

The Rookery



The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 19, Number 3

Fall 2014

“A CLEVER RUSE”

(Editor’s note: Anyone who lives in Maryland these days can’t help but know that the state is in the throes of commemorating the last days of the War of 1812, with special emphasis on the Battle of Fort McHenry in Baltimore, during which a young lawyer named Francis Scott Key wrote a poem that eventually became our national anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner.

Sometime last year, Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller received a request from the Kent County War of 1812 Committee to place a marker on the island. It would tell the story about a rather clever trick that a US commander played to prevent the British from landing troops on Eastern Neck. The sign, erected at the entrance parking area at the Tundra Swan Boardwalk, tells the story, calling it a “Clever Ruse.”)

Of course, there had been battles all around the state and, in particular, on lands surrounding the Chesapeake Bay, because the British understood that the Bay was the gateway to ports of importance, including Washington, DC and Baltimore. The British had already attacked and burned Washington, DC on August 24, 1814 and Kent County braced for their return in a few days. (Enemy raiders had destroyed Georgetown the previous year while terrorizing Maryland's Eastern Shore.) Now they had an encampment on Kent Island and wanted to head north to what they considered the mainland, via the Eastern Neck area. This is where we come in:

On August 27th, 1814, Col. Phillip Reed, commander of the 21st regiment of the Maryland Militia, used Eastern Neck Island and the nearby mainland to mislead the British as to the size of his forces. Knowing that the British were able to observe the militia’s activities from their encampment on Kent Island, he directed his small force of cavalry to cross and recross the water from the mainland at Trumpington Farm to Eastern Neck Island in full view of the British lookout boats stationed at the mouth of the Chester River. By countermarching and continually recrossing the river, the Americans hoped to fool the British into believing that they had a much larger force than they really did and would therefore be reluctant to cross to the island.

There are no known documents to support the ruse, but if it did occur it may have worked, because Captain Sir Peter Parker, commander of a

British squadron in the upper Bay, wrote, “Running down the Eastern shore of Maryland on [August] 27th ... I was surprised to observe the Enemy’s Regular Troops and Militia in motion along the whole coast.”

The British never did cross onto the island. Instead, they finally landed on the Bay shore on August 30 near Rock Hall and marched inland to encounter the American militia at the Isaac Caulk farm. The Americans stood their ground during the night attack. Heavy British casualties included the popular young officer, Captain Sir Peter Parker. The British retreated. (That battlefield is marked by a state marker and monument; the marker is quite evident as you travel on Route 20 toward Rock Hall.)

The victory in the Battle of Caulk's Field boosted American morale following the enemy's invasion of Washington. Perhaps as a result, just two weeks later, on September 13 and 14, the British naval attack on Ft. McHenry failed, and thus they never got to Baltimore, their ultimate destination. ☪



President's Message**Fall 2014**

Friends:

Do you feel it? The air has changed and summer is now a memory. Fall is an exciting time. We look forward to migration of all kinds. Some critters will leave us and some will come visit. Whatever your passion - birds, butterflies, hummers, ducks, osprey, swans, shore birds - I think you know what I mean: The quiet void is quickly filled with another of nature's wonders. Nature's rhythm is a beat hard to mimic.

This fall please look for the kayak put-in on the west side of the island (see page 5 for more info), a new volunteer opportunity in the butterfly garden, and a Friends' group social. Within a short time we should see a shoreline restoration project by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at Hail Point. Keeping our shoreline safe is important for the island's future, and much thought and expertise has gone into how to accomplish that task. All exciting things to benefit wildlife.

The Friends of Eastern Neck Social has to be rescheduled to October 25, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. I am sorry about this inconvenience but it cannot be avoided due to a schedule conflict. The good news is that if you did not RSVP you still can, and if you were busy on the first Saturday of October now maybe you can attend. We hope to see you here.

As we jump into this autumn season I want to leave you with a poem by David Ignatow:

One leaf left on a branch
 And not a sound of sadness
 Or despair. One leaf left
 On a branch and no unhappiness.
 One leaf left all by itself
 In the air and it does not speak
 Of loneliness or death.
 One leaf and it spends itself
 In swaying mildly in the breeze.

As ever,

**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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REFUGE UPDATE**What's Happening on Your Refuge****By Cindy Beemiller, Refuge Manager**

Maintenance: You may have noticed or happened upon the closed observation platform at Tubby Cove. A new inspection revealed that the railing is not high enough to pass safety standards. We will be working to replace the railing. It is a great spot for fall and spring wildlife observation. However, I believe the repairs will not be completed until spring. So, make sure to check out some other great spots like Duck Inn Trail, Bogles Wharf or the blind at Bayview trail. We are also planning repairs for the washout area along the Bayview Trail and we are working to fix the last 500 feet of Duck Inn Trail.

Solar panels, etc: Wildlife Conservation can be at various levels: in your back yard, state, country or globally. Wildlife are not bound by borders and so the US Fish and Wildlife Service conserves wildlife on small and big scales. The Refuge traded vehicles to gain a Ford Escape hybrid to reduce vehicle pollution. The Refuge is working on - and it may be completed when you read this - a solar array at the maintenance building. The array will provide about 2/3 of our monthly electric requirements.

New USFWS/Friends Policy: A new National Friends Policy will take effect October 4, 2014. The policy brings a few changes to how the Refuge administers programs and how the Refuge manages Friends activities at the Refuge. But Friends members and volunteers will hardly notice a difference. For example, the new policy changes how the Refuge reports volunteer hours. Currently, volunteers who operate the bookstore are counted as Refuge volunteers. However, the new policy differentiates between Friends volunteers (those who work on Friends business), and Refuge volunteers (those who work on Refuge business). The bookstore volunteers are considered to be Friends volunteers and not Refuge volunteers. All volunteers will still report their hours the same as they have in the past, in the Volunteer Log Book. Refuge staff will separate the hours when tallying the time for USFWS annual reports. So, while in 2013 volunteers gave over 4000 hours to the Refuge *including* the bookstore, once the policy takes effect October 4, I estimate the Refuge will report only about 800 to 1000 Refuge volunteer hours, since bookstore hours are to be counted as Friends hours and not Refuge hours.

Everyone is welcome to work on Refuge business, which may include mowing, taking care of the Refuge garden and trails, and more. We still strongly believe that all Friends volunteers who work the store are a valuable part of assisting Refuge visitors with questions and information. We plan to recognize Friends and Refuge volunteers' hours at the annual dinner as we have in the past.

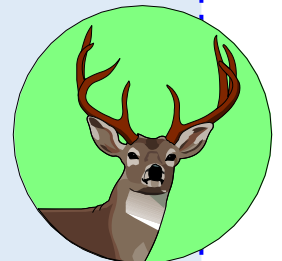
How we manage the annual Refuge deer hunt (see below) will also change. For many years, the Friends have assisted with administrative tasks for the deer hunt. Starting October 4, Refuge staff will be solely responsible for administering the hunt. Volunteers are welcome to help on the days of the hunts to greet and inform visitors that the Refuge is closed and to explain when the Refuge will be open.

Another change requires Refuge staff to lock personal office doors when out of the office, starting in October. Locking my door is a formality. I will place a bin on the door, so if you have any messages, questions, comments or just want to write a note you can place it in the bin. The hallway will be a little darker, but the staff's relationship with the volunteers and the Friends won't be. I appreciate your continued support. Luckily, we have a great corps of volunteers and these changes are small or will have little or no impact on how we have been operating. ☀

FALL DEER HUNTS SCHEDULED

Although we always want visitors on the Refuge, we ask them to stay away on the days when we've scheduled our annual white-tail deer hunts. This year those days are:

Saturday, October 4
 Wednesday, October 8
 Friday, October 10
 Monday, October 20
 Monday, October 27
 Monday, November 3
 Friday, November 7



(Refuge Update – Continued)

(Cindy muses...)

Look Up, Look Down, but most importantly – Stay Still

Many visitors ask me where to see an eagle. For many animals, all you have to do is stay still. Eastern Neck is fortunate enough to have wonderful vistas and wildlife to be seen. But you have to wait for it, and it's worth it! Today I took a short break to enjoy our wonderful August weather, *unbelievable* August weather. The Tidal Marsh Overlook is so close, short and yet takes a while. Yes, it takes a while. I spotted three species of butterflies, numerous birds, a black rat snake and an osprey having an altercation with an eagle. Yeah, I saw all that in 20 minutes. There are pink flowers in there too.

I see people hustling down the paved county road with windows up and all eyes forward. Do they have an appointment with an eagle, belted kingfisher or yellow-billed cuckoo? Even if you could make an appointment with the animal, you would miss so much. I would advise people to turn the car radio off and put the windows down. People rush past Headquarters Pond. I can't tell you how many times I have seen an immature bald eagle, green heron or turtle at Headquarters Pond. I can't tell you because it is often. With the windows down I breathe in the smells and sounds. I enjoy the salty smell of the bay, the scent of fall and the cold winter air chilling my nose. I enjoy the sound of a beetle crossing some fallen leaves, waves lapping or the whistle of wings as birds fly overhead. I stay still.

♣



FISHING DERBY PARTICIPATION REACHES ALL-TIME HIGH

The refuge's annual fishing derby in June attracted more kids than can ever be remembered and, of course, the weather cooperated with a strikingly beautiful day. Ninety-eight kids registered, and with all their attendant parents and grandparents filled every open niche along the sides of Headquarters Pond. But everyone caught fish and had a free lunch provided by the Friends, so it was a great success. Again...



Bait's always necessary



◀ *The place was packed and space at a premium...* ▼



... so sometimes a little creativity is needed ▲



Watch as Dad removes the hook



Jolene and Meg get plenty of food ready

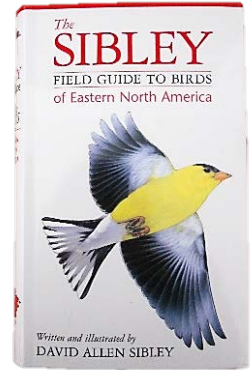


Ed celebrates our record day.

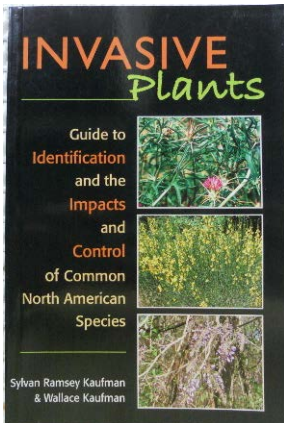
(More pictures on page 8)

Friends Doings in the Bookstore

In the Summer issue of *The Rookery*, we featured small-sized souvenirs of a visit to the Refuge that are available in the bookstore, all priced at about \$4.50 or less. Of course, we have some very serious offerings as well. Since this is a "bookstore," most of these are informational books or guides with prices that range from \$12.95 to \$39.95. Among them are books like *Reptiles and Amphibians of Delmarva*, *Birds of Prey*, *Birds of the Marshes*, *Butterflies of Delmarva*, *Exploring the Chesapeake in Small Boats*, a *Field Guide to Wildflowers of the Eastern US*, *Outlaw Gunners* and (of course) *Ospreys*.



One of the most popular of the more expensive guides is *the Sibley Guide to Birds of the Eastern US*. This is not the full-sized *Sibley Guide to Birds* but a smaller (about 4" X 7") flexible field guide. It will come in handy for the serious birder if you're not planning to cross the great divide. It's priced at \$19.95.



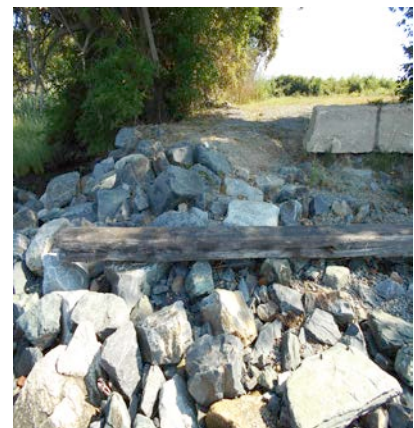
Our most expensive offering is a guide to *Invasive Plants* (\$39.95). While it is softcover, it's a heavy volume of over 440 pages, described on its jacket as the "first-ever field guide to invasive plants in North America. Features full-color photos and descriptions of some 175 alien species.....that are in some cases changing the landscape to an almost unimaginable degree." The detail is amazing; it is a formidable book, but if you're interested in this very troubling topic, this may be the book for you. (See a related article on page 7.)

We also have many educational children's books (after all, that is part of the stated mission of the Friends), so look them all over when you come in to the bookstore. You should be able to find a book or two on a topic of interest to children of all age levels.

**COMING THIS FALL:
THE NEW KAYAK PUT-IN AT INGLESIDE!**

Excitement is brewing as the new kayak put-in project gets under way this month.

As you can see from the picture, the put-in site is anything but kayak-friendly now - it's just rocks and more rocks. The contractor will be starting to change that any day now, and we'll let you know how it turns out!



THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Most of our members know that the butterfly garden at the end of the Bayview/ Butterfly Trail is one of the main attractions for visitors to the Refuge. This garden was the result of a project proposed in the early 2000s by a student at Washington College, and its creation was funded by the Friends, with the blessing of Refuge management. So it is essentially a Friends project, and over the years it has been Friends members and/or volunteers who have maintained it, not Refuge staff. That means we have paid for plants, mulch, some needed tools - anything necessary to keep the garden in good shape.

This year, however, we got word that long-time volunteer garden leaders Dave Gauntt and Zeeger de Wilde could no longer be responsible for leading the group that kept the garden in "visitor-ready" shape, and no one stepped forward to take their place. Because we wanted the garden to remain a "go-to" site on the island, the Friends board voted to hire a professional landscaper to maintain the garden until another volunteer group could be gathered. While this has been a satisfactory arrangement (the garden looks pretty good, especially with all the rain we've had this summer), it is quite expensive. So we're looking for some volunteers from the local area to head up a new group of gardeners to keep this good thing going.

It would not be expected that a few volunteers would do all the work necessary to maintain the garden as it is. It's a big garden with a variety of needed work and,

more important at this time, expertise. We would continue to pay the landscaper to do the "heavy lifting" - that is, the basic weeding, mulching, thinning/transplanting and planting of plants. Our volunteers would provide *garden expertise*, generally overseeing the upkeep of the garden so it isn't allowed to become overgrown and wild and thus not attractive to either butterflies or visitors.

This effort could most likely be done with just a few (three or perhaps four) volunteers, and would require only a few hours a week. But the rewards could be great. You would be responsible for maintaining one of the gems of the Refuge, one of the major Refuge attractions. If you'd like to help with this project, give Cindy a call at 410-639-7056. We'll get you all together - and go from there.



If you like to garden, *please* consider helping!

**Invasive Species Management Program
Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge**
By Alexander Wong - Biological Science Technician

Editor's note: Friends may remember that last summer, because of federal cutbacks (sequestration), the Refuge did not get the money usually set aside for a bio science technician to continue the invasive species management program that has been ongoing on the island for some years now. The board voted to fund this position because it felt that skipping even one year of treatment could reverse many of the gains made over the past few years. The good news is that we don't have to fund the position this year – federal funds have once again become available. Alex is on the job now and we're pleased to present his story.

As a seasonal Biological Science Technician for Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, my job is to control the spread of invasive plant species by means of chemical application. I begin my day by checking over the John Deere Gator and filling it up with gas. I mix the chemicals I need for the day in the 60 gallon drum that is on the bed of the Gator, attached to a pump and hose that runs approximately 120 feet. The chemical used most prevalently is Glyphosate, the same herbicide found in the *Roundup* that you might purchase to control weeds in your yard at home. Eastern Neck NWR uses an aquatic-safe brand called *Rodeo* to protect its watershed and wildlife from contamination.

Once the chemicals mix, I begin spraying invasive plant species in areas of concern on the island. These include the edges of the agriculture fields, forested areas and wildlife trails. If you visit the Eastern Neck NWR website, you'll learn that "Non-native, invasive species threaten the biological diversity and value of all habitats at Eastern Neck NWR. Invasive species often out-compete native species because they lack natural ecological controls such as predators and disease." (<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/easternneck/management.html>). Mile-a-minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*) and Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*), or Common Reed, are two of the most prevalent invasive species targeted for removal. Other invasive species include Canada thistle, Johnson grass, Garlic mustard, Japanese stilt grass, Wineberry, Multiflora rose and Japanese honeysuckle. There are also invasive tree species that require mechanical removal by chainsaw. My job involves identifying these trees and marking them with spray paint to be cut down in the off-season when other invasive species are less abundant. The stumps of these trees, rather than the entire tree, will be treated with chemicals, which saves time and resources. Invasive tree species on Eastern Neck include Autumn olive, White mulberry, Paper mulberry, Tree of heaven (*ailanthus*) and Princess tree (*paw-lonia*).



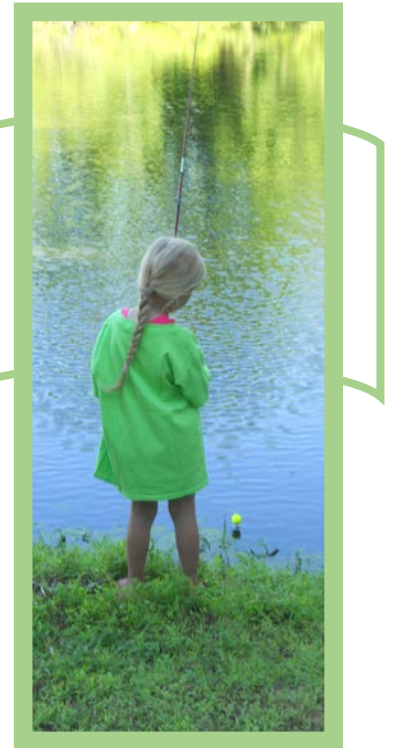
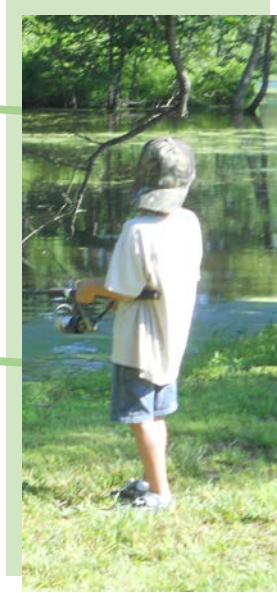
Mile-a-minute vine is one of the most pervasive of the invasives Alex is fighting.

As a college geography major concentrating on environmental studies, I've developed a passion for conservation throughout my life. I very much enjoy working outdoors. Since I graduated college in 2011, I've participated in four conservation internships over two years, one of which involved identifying plants for a scientific study; this gave me the skills necessary to be successful at this job. There is so much amazing wildlife on Eastern Neck, and being able to work in the midst of their habitat is certainly the most rewarding aspect of my job. On a daily basis I can see bald eagles, ospreys, turkey vultures, deer, foxes, rabbits, woodchucks, beavers, turtles, snakes, frogs, toads and other amphibians, dozens of different insects, and many more species of birds and wildlife. To learn more about the invasive species management program, wildlife and habitat, and to stay updated on Eastern Neck NWR news, please visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/easternneck/index.html>

MORE FISHING DERBY...



Blackwater staff helped with the poles



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