

# The Rookery



## The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 18, Number 4

Winter 2013

### COME ONE, COME ALL, TO OUR FOURTH ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE!

Despite government closures, staff reductions and limits on overtime activities, the Refuge's fourth annual open house will go on, with all the activities that have made this a very popular attraction in just three years. It's scheduled for Saturday, December 7 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. Everything (except the early morning bird walk) starts at the visitor center Lodge. And it's all free.

The most popular activities by far during the past three events -- the tours of areas that are not usually open to the public, archery for the kids (and kids at heart) and a guided bird walk -- will all be available this year. In addition, the Friends are providing free coffee and tea as well as a free lunch of the ever popular corn chowder and chili, with accompanying music by Ben Bennington and Friends. We will also again be displaying the winners of the Junior Duck Stamp competition. It's just amazing the talent shown by some very young students!

On the lawn in front of the Lodge you will be able to visit at exhibits by some of our partners in outdoor pursuits: the Maryland Department of Natural Resources police and the Center for Environment and Society at Washington College among them. The Friends will also have a table set up there, so bring your friends so they can sign up as Friends!

Of course, the bookstore will be open for browsing and buying. If you didn't spend all your holiday money on Black Friday, we might have something that will appeal to someone you love. (See page 5 for some ideas.)

A note about the tours of areas not usually open to the public: These are very popular tours with limited numbers of participants, so tickets are distributed on a first-come first-served basis. The tickets are free but are available only on the day of the Open House.

A vertical poster for the Wildlife Refuge Open House. At the top, it says "Celebrating Eastern Neck's 51st year!". Below that is a circular logo for the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, featuring a swan and the text "Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge" and "Rock Hall, MD". The main title "Wildlife Refuge OPEN HOUSE" is in large, stylized letters. Below the title, it says "Sat., December 7, 2013" and "9:00 AM to 2:00 PM". The location is "Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, 1730 Eastern Neck Rd, Rock Hall MD 21661". A list of activities includes: Guided Tours of normally closed areas (Cedar Point, Ingleside, Shipyard Creek, DU Impoundment/Cedar Pond), Guided Bird Walk (Tubby Cove and Boxes Point), Music by Ben &amp; Friends, Light lunch provided by the Friends of Eastern Neck, Youth Archery Practice Range, and Variety of wildlife exhibitors, and much more! At the bottom, it lists partners: Friends of Eastern Neck, Ducks Unlimited, Kent Co. Bird Club, Center for Environment &amp; Society at Washington College, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It also provides contact information: (410) 639-7056 and www.fws.gov/northeast/easternneck/. Tickets for tours are free and will be distributed at the Refuge Office the day of the Open House. Access and all activities are free. Logos for Washington College and Friends of Eastern Neck are at the bottom.

There's a more *detailed schedule on page 4*, so look and see which of these tours you may want to take and be here early to get a ticket.

So come on down and join all the fun. You can spend the day at *your* Refuge with lots of other people who enjoy it as much as you do. We love having you visit.

And, by the way, you may just see some Tundra Swans if the weather's right. They were first spotted on November 13, so we know they're around.

We hope to see you here!



**President's Message****Winter 2013****Friends:**

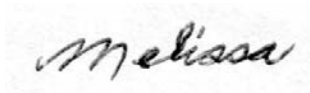
On the occasion of my first newsletter message as President of the Friends of Eastern Neck, my mind has scattered thoughts and it has been a crazy ride so far. Eastern Neck Staff and Friends have endured sequestration, causing the loss of one position; a partial government shut down, which closed the Island and canceled hunts and other activities; a small fire in the marsh, which luckily did not do much damage but required the Blackwater fire staff to spend a few days on the Island; and the resignation of our Washington College Intern after a few weeks. However, with dedicated and resilient staff and volunteers, progress has not been halted and much has been accomplished.

As I write this article, winter is descending on Eastern Neck. All the seasons are fun and have special and unique attributes but winter is beautiful here. The bugs have gone and we are all on the lookout for the Tundra Swans to return. The ducks and the geese have arrived signaling the start of the waterfowl count. Invasive species growth has halted, requiring that we say good-bye to Ford, our part-time summer worker, who will move to a position in Delaware trapping deer for research. The eagles are more active as they get ready to impress potential mates.

As we prepare for our annual Open House I would like to thank all of the volunteers who spend time helping at the refuge. There is always much to do and a job for everyone.

Lastly, and most exciting, as you will read in this issue, Eastern Neck has received a 1.5 million dollar grant to save Hail Point from breaking into two pieces, thus losing the protected area behind it for the waterfowl. The Friends of Eastern Neck would like to publicly thank Matt Whitbeck for his forward thinking and effort in writing this grant. You will hear more about this exciting opportunity as it develops.

I hope that you can make some time to come out and enjoy your refuge. Winter is really peaceful and beautiful at Eastern Neck.


**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***

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Friends of Eastern Neck  
**Memberships**

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

**Board of Directors****Officers:**

Melissa Baile: President  
Phil Cicconi: Vice President  
Carol DeGennaro: Secretary  
Leann Miller: Treasurer

**Members:**

Penny Brown

Lew Halin

Jolene L'Tainen

Bob Parks

Meg Parry

**Committee Chairs**

Jackie Cicconi and Kay Snelson:  
Bookstore

Melissa Baile:  
Membership

## REFUGE UPDATE

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

We are still in the double digits!! As you may remember from the previous newsletter, our visitor numbers in the lodge are higher than last year. Everyday -- weekday or weekend -- we have recorded double digit visitation. With increased visitation, we reach more people on the importance of land conservation.

The new fiscal year brought us to a government shutdown and therefore the Refuge was closed. Three deer hunts were cancelled, the Kent County fourth graders went to Sassafras Wildlife Management area run by the state and other groups had to cancel or reschedule their trips to Eastern Neck. During a shutdown employees are furloughed, meaning we temporarily do not work for the government. Therefore, we could not carry or answer our work cell phones, answer email and do any other activities related to the Refuge. For days I wondered how the Refuge was doing, concerned about vandalism, trespass, theft and littering. Luckily, law enforcement was permitted to conduct regular surveillance and keep things in order. I was happy to be back at work.

The remaining four deer hunts went well and were well attended. We hosted over 200 hunters and 81 deer were harvested. This is more than the number taken last year, even though there were fewer hunts. That deer herd really needed to be culled!

The annual waterfowl survey crew is back again, counting the ducks, geese and tundra swans that use Eastern Neck as a stopover on their annual migration. The data help the Refuge look at long term trends, and it lets everyone know we have a lot of ducks during the winter! This is why we are a year-round attraction -- birders especially want to come and see our many duck species and, of course, our famous tundra swans.

Initially, I planned to cut back on the number of activities we could offer during our annual open house this year, mostly because of staff time cutbacks. However, some members of the Friends came to my rescue, and the open house will be great, thanks to numerous volunteers who are helping to get ready. We are offering tours plus archery for the kids and kids-at-heart. The Friends will provide lunch and there will be a free concert. See the front page for more!

I truly have saved the best for last! As Melissa announced in her message, Eastern Neck has been awarded a large grant to protect the northern and southern shorelines along Hail Cove on the southeast side of the island. As you may know, Hail Cove is a narrow band of land keeping Hail Creek intact. A large project was undertaken in 2010 to begin the extensive task of protecting Hail Cove, and this project will do more to reduce erosion and still maintain the coastal ecosystem along more of the coastline. I will have more information as this project develops. The grant is for 1.5 million dollars. Yeah, we are excited!

✍



*The main road on a beautiful late fall day.*

**Did you know?** The National Wildlife Refuge System comprises more than 560 refuges and other protected areas encompassing 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the remote Pacific. There is at least one national wildlife refuge in every state and territory and within an hour's drive of most major metropolitan areas.

**OSPREY WATCH UPDATE**


By Meg Parry

No doubt anyone who lives in Rock Hall or its surrounds has had the joy of observing ospreys in the spring and summer, be it soaring gracefully overhead, perched protectively on a nest of feathery chicks or feeding fish to their young.



Because ospreys are such an integral part of Eastern Shore life, the Friends group was pleased to be invited to participate for the first time in a worldwide project monitoring breeding populations. We first told you about this project in our summer issue of *The Rookery*. This citizen science project is coordinated by The Center for Conservation Biology, under the auspices of both The College of William and Mary and The Virginia Commonwealth University. Because the Chesapeake Bay supports one of the largest populations of breeding ospreys in the world, input from our region will be valuable in building a baseline of data for this study. As top consumers within aquatic ecosystems, ospreys are very sensitive to environmental conditions and changes such as reduced food supply (fish, of course!) and environmental contaminants. Therefore, the breeding information gathered from our region and many others will be used to evaluate the health and viability of aquatic environments worldwide. To date, almost 4,000 nests have been monitored internationally, and we are glad to be a part of this effort.

Because of the sheer magnitude of the task of monitoring ospreys in our region, we decided to track only a small and targeted sampling of nests this past spring and summer. Our goal for next year is to greatly expand our efforts by eliciting the support and participation of many more monitors and conservation and environmental groups. We also anticipate taking pictures of nests next year – something we were

unable to do this year. That said, our 2013 efforts focused on Eastern Neck Island, Eastern Neck Road, Davis and Langford Creeks, Long Cove, Route 20 and Gratitude. Of 30 nests monitored, 26 fledglings were observed, with six nests being abandoned. The largest nest observed contained three fledglings. If you are interested in learning more about Osprey Watch, you may visit their website at [www.osprey-watch.org](http://www.osprey-watch.org). Or, if you're interested in becoming an Osprey monitor in the 2014 season, please contact the Refuge. We'll need all the help we can get to make our contribution to this citizen science project more significant and meaningful in the coming years. 

### **2013 OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE**

#### **All Day Activities At the Lodge (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)**

Archery for the kids  
Junior Duck Stamp winner display:  
Lodge conference room  
Exhibits by Refuge partners

#### **Guided Bird Walk by the Kent County Bird Club Meet at Tubby Cove parking lot by 9:00 a.m.**

**Guided Tours**  
Tickets are free; available at the  
Refuge booth at the Lodge

Cedar Point - 10:30 a.m.  
Ingleside - 11:00 a.m.  
Shipyard Creek - 12:30 p.m.  
Impoundment and ponds - 1:00 p.m.

**Lunch**  
Provided by the Friends  
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
Music by Ben and Friends



FRIENDS' DOINGS IN THE BOOKSTORE



Mugs

Notecards

Patches Socks

Key chains Puzzles

Polo shirts Postcards

Bingo games Screensavers

Bird ornaments Denim shirts

Brush art ornaments Mouse pads

Pens T-shirts Bay Bio cards Giant bugs

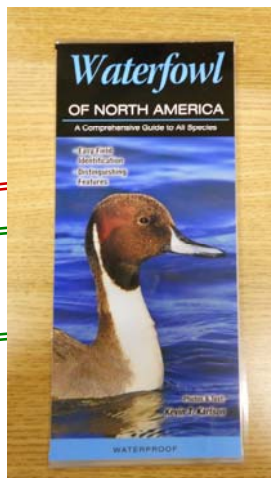
Plush toys Bird carvings Sweatshirts Books

Books Kayak trail maps Tundra swan pins Caps

Bird memory games Books Magnets



Our tree is much too small to contain all of the wonderful surprises we have in stock in the bookstore. You must come and see for yourself. Bookstore manager Jackie Cicconi is always on the lookout for new items that may be of interest to a great variety of tastes. Here are just three of them:

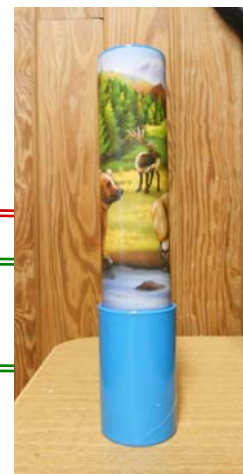


**Waterfowl of North America** joins our series of high-quality laminated foldout guides, just in time to identify the ducks that use the Refuge as a stopover on their winter migration. (\$7.95)



Front ↑ Back ⇨

**Wrap-around ENNWR deer hunt t-shirt:** This year's deer hunters had a chance to buy this unique shirt. It's sort of hard to picture - the deer head wraps around from the front to the back of the shirt - and now it's your turn. Fun! (\$16.95)



**Down memory lane:** Did you have one of these when you were a kid? It's a **kaleidoscope**, a fun toy that you look into and makes pretty designs when you turn the bottom part. It's been a great seller in just the few months it's been in stock. (\$6.95)

## THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

Once again we are listing the names of members who contributed \$100 or more in the past six months. I'm always amazed at how generous our members are -- under any circumstances. Thank you, thank you!

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! *∞*

Friends of Eastern  
Neck

### *Memberships*

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

### Tundra Swan

The Robert K. Stetson Family

### Blue Heron

Bob and Bonnie Ford

Michael J. Saxton

### Eagle Society

Anne Bricker    Chester River Kayak Adventures  
Theodore Carski    Steve and Virginia Croker  
Judy Kelly    Ted and Gretchen Knowles    Karen Unruh  
Susan Reinsch    Dr. and Mrs. William Rienhoff III  
Robert Steinwurtzel    Dr. and Mrs. Clifton West  
Bob and Barbara Brillhart    Curtis Ball

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