment and agricultural runoff from the island. Students then worked in teams to examine specific tree parts under magnification using jeweler's loupes. They made detailed scientific drawings of tree specimens they had examined through the loupes. Then they examined a cross-section cut of a large stump which came from one of the many trees downed during Hurricane Irene. The stump allowed students to examine the various elements of tree anatomy that had been discussed. It also gave them a chance to count the rings of the stump to estimate the tree's age. This led to a discussion of how math is used in careers such as forestry.

The forestry station also gave Colby a chance to introduce the students to Eastern Neck NWR, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the entire National Wildlife Refuge System. During this activity, the students enjoyed locating Eastern Neck NWR among the more than 550 National Wildlife Refuges on a map. They also enjoyed hearing about the great many career options available within the USFWS. The kids were amazed to learn that careers with the USFWS include wildlife biologists, website managers, pilots, foresters, maintenance workers, law enforcement officers and more. They were equally amazed that those careers could give them opportunities to work in all 50 states and beyond.



Refuge Shoreline Cleanup Sees Great Turnout, Excellent Results.

On Sunday, October 23 Eastern Neck NWR held its fall Shoreline Cleanup in partnership with the Friends of Eastern Neck and the Center for Environment and Society at Washington College. Included in the 29 volunteers were a local Webelos Scout Pack, members of the Washington College Student Environmental Alliance, and members of the Washington College Baseball team (a big help!). A full two miles of Refuge shoreline was cleaned up, yielding 22 bags of garbage, four large tires and a considerable amount of wood. Eastern Neck staff greatly appreciates this help and thanks the Recycling and Solid Waste Division of the Kent County Public Works for allowing the refuge to dispose of all of this debris for free.



Scouts and their leaders (above and left) worked with Washington College students (below) to rid the Refuge of lots of trash.



(Open House - Continued from page 1)


(4) *DU Impoundment/Cedar Pond Tour* (2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.) Come along for a walk with Ducks Unlimited staff to inspect and learn about water control structures on the refuge that help create optimal wildlife habitat.

****New this year: In order to keep the tour groups at optimal size, tickets will be required for these four walks. The tickets are free and will be available at the Refuge Check-in booth in the tent in front of the lodge.****

And we're not done yet! The Friends will offer a *free lunch* in the tent to all attendees from

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Also beginning at 11:30 a.m., ***Ben Bennington and his musical group*** will play for about an hour in the lodge. This group played last year and was so well received that they were asked to come back.

Of course, you can also do what you normally do when you come to the Refuge -- walk the trails or watch the Tundra swans (yes, they're back!), the Canada geese in the fields or myriad duck species on the water.

It should be a wonderful day (we'll be doing all of this rain or shine), so come on down (dress warm) and join the good times! 



Archery for Kids

On Saturday, October 8th, kids attending the Rock Hall Parks and Recreation Fall Harvest Party enjoyed learning to shoot a bow and arrow under Colby's instruction at the archery activity hosted by Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge. A total of 62 kids learned how to safely hold, aim and release arrows from a compound bow at an Olympic-style target in a modified archery range. Colby is looking forward to providing archery opportunities at future events including at the Refuge Open House on Saturday, December 10.




Butterfly Garden Update

Kingstown Farm, Home & Garden Donates Native Plants to ENNWR

Garden Crew member Alice Macnow reports: Kingstown Farm, Home & Garden center has donated native plants to Eastern Neck's butterfly garden. Cindy King, in charge of Kingstown's horticulture area, wanted to plant more evergreens in place of the plants in that area to give birds shelter from hawks and winter weather.

Cindy offered the plants to Peggy Christie, one of the volunteers at our garden. After some phone calls to other volunteers, three gardeners went out on Saturday, November 19 to plant. The truckload of plants included New York ironweed, asters, monarda, swamp milkweed, rudbeckia, purple coneflowers, oat grass and switchgrasses. All were neatly dug, clipped down, labeled and placed in boxes when the volunteers arrived to pick them up.

The day was perfect: it had rained a couple of days before, so the ground was moist and soft, but not too wet. As the day progressed, it even warmed up enough for us to start pulling layers of clothing off. The plants were placed alongside others of their species wherever possible to create larger swaths of similar plants. This makes it easier for the butterflies to find their nectar or host plants for their larvae. The butterfly garden has been almost totally replanted this year owing to weeds that could not be removed, so it was fortunate that additional plants were donated. We are grateful to Kingstown for helping us revive the garden, which is a favorite spot for butterflies, birds and human visitors. 

FRIENDS' DOINGS

The Bookstore has New Treats for the Holidays

Bookstore manager Jackie Cicconi has outdone herself once more in ordering items for holiday giving. A few have a definite holiday feel, but of course most are just great additions to our offerings of year-round goodies.



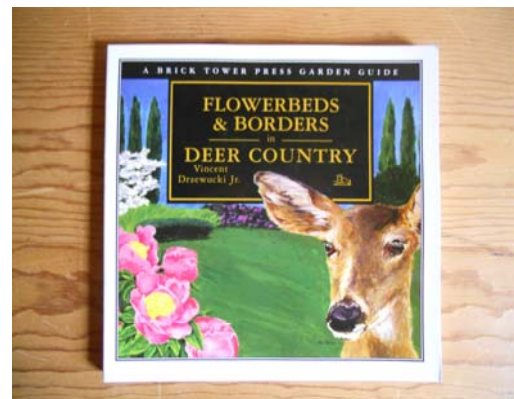
Our brush art ornaments (\$7.95) have been popular for several years now, and the cardinal and blue jay are new. But look! They have “grown-up” friends who are already sitting on their own branches. (\$10.95)



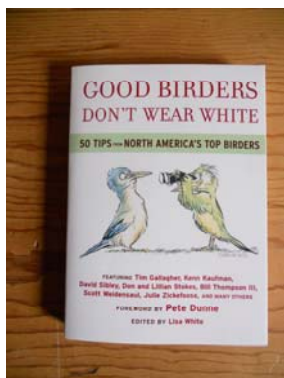
This unusual paperlike ornament (above, \$1.85) can have two lives: Once it's off your tree, it can be planted in soil and, with watering, will bloom into wildflowers. What a fun and lasting gift!



Socks are always bestsellers this time of year (what to get that someone who has everything), and this season we've added a cardinal/holly-themed pair (still only \$7.95).



Wow! Do I need this book! If deer use your garden as their personal smorgasbord, this book can tell you how to foil them (\$9.95).



Another new and useful book, especially if you have birder friends, is “Good Birders Don't Wear White” (far left). The title may be somewhat humorous, but this little book is full of excellent tips from top birders around the country. (\$8.95)



And although we've had playing cards for some time, this new batch (left) featuring North American birds has stunning photos. (\$4.50)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Deer Management on Eastern Neck NWR

by Matt Whitbeck

Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, Chesapeake Marshlands NWR



Most people familiar with Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge know that the refuge hosts a deer hunt every year, but many people may not know why it is done. The hunt is conducted for many reasons, but primarily as a habitat management tool and to

promote public support for conservation through wildlife-dependent recreation.

When Europeans first arrived in Maryland, white-tailed deer numbers were regulated by predators such as the grey wolf and cougar, as well as by Native American hunters. Deer numbers crashed as Europeans cleared forests for agriculture and exerted excessive hunting pressure on remaining deer populations. By the early 20th century, white-tailed deer were found in only a few remote sections of Maryland. Throughout the century, the recovery of habitat coupled with deer stocking activities and cautious harvest regulation restored populations throughout the State. By the mid-1980s, the consequences of a growing deer population were becoming evident. Deer numbers were surpassing carrying capacity, both biological and cultural, as damage to forested habitats and agriculture were becoming apparent. The goal of most modern wildlife managers is to maintain the persistence and well-being of white-tailed deer, while ensuring they are not negatively impacting the biological integrity of the landscape.


With the extirpation of natural predators such as grey wolf and cougar, hunting is needed to keep overabundant deer populations from negatively impacting forest habitats. White-tailed deer, being keystone herbivores in eastern forests, can have a dramatic impact on forest composition and structure, and thus an indirect impact on forest wildlife.

In forests with high deer densities, tree species favored by deer, such as oaks, do not regenerate and less palatable species, such as beech and black cherry, flourish. Numerous studies have documented the influence excessive deer populations can have on which tree species are recruiting into forested habitats. Dramatic shifts in tree composition can be expected. Deer browse can have immediate impacts on the structure of forests. At high densities, deer can decimate shrubs and young trees. Many songbirds depend on this understory structure for nesting and foraging habitat. Songbirds, such as worm-eating

warblers and wood thrush, can suffer when excessive deer browse reduce the quality of their habitat.

Agriculture fields are one of the dominant habitats on Eastern Neck NWR. These fields are planted to provide supplemental food sources for migratory waterfowl, primarily Atlantic Population Canada geese. If overabundant, deer herds can reduce the value of these crops to waterfowl and threaten the economic viability of the program. Hunting is one of the key tools available to resource managers to ensure that deer depredation on crops does not become problematic.

In addition to the habitat benefits of controlling deer numbers on Eastern Neck, the benefits of wildlife-dependent recreation cannot be downplayed. The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, which taxes ammunition and firearms used in hunting, has generated over 2 billion dollars in the last 50 years to support wildlife restoration work. Hunters have been some of the most outspoken supporters of conservation in North America. Youth hunts are a big component of the Eastern Neck hunt program. These youth hunts are designed specifically to encourage the recruitment of young hunters into the ranks of wildlife conservationists.

Looking back at the decline and rebound of deer populations over time, it is clear that we need a balanced approach to deer management. Our goal is to balance healthy deer herds with the biological integrity of refuge habitats. Aldo Leopold states it eloquently: "Conservation is a state of health in the land. The land consists of soil, water, plants, and animals, but health is more than a sufficiency of these components. It is a state of vigorous self-renewal in each of them, and in all collectively. Such collective functioning of interdependent parts for the maintenance of the whole is characteristic of an organism. In this sense, land is an organism, and conservation deals with its functional integrity, or health." 



Editor's note: The seven hunt days in October and November this year resulted in a take of 87 deer. This is about average for Eastern Neck and will go a long way to help the goal of herd management.

Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge Field Habitat Management by Cindy Beemiller, Refuge Manager

National Wildlife Refuges are home to a variety of animals and plants. Refuges across the country *manage* forested habitat, ponds, lakes, vernal pools, grasslands, meadows, mountain ranges, river systems and more. Matt's article about deer management (*see page 6*) details just one means of managing for habitat maintenance. Eastern Neck NWR manages various types of habitat for a variety of wildlife species; one of the most visible is the emphasis on our variety of *field types*. The Refuge not only manages the land but also the effects that can have on the surrounding Chesapeake Bay and Chester River.



Eastern Neck hosts 42 fields of various sizes. Over the past few years we have begun to plant some fields with trees to provide habitat for forest-dwelling birds and to decrease water and nutrient runoff into the Bay. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) calls for the Refuge to “establish a minimum 330 foot forested buffer around the Refuge’s shoreline and tidal marshes to promote riparian habitat for forested birds, bald eagles and other raptors, and other wildlife and to provide other resource values, such as for water quality and marsh protection.” Therefore, the field south of the Ingleside Recreation parking lot was planted earlier this year with sycamore, cherry, pine and other tree species. Newly planted areas have trees, tall grasses and fox tail. To the casual observer it looks fallow for a year or two.

Other fields are being planted completely in trees. Field 1, along Boxes Point trail, is scheduled to be planted in trees next calendar year. However, Boxes Point trail is a road bed surrounded by soggy soils. The inundation of water into the soil would be a problem for any sycamore, pine or other tree we typically plant. The field will be monitored for soil consistency before finalizing the plantings. Fields 13 and 14 -- located away from any public access between the Butterfly/Bayview Trail and Ingleside Road -- had some small success with newly planted trees. These two fields will be replanted in the next calendar year.

Forest habitat is important for migrating and nesting song birds. As stated in the Refuge CCP, “these include wood thrush, eastern wood peewee, northern flicker, and scarlet tanager. Many more species seek shelter or forage on the Refuge during migration.” The CCP calls for a 145.3 acre increase in forest habitat and a 145 acre decrease in agricultural fields.

Besides planting forest and forest buffers, the Refuge uses agriculture to support wildlife. Corn and clover are used to feed wintering waterfowl. Soy and clover reduce the use of chemical fertilizers by fixing, or in this case adding, nitrogen to the soil. Nitrogen fixing is accomplished by the roots and soil microorganisms. The microorganism helps the plant secure food from the soil. The plant secures nitrogen from the atmosphere for the microorganisms. The plant’s nitrogen is added to the soil when the plant dies or is mulched back into the soil.

The fields around the bunkhouse (former headquarters building) are usually burned to maintain a grassland habitat. In the past year the Refuge staff mowed, as burning was continually delayed due to weather and staffing issues. Grasslands are habitat for butterflies, moths, damselflies, dragonflies and beetles. Visitors searching and counting for butterflies and moths recorded 26 species and over 1000 individuals in one visit. Grasslands are also maintained for visitors to have a larger view of Maryland’s greatest natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay. Grasslands are habitat for a variety of bird species. Maryland is home to nine grassland bird species such as the meadow lark and bobolink.

Eastern Neck joins 555 National Wildlife Refuges protecting over 150 million acres for the benefit of wildlife and the American people. Every piece, small or large, contributes to the network of lands for 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species and 200 species of fish. Refuges are visited by 46 million people each year (www.fws.gov). I encourage you to visit...and visit often.



THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

Once again we are listing the names of members who contributed \$100 or more to the Friends of Eastern Neck in the past six months. In these tough times, we continue to be amazed at their generosity.

And don't forget that we're grateful to all Friends members for continuing to support us and our work at the Refuge. You're *all* very special to us!

Tundra Swan

George and Jean Bankey
Robert K. Stetson Family
Terence T. Finn

Blue Heron

Bob and Bonnie Ford Joe Bodell
Jane Nitsche and Gerry Cohee
Gerry Nitsche and Barry Serviente

Eagle Society

Jim and Clara Daining Don and Jolene L'Tainen
Ann F. Miller Bob and Marilyn Parks
Gren Whitman and Janice Plotczyk
Susan Reinsch Robert Steinwurtzel
Daniel E. Jones, Sr.

Friends of Eastern
Neck

Memberships

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

***The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.
P.O. Box 450
Rock Hall, MD 21661***