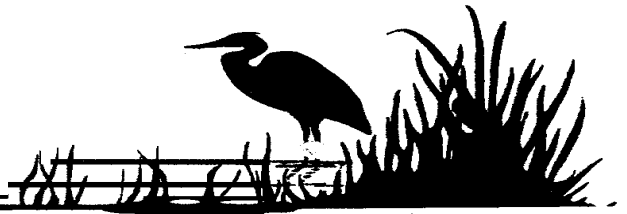


The Rookery



Published Quarterly by The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

*This year celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Friends of Eastern Neck
and
The 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge!*



The Volunteer Spirit

by

Colby Hawkinson, Visitor Services Specialist

Volunteers help form the foundation of every National Wildlife Refuge. That is especially true at Eastern Neck NWR: Without your help, the Refuge would not be able to hold the special events and perform the vital conservation functions that it does. Even with the very best of volunteers, every Refuge evolves and there are times when more volunteers are needed to join in the effort. This is currently the case at Eastern Neck.

I greatly appreciated your help over the past year with the effort to gain visibility for the Refuge among potential new volunteers as well as potential visitors. This effort has included advertisements in local papers, presentations for other organizations in the area, and the volunteer orientation night that was held last spring. The effort to build the ranks of volunteers has also been made via outreach booths at community events, including the Rock Hall Expo, WCTR Party By the Bay, Rock Hall FallFest, and the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition and Sale. I would like to personally thank the following volunteers, without whose help the booths would not have been possible: Carol DeGennaro, Jolene and Don

L'Tainen, Phil Cicconi, Marie Beasley, Ed Hatfield, George Bankey, Howard Bauer, JR Bauer, Dave Sorflaten, Ruth Menefee, Amanda Swaller, Terry Willis and Dave Gauntt. They helped the Refuge contact 544 people, (including 163 children, the next generation of conservationists!!)

The effort to attract new volunteers for all areas of need at Eastern Neck will continue, with added focus on the help that is needed at the front desk in the Lodge and in the Butterfly Garden. I believe that staffing the front desk is among the most important functions performed at Eastern Neck. Front desk volunteers provide the 'face' of the Refuge to the majority of Refuge visitors, the human link that is vital to a good visitor experience. I sincerely thank each of you who donate your time and energy at the front desk. The same goes for all who help keep our BayScape Butterfly garden in great shape. The garden is one of the crown jewels here at the Refuge, unique in its capacity to provide visitors with a nature experience that is highly "up close and personal." I admire the efforts of each of you who continually work in it, regardless of the weather and temperature. *(Continued on page 4)*

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5 *Friends' Doings* 6 *President's Annual Report* 7 *ENNR Schedule of Events* 8 *New Member Form***

President's Message**Spring 2012**

Friends:

"Rookery" readers with long memories will recall that several years ago, an intact and reasonably sound "gunning skiff" was rescued from a pole shed on the Refuge. Pete Leshner, curator of collections at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, inspected it and said it was probably built in the 1940s or 50s "for use in shallow, protected waters ... a marsh boat." After its discovery, the skiff was gently moved by then-Refuge Manager Jonathan Priday and has been stored in a dry shed since.

FOEN board member Melissa Baile and long-time Refuge volunteer Terry Willis are spearheading an exciting project to put this historic gunning skiff on display for Refuge visitors. Melissa and Terry have engaged a local builder to design and build a "display structure" for the skiff to be located next to the Refuge headquarters, pending funding approval by the board. The structure will protect the skiff from weather and sunlight and allow visitors to view it closely. Signage and literature will complete this local-history project.

If you're interested in helping with this project, if you have an idea you want to share, or if you want to make a tax-deductible contribution in support of it, please get in touch with me at grenwhitman@verizon.net. It could be an exciting addition to the Refuge experience!




The skiff as it was found in 2008.

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.

The Rookery

*Published Quarterly By
The Friends of Eastern Neck,
Inc.*

www.friendsofeasternneck.org

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410-639-7056

Friends of Eastern Neck

Memberships

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500**Board of Directors****Officers:**

Gren Whitman: President
Phil Cicconi: Vice President
Carol DeGennaro: Secretary
Leann Miller: Treasurer

Members:

Melissa Baile
Lew Halin
Ed Hatfield
Bob Parks
Meg Parry

Committee Chairs

Gren Whitman: Membership

Jackie Cicconi
and Kay Snelson:
Bookstore



REFUGE UPDATE

What's Happening on Your Refuge by Cindy Beemiller, Refuge Manager


- Over the past several months, the power company completed one of my favorite projects: removing electrical lines and poles from the Refuge. The lines are now underground. The only remaining poles carry the telephone line along the paved road. Electrical lines pose a hazard to flying birds and disrupt the natural beauty of the land, and trees falling onto power lines pose a safety hazard to visitors, staff and volunteers.
- The island frequently struggles with coastline erosion. Refuge staff and volunteers installed bales of straw and several trees to collect sediment to halt erosion along Cedar Point Road as a temporary fix. We are researching opportunities and funding to install a living shoreline as a long-term resolution. We appreciate the offer of assistance from the Friends for volunteer time and other resources when the project comes to fruition.
- In the past few years we have greatly reduced the number of invasive plants on the island. Blackwater NWR contributed time and money to Eastern Neck in February to plant native trees in our most successful areas. The crew of biologists came up from Cambridge and planted trees along Cedar Point Road. Native trees are planted to shade out any new invasive plants recruited to the area through seed dispersal. Blackwater staff and a volunteer not only planted the trees but Blackwater Refuge paid \$2,500 for the project!
- Another method used to combat invasive plants is the use of weevils as a biological control. Weevils were introduced on Eastern Neck a few years ago to control the invasive mile-a-minute weed. As the name suggests, mile-a-minute can grow rather quickly, covering everything in its path from shrubs to tall trees. Weevils eat and burrow into the stem of the mile-a-minute vine, stunting the plant's growth. Blackwater continues to monitor the weevils and their progress.
- Prescribed fire is a tool used to enhance plant growth, clear excessive amounts of fuel from plant matter and combat invasive plants such as *Phragmites australis* (phrag), a common tall reed growing in marshes along the east coast. Blackwater's fire crew conducted a prescribed burn along Bogles Wharf Road as a part of the regimen to control the phrag. The ground plant matter (fuel) was somewhat green and wet, making the fire a stubborn one to keep going. The fire did burn the marsh but would extinguish itself upon reaching the phrag. We will continue to work with the fire crew to administer fire at the best times to burn up stands of phrag and open the area for native species.
- Terry Willis, a long time Refuge volunteer, generously donated an observation platform for the waterfowl survey crew to use for Hail Creek. This survey has been conducted by volunteers for about 18 years. The long-term data provides the Refuge with waterfowl trends over time. In the future, the Refuge is looking to have non-harvestable oyster reefs and harvested oyster reefs. Although oysters are great for the bay and we are certain there are no to little impacts to wildlife such as waterfowl from active harvesting of oyster reefs, the survey allows us to monitor with greater certainty the impacts, if any, on wildlife and then to adjust the reef project as needed.

Things To Come

- The Hail Cove restoration project continues to evolve. The shoreline and the arc of stone that extends the shoreline and offers protection to Hail Cove has worked well to add sand and sediment to the shore. Some beach plants have taken to the site and continue to flourish. The next phase is to add an oyster reef to the area for increased ecological diversity. Oysters filter water, increasing water quality and clarity. The reef can provide habitat for fin fish and other aquatic species.
- By this summer, we should have in place a new sign adjacent to the Tundra Swan parking area that will act as a guide to visitors on Refuge regulations – what they can (trail walking, nature study, photography, etc.) and cannot (hunting, camping, etc.) do.
- Blackwater staff are reviewing applications for the Eastern Neck summer technician for the Invasive Species Program, a seasonal position EN hosts every year. Blackwater runs the Invasive Species Program as part of the biology program. They manage all the paperwork, train the intern and fund the position out of their Invasive Species program monies.
- The Friends of Eastern Neck donated two traffic counters to the Refuge. The staff will install the counters by the end of February. They will give us key information on how many visitors we have during different seasons and will delineate between visitors who only go to Bogles Wharf and those who venture further onto the Refuge.
- As always, we are looking forward to the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in April. We hope to see you there!

(Volunteer Spirit - Continued from page 1)

I think that your enthusiasm as Eastern Neck volunteers and the many great projects you are involved with are the true 'selling points' for potential new volunteers. Each of you has the ability to be a subtle yet highly effective ambassador for the Refuge. If you know someone in the community who might like to lend a hand, invite them to come to the Refuge with you. Share with them some of your photos or favorite stories from your volunteer efforts over the years. Encourage these folks to attend a Refuge event so they may see for themselves the human spirit that makes Eastern Neck a great place to be involved. It is a great spirit indeed, and I look forward to working with you to welcome new volunteers on board.

(Colby can be reached at the office on the Refuge at 410-639-7056, Ext. 222.) 



George Bankey and summer intern Amanda Swaller volunteered at last year's FallFest information booth.

Open House has Something for Everybody

The second annual Open House, held on December 10 was, by all accounts, another successful experience for the approximately 200 people who attended and took advantage of the activities offered by Refuge staff and volunteers. The "behind the scenes" walks on usually nonpublic areas of the Refuge were booked to capacity, the archery area was always in use, the Duck Stamp exhibit was marveled over and the food was excellent. Planning is already underway for the Third Open House in December, when we'll also be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Refuge. I think a cake may be in order!



Blackwater's big white tent was perfect for the occasion.



Archery had an appeal for all ages.



Federal Duck Stamp art was stunning!



Everyone enjoyed the free lunch (courtesy of the Friends) supplied by the kitchens of Washington College.

FRIENDS' DOINGS

Finally -- an ENNWR Hoodie!

Everybody has a hoodie. They're popular with kids and adults alike and they're practical, too, for casual wear in Maryland's unpredictable weather. Bookstore manager Jackie Cicconi and I met with our good friends at BayCraft, the local supplier of all things wearable, and de-



signed our first. At this point we've only stocked adult unisex large and x-large sizes, but those usually fit most people as the top "layer" of winter outerwear. As you can see, they're a wonderful royal blue with our own osprey logo -- so cool! (\$32.95)



FRIENDS BOARD LOSES "BUSY" MEMBER

The members of your board of directors said farewell to **Bob Kramer** in January, whose busy schedule just couldn't accommodate our monthly board meetings. Bob has been on the board for six years and has acted as secretary for the past three years. We will miss his insights into the workings of the organization but, lucky for us, he will still be volunteering at the Lodge front desk at least once a month. We thank him sincerely and heartily for all his efforts on behalf of the Friends. Good luck, Bob!

TREASURER'S SUMMARY REPORT - 2011

The gross income of the Friends of Eastern Neck for 2011 was almost \$4000 less than for 2010 (down to \$27,496 from 2010's \$31,467). More than 70% of this amount was due to fewer bookstore sales, which probably suffered because of lots of inclement weather as well as the still shaky economy. Income from dues was down \$1661, from \$11,116 in 2010 to \$9,455. The remaining \$1700 came from donations.

However, the Board of Directors did not approve much spending in 2011 either. It was fortunate that the contract with CES could be extended through the end of the year, so no money had to be allocated for that project. We spent only \$2500 on Refuge projects (for benches in front of the Lodge, fishing derby and open house food and two traffic counters) plus more than \$1675 on the BayScape Butterfly Garden. With reserves on hand of about \$25,000, we are looking to spend a good portion of that on Refuge projects this year. Cindy has a list of ideas for us and we are considering at least one major project -- see Gren's message on page 2. You'll be hearing about these activities as the year progresses. We thank you for continuing to support us. We couldn't do anything without your help!

-- Leann Miller,



Don't forget to visit our website at www.friendsofeasternneck.org.

And also don't forget that we'll send you *The Rookery* through cyberspace (in .pdf format) if you want to save the Friends a little paper and postage. Just send an email to wkrl@verizon.net with the subject "Rookery" and tell me that you would like to have the newsletter sent to your email address rather than in hard copy through the mail. I'll add you to the "Rookery group" and you'll get your copy in your Inbox instead of your mailbox.

Leann

Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.
ANNUAL REPORT, DECEMBER 31, 2011
 by Gren Whitman, President

OVERALL

The Friends of Eastern Neck's principal activities during 2011 closely replicated those of recent years by supporting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as it manages the Refuge, engaging in hands-on volunteer activities, and funding specific projects and activities. As usual, the greatest portion of time and energies of FOEN volunteers went into the Refuge Bookstore operation, FOEN's major source of funds to support the Refuge (augmented by dues and gifts). In addition, and in partnership with FWS and Washington College's Center for Environment and Society (CES), FOEN helped to plan, coordinate, and fund the second annual Open House for the Refuge.

IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS

Approximately 40 local volunteers staffed the Bookstore in the Headquarters Lodge, serving as the Refuge's principal contact point by greeting visitors and answering phones. These loyal volunteers were critical to the Refuge and FOEN --- without them, no one would be available to greet and orient visitors, the phone would be answered by a recording, and there would be no income from the Bookstore.

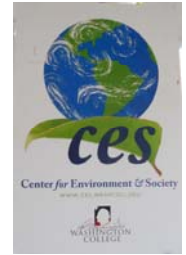
In addition to continuing its grant to CES, FOEN's major expenditures were to purchase two benches for the Lodge (from a local supplier, Stolzhus in Kingstown); to furnish hot dogs, soda, ice, snacks and night crawlers for the Fishing Derby; to lease the office copier; to print and mail our quarterly newsletter; to buy plants and supplies for the BayScape Garden; and to purchase two computerized vehicle counters (in process of being installed at this writing).



Other significant volunteer activities on the island included helping the FWS conduct its annual Fishing Derby, with 84 local kids participating; conducting weekly waterfowl counts October- through April; and helping FWS with mowing and weeding. A FOEN board member delivered "rack cards" with information about the Refuge and Refuge activities to information booths, B&B's, businesses, and other locations in Kent County to increase public awareness about the Refuge. Along with the FWS and local landowners, FOEN contested a bottom lease that would have put an oystering operation in the middle of a favorite spot for wintering waterfowl proximate to the Refuge; the Maryland Department of Natural Resources helped work out a compromise plan.

CES, WASHINGTON COLLEGE

The contract between FOEN and CES was extended through December so that we could continue our second year of partnership outreach and educational activities. In general, the contract provided for liaison between FWS, FOEN and the larger Washington College community. Principally, CES continued to organize events designed to attract visitors and promote the three-party partnership. For the year, CES organized and conducted a Presidents Day bird walk guided by Wayne Bell, Walter Ellison, and Nancy Martin with 43 participants; a nature photography workshop on March 30 conducted by the college's Brian Palmer, capped at 18 participants (with a meal); shoreline cleanups in April (12 participants) and October (33 participants); what's become our traditional "Summer Solstice Paddle" on June 21 (15 participants); a "Full Moon Paddle" in October (cancelled by weather); a Downrigging Weekend outreach table (also cancelled by weather); and a talk at Washington College on "America's Wildest Refuge," with 75 attendees and an Arctic NWR 50th Anniversary cake. CES also helped plan and participated in the second annual Open House (event banners and other PR materials, a 14-passenger van, catered food, and a FOEN/CES display table). CES designed and printed posters for each event on the Refuge; created a FOEN membership email list; and submitted calendar listings and press releases. Finally, to help boost FOEN into the 21st century, CES contracted with a webmaster to develop our Web page and get it up and running. You can get basic information about FOEN and the Refuge at www.friendsofeasternneck.org.



SECOND ANNUAL ENNWR OPEN HOUSE

The Refuge's second Open House was on December 10, boosted greatly by cooperative weather --- sunny, mild, with little wind. Early in the planning process, we decided not to mess with success, so the day was much like our first event in 2010, with some pleasant changes. Repeated were all the walks in areas of the island usually off-limits to the public: guided walks to Cedar Point and Hail and Shipyard creeks; a tour of several Green Tree reservoirs; and an early-morning bird walk. (A spectacular massing of waterfowl on Hail Creek rewarded afternoon walkers.) Again, Friends member Ben Bennington and his musical group entertained Open House visitors during lunch, and, speaking of lunch,

(Continued on page 7)

Annual Report (Continued from page 6)

a free one was provided by the Friends and catered by Washington College. New Open House features included an archery range for all ages, an exhibit of Federal waterfowl duck stamp art (award-winning paintings by adults and children); and several new booths, including the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, that joined booths by Ducks Unlimited, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the DNR, Master Gardeners (and the BayScape Garden), and CES. Rock Hall's volunteer fire department had an EMT on duty all day. Almost 200 people attended this event, sure to be repeated in 2012.



SUMMARY OF FWS ACTIVITIES

In April, the FWS conducted its annual pot-luck dinner to honor and recognize its many Refuge volunteers. Staff continuity was achieved by having the same three productive staff members at the Refuge for the entire year: Cindy Beemiller (Refuge Manager); Colby Hawkinson (Visitor Services Specialist); and Jon Beck (Maintenance Worker), plus significant support from FWS staff from Blackwater NWR, including Suzanne Baird, manager of the Chesapeake Marshlands Complex. Jon and his family now occupy the renovated "farmhouse" on the Refuge. Reconstruction of the Bayview Observation platform was completed. The septic system for the intern house adjacent to the BayScape Garden was repaired, and the garden was the happy recipient of a donated Purple Martin nesting house. Hurricane Irene caused considerable damage and required a large amount of cleanup and "logging," as well as trail repairs and maintenance. The annual deer and turkey hunts were conducted in the spring and fall, and Black Duck research continued.



Ospreys are due back at the Refuge mid-March -- a sure sign of Spring!

2012 ENNWR Events Calendar

Volunteer help is needed for all listings in bold. For more information on any of the events listed here, you can contact Colby at 410-639-7056 or colby_hawkinson@fws.gov

- March 3 Rock Hall Expo Outreach Booth --10:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Rock Hall Fire Company**
- March 17 Refuge System Anniversary -- An interpretive program about the refuge system. 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Lodge
- March 31 Kent County Parks & Recreation Spring Festival -- Eastern Neck will offer youth archery from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. at Worton County Park.
- March 31 Owl Prowl -- from 7:00 pm until 9:00 pm. Meet at the Lodge Dress for weather and bring a flashlight.
- April 7 Rock Hall Parks & Recreation Easter Egg Hunt -- Eastern Neck will offer youth archery
- April 14 Spring Shoreline Cleanup -- 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Meet at the Lodge**
- April 21 Earth Day Beginner's Bird Walk -- 8:00 am to 12:00 noon. Meet at the Tubby Cove Boardwalk.
- April 25 *Volunteer Appreciation Dinner -- 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Your invitation will be in the mail!*
- April 28 & May 5 Youth Turkey Hunt -- Refuge (except access to Bogles Wharf) will be closed until noon on these two days
- May 12 IMBD at the National Aquarium in Baltimore -- If you can help at this outreach booth, call Colby.**
- May 19 Volunteer Roundtable Lunch -- people interested in volunteering can come and meet current refuge volunteers, 11:00 am until 1:00 pm. An optional driving tour of the refuge will take place following the lunch.
- June 2 National Trails Day Hikes -- Refuge staff will lead two special nature walks that will explore 'behind the signs' areas usually closed to public access. Hikes are 9:00 to 11:00 am and 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD (NEW) VOLUNTEERS...

As a member of the Friends of Eastern Neck, Colby has told you about the important role our volunteers play in maintaining the Refuge as a meaningful destination for thousands of visitors. Do you have a friend (or friends) who might be interested in joining us? Give them this copy of your newsletter and have them complete and return the form below. Someone will be in touch!

Yes! I want to be a Friend of Eastern Neck. Tell me how I can help!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ E-mail: _____

Membership Type:

Friend (\$25) ____ Patron (\$50) ____ Eagle Society (\$100) ____ Blue Heron (\$250) ____ Tundra Swan (\$500) ____

Make check payable to Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Send this form to: Friends of Eastern Neck, P.O. Box 450, Rock Hall, MD 21661

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