

The Rookery



The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 17, Number 2

Summer 2013

TRACKING OUR FEATHERED AND FURRY FRIENDS

Editor's note: The Refuge, as we all know, is all about wildlife -- protecting it and its habitats, making sure we know about the variations and the reasons for them, in its populations. In the past month, we've had a chance to learn how the Friends can become involved in tracking one of the most prominent inhabitants of the island, and we were very pleased to read about the remarkable comeback of one of its former favorites:

FRIENDS OF EASTERN NECK JOINS OSPREYWATCH

By Meg Parry

The Friends is pleased to announce its participation in an exciting project called OspreyWatch, starting this summer. This citizen science project, implemented jointly by the College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University, is a global initiative to collect data on breeding ospreys worldwide. Currently in its second year, it has over 1,000 members worldwide reporting on approximately 3,500 nests.

Knowing that the Chesapeake Bay supports one of the largest breeding osprey populations in the world, OspreyWatch contacted us recently, asking for our help in initiating a monitoring system to track osprey nests on the Eastern Shore. This is, of course, a daunting task, considering the many hundreds of miles of waterways and shoreline in Kent County alone. So we are starting small this year with a pilot project monitoring nests at Eastern Neck and a few nearby waterways, with hopes of expanding the project and widening participation to other conservation and environmental groups in the region next year.


We are glad to take a leadership role in bringing this project to the Eastern Shore and look forward to seeing it grow and develop, just like the osprey chicks emerging from their nests! In the meantime, we'll keep you posted on our summer findings.



LOOK WHO'S BACK!



This may look like your ordinary garden variety gray squirrel, but it's not. It's a Delmarva Fox Squirrel and, according to a *Baltimore Sun* newspaper article in April, it's made a somewhat remarkable comeback from the brink of extinction. It's been on the endangered species list since 1967, but because of the success of a 15-year "reintroduction" program, it's now being considered for de-listing. Unfortunately, Fox squirrels -- more than twice as big as gray squirrels, sometimes up to 30 inches long -- haven't been seen on Eastern Neck for quite a few years, but the article details the efforts of state and federal wildlife personnel to rebuild the population on other parts of the Delmarva Peninsula and, in particular, on Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

Chesapeake Marshlands Complex lead biologist Matt Whitbeck, one of the featured staff interviewed for the article, calls the comeback "something to be proud of." From a few hundred sightings 30 years ago, it's now estimated that there are 17,000 to 20,000 Fox squirrels on both public and private lands. As long as their habitat is protected -- they prefer to forage on the ground in hardwood and loblolly pine forests -- they should continue to thrive. 

IN THIS ISSUE: 2 *President's Message* 3 *Refuge Update*

4 *Member Thanks; Volunteer Dinner* 5 *Bookstore* 6 *Looking for New Members*

President's Message**Summer 2013**

Dear Fellow Friends,

Friends President Gren Whitman resigned his board position effective May 10 to pursue other interests. Gren had been President for six years, and he did an excellent job of moving the organization forward using skills and life experiences garnered over many years of successful volunteerism. We will miss his presence and special wit.

The work of the Friends Board and volunteers must move ahead as we have a number of important initiatives in the works. The board has agreed to fund these projects this year:

- A Visitor Services Intern from Washington College: A student who will assist at the Refuge for 12 months beginning in August. See Cindy's update on the next page for more information about his project.
- An Invasive Species Biotech: Continuing the summer invasive species plant control work on the island.
- Erosion Control: Funding the purchase of additional stone needed to control erosion on the southeast side of the island, where the Cedar Point road is close to being cut by wave action.

The Youth Fishing Event will be held on June 8th. We will need more volunteers than ever because of the sequestration which has hit our Refuge especially hard and, unfortunately, we cannot depend on as much assistance from Blackwater staff as in previous years for the same reason. We would be in much worse condition were it not for the efforts of our volunteers; thank you one and all.

As far as the organization is concerned, your board is very cohesive and remains dedicated to the continued success of the friends group.

Phil Cicconi, Acting President


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*

Editor

Leann Miller

Direct Inquiries and
Correspondence to:

P.O. Box 450
Rock Hall, MD 21661

or
info@friendsofeasternneck.org

**Friends of Eastern Neck
Memberships**

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

Board of Directors**Officers:**

Phil Cicconi: Acting President

Carol DeGennaro: Secretary

Leann Miller: Treasurer

Members:

Melissa Baile

Lew Halin

Jolene L'Tainen

Bob Parks

Meg Parry

Committee Chairs

Jackie Cicconi
and Kay Snelson:
Bookstore

REFUGE UPDATE

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

Looking Back

The first week of March started off with a budget action called sequester. Some planning had prepared Refuges for the proposed cuts and we continue to frame our operations and projects around a smaller framework of funding. We will continue to do so through fiscal year 2014. The effects include a freeze on hiring, so we can't fill the vacant Visitor Services position at Eastern Neck. Despite the budget limitations we as Refuge staff may have, we still have lots to do and lots of opportunities for volunteers. One such project is the upcoming Fishing event for kids and a trail maintenance crew. Read on in *Things to Come* to find out more!



On the last Saturday of April and the first Saturday of May we had the annual Youth Turkey Hunts. This year three kids were selected to hunt on each Saturday. All of them, ages 10 to 15, observed several turkeys and one was harvested at 21 pounds!

The Friends of Eastern Neck were generous to fund a part-time Visitor Services position in which a Washington College student will be working at the Refuge from August 2013 to August 2014. (A new intern will then start in August 2014. There will be about one to two weeks overlap allowing for the outgoing intern to train the new intern.) The intern will take on some of the duties previously performed by Colby Hawkinson, with the main focus of the activities being to attract visitors to the Refuge and to involve them in some activities, such as shoreline cleanups.

The Friends also funded the purchase of the rocks which were sorely needed to complete a project begun by the Refuge – the Cedar Point Shoreline restoration, which I told you about in the previous newsletter. Blackwater and Eastern Neck staff installed a rock shoreline in the water parallel to the road to stop the gradual erosion of the shoreline at

Cedar Point. When planting conditions are best, we will plant grasses to further protect the road and land. The grasses will be paid for by Blackwater.

Boxes Point Trail has been “closed for eagles” for the past few months. A nest is *very* close to the trail and, unlike ospreys, which seem to be able to tolerate and even ignore human activity, eagles don't like it near their nests. But it is that time of year – eaglets will be FLEDGING! Those young eagle babies will be flapping and jumping up and down getting ready to try out their wings. Therefore, we should be able to open the trail again during the week of June 17.

And speaking of ospreys, they are doing well. We seem to have more nests every year, including a new nest by the automatic gate at Bogels Wharf Road.

Things to Come

Our annual Youth Fishing Event will be held on Saturday, June 8. The event is an hour shorter this year – 9:00 am to noon. We will have poles to loan to the kids if needed. The Friends are again providing a free lunch and t-shirts!



We have selected a summer invasive species biotech! Ford Van Fossan grew up in the St. Michaels area and currently lives in Vermont. He will be joining us the week of June 10 to continue the process of eradicating and monitoring invasive plants. Stop and say hello if you see him. This summer position has been funded out of Blackwater's budget for several years, but the money for it was cut due to sequestration. The position is being funded this year by a grant from the Friends of Eastern Neck at a cost of only \$6000. As an added bonus, the National Aquarium in Baltimore has agreed to administer the grant.



THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

Once again we are listing the names of members who contributed \$100 or more in the past six months. We continue to be gratified by all those who feel that this organization is fulfilling its goal in assisting the Refuge in its mission.

This is the longest list of members of the Eagle Society (22) we have ever published, and we're so very thankful that their numbers continue to grow.

And don't forget that we're grateful to *all* the more than 200 Friends members for continuing to support us and our work at the Refuge. You're *all* very special to us!

Friends of Eastern Neck Memberships

Friend: \$25
Patron: \$50
Eagle Society: \$100
Blue Heron: \$250
Tundra Swan: \$500

Tundra Swan

George, Jean and Laura Bankey
Terence T. Finn

Blue Heron

Bob and Linda Kramer Bob and Bonnie Ford
Gerry Nitsche and Barry Serviente, in memory of John L. Everett

Eagle Society

Dayl R. Baile* Theodore Carski Allen and Arlene Katz Ron and Joyce Landon
Ann F. Miller Gerry Cohee and Jane Nitsche William and Barbara Noll
Vic and Patricia Pfeiffer Jim and Joanne Rich Ed and Karen Robison
Dr. and Mrs. William Rienhoff, III Alexandra Totten Thomas and Marian Wenger
Dr. Clifton F. West Matt and Michele Whitbeck Richard and Laura Hall*
Joe Bodell* Peter and Nicole Selhorst* Lou and Cheryl Cadwell*
Frank and Sandy Kheradi* Leslie A. Palmer* Don Taylor*

*New to the Friends and/or the Eagle Society

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner a "Tuscan" Success

More than 40 volunteers and staff members attended the annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on April 24, despite some threatening weather (which didn't really materialize). Cindy had ordered a Tuscan style dinner to help the staff celebrate the work of all the Refuge volunteers. (*Very tasty!*) She was assisted by Blackwater visitor services specialist Michele Whitbeck and Complex Manager Suzanne Baird as she distributed certificates and gifts to those who had reached certain milestones in hours volunteered on and/or for the Refuge.



The deck was our Tuscan retreat.



Cindy and Michele conferred↑



... and Suzanne listened.

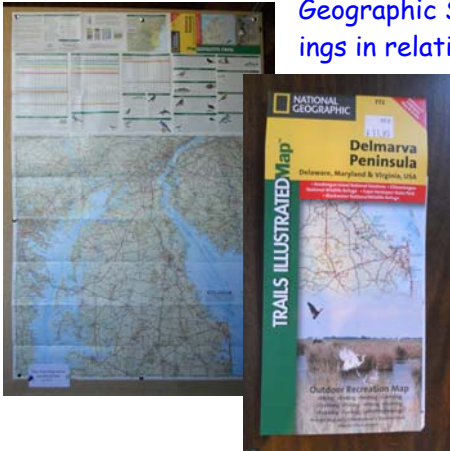


Bill Nuttle received a well-deserved gift.

FRIENDS' DOINGS IN THE BOOKSTORE

Where are we?

If you're a volunteer at the Refuge bookstore, this is a question you hear quite often. Many out-of-town visitors, after driving to what seems like (and, if you think about it, actually is) the end of the road, want to orient themselves in relationship to some place they know -- Baltimore or Washington DC, for example. We now have the perfect answer for them. On the bulletin board at the ramp that goes back to the Refuge offices is a wonderful map of the upper Chesapeake Bay/Delmarva Peninsula region published by the National Geographic Society. Once you find Eastern Neck Island it's easy to get your bearings in relation to other notable towns and cities. We had been asked numerous times if we had copies of that map for sale, and up until January we had to say we didn't. But after some sleuthing by our Chesapeake Marshlands Complex manager Suzanne Baird, we found that it was readily available from the Society, and we very quickly put it in our inventory. It's been such a popular seller in just the past four months that Bookstore Manager Jackie Cicconi has had to reorder it twice to keep up with the demand. And it's not just a road map, either. It has information about natural resources of the region as well as various trails and other attractions. It's on very sturdy paper and costs \$11.95, but it's worth it -- a great backup for your GPS!

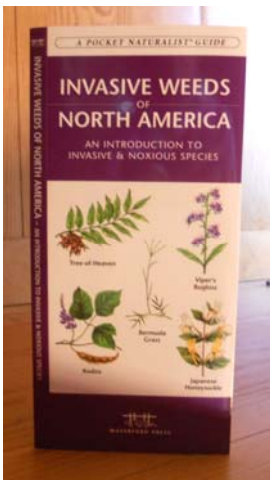


And of course if you're in the mood to canoe or kayak around the island, don't forget our waterproof Eastern Neck Island Water Trail map. We've had this for several years now and it's a steady seller at only \$2.95. Again, it isn't just a map (after all, the trail just follows the shoreline and it's sort of difficult to get lost) but it also describes the stops along the way and any wildlife or special vegetation you might see.



A Favorite New Foldout

We're all concerned about invasive species these days, and it appears that many of our visitors want to do what they can to prevent their spread. That may be why a new plastic-coated foldout, *Invasive Weeds of North America*, is selling well: If you see any of these weeds around your home or on your next hike or walk, you can feel justified about pulling them out and destroying them. The foldout is quite durable, very detailed and easy to carry with you wherever you go. At \$7.95 it seems like a good investment for the future of native wild plants.



Now that spring is giving way to summer, the Refuge is at its most appealing. Come and see us if you haven't been here lately. The Butterfly Garden crew has been working feverishly to attract our fluttery friends, and the trails provide a quiet, serene experience. And, of course, our wonderful cast of bookstore volunteers would love to see you!

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

As a member of the Friends of Eastern Neck, you already know 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. *(Please don't send in your regular membership contribution with this form. A reminder will be sent directly to you in the mail. Thanks!)*

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work or cell _____ E-mail: _____

Membership Type:

Tundra Swan (\$500) _____ Blue Heron (\$250) _____

Eagle Society (\$100) _____ Patron (\$50) _____ Friend (\$25) _____

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