

The Rookery



The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 19, Number 4

Winter 2014

A Day of Dedication and Friendship

On October 25 the Friends combined two significant events into one memorable day. First, we dedicated a new kayak put-in at the Ingleside Recreation Area in memory of Owen P. Bricker III. Many of his family and friends were on hand to celebrate this much-needed addition to the Refuge. While this was initially a Friends-financed project, member Anne Bricker took on most of the cost of construction because she wanted to honor her late husband with a permanent memorial on the island.

Located on the western side of the Island, the Bricker Kayak Put-in will serve those paddlers who want to see the Bay side of the Refuge. Access to the area is at the end of the Ingleside parking lot and picnic grove. Paddlers can put in at Bogles Wharf, but many less able paddlers then cannot make it all the way around to the Bay. This new addition will remedy that hardship. (See pictures of this event on page 4.)

As an associate professor at Johns Hopkins, Owen Bricker was a pioneer in aqueous geochemistry. His work on mineral-water interactions in the Chesapeake Bay led him to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency where he helped design and establish the Chesapeake Bay Program. In 1981 he joined the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a senior research scientist, the position he would hold for the rest of his career. Not only did he produce significant research about the Bay but also mentored and encouraged other scientists who also have gone on to produce significant research on the Bay.

(Because Ingleside is an important winter resting and stop-off point for many waterfowl and songbirds, it is closed to the public until April 1. After that time please visit this new put-in area.)

The second event was the Friends Social, a gathering of as many Friends members as could fit it into their busy schedules. Friends President Melissa Baile invited our members to come together to just meet and talk (and eat!) because, while many members volunteer at the bookstore or in the garden or in other ways, they seldom get to see one another or otherwise have chances to interact. Almost 70 members came to this fun time, and the weather cooperated – it was a beautiful, sunny Fall day, and a great time to get to know the folks who keep the Refuge ‘on track.’



The food came first, and it was a colorful and, of course, delicious spread.



It was a delightfully sunny, warm day, so most Friends ate and talked on the deck.

President's Message**Winter 2014**

Friends:

We have had a busy time at Eastern Neck in the last few months. A kayak put-in at Ingleside was dedicated to Owen Bricker. A member social saw 70 people enjoy each other's company. (Read more about these two events on page 1.) The waterfowl count started and has picked up speed each week. A shoreline recovery project is beginning. (See Cindy's report on page 3.) We had 498 people recorded as visiting the Lodge in one month. The Butterfly Garden has been put to sleep for the winter, and a new crew has been recruited to oversee the garden for the next few years. Your board is working to brainstorm new projects to meet other needs of the Refuge.

On a personal note, I was privileged to see a Great Horned Owl one Wednesday morning during the waterfowl count. For me, it was like stopping time to see such a beautiful and elusive creature.

There are so many beautiful things to see right now at Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge. Almost every bush has tiny Kinglets playing in and out. It is good to see them back in town. Loons are now a common sight. That is a sure sign of winter as they pass thru. Ducks are starting to show up in large numbers. Just last week seven types were recorded. Rumor has it that the first Tundra Swan was sighted flying overhead -- our 'signature bird' is due soon and should be in evidence, in fact, by the time you read this.* Birders from far and wide come to see these beautiful birds, bringing visitors continuously during the winter months. The Refuge never closes.

Yes, winter is a beautiful time at Eastern Neck. There are people walking, fishing, taking photos and just plain looking around the Island. I hope you can make some time to come and enjoy.



*Your editor saw at least 45 or 50 swans resting in the cove east of the bridge on November 22!

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

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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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Membership

REFUGE UPDATE

**What’s Happening on Your Refuge
By Cindy Beemiller, Refuge Manager**

More Trees!

With the help of volunteers, staff members from The National Aquarium in Baltimore planted over 240 trees on November 18. Two hundred trees were planted west of the Wickes parking lot. We have had success eradicating invasive plants from that area. Invasive plants do not do well in shade and will take over open areas quickly. Planting five-gallon potted oaks stops invasive plants such as mile-a-minute, Johnson grass and Canada thistle from re-establishing themselves. The group also planted along the roadside near Ingleside gate. When you visit the island you will notice the trees were cut and new saplings are planted. The cut trees were paper mulberry, a non-native tree in Maryland. The new saplings are dogwood and service berry. The saplings will provide a native cover and food source for song birds and other wildlife. A big thank you to the Aquarium for funding and doing all the work on this project.

of a thin strip of land, known as Hail Cove, which separates it from the Chester River. In 2009 the cove was protected with a headland structure, as seen in this picture taken from the air.



In 2014, ‘15 and ‘16 the Refuge will be working with contractors to protect Hail Point and Cedar Point from erosion. The \$1.3 million federally-funded project is to enhance coastal marshes that act as natural buffers against hurricanes and severe storms. It will protect about 400 acres of marsh habitat. Marshes have many benefits for wildlife and people. Salt marshes provide nurseries for shellfish and fin fisheries, provide habitat and food sources for wildlife, protect coastal areas from storm surges, and provide educational opportunities. Storm water runoff may have pollutants; salt marshes absorb these as they enter the bay. This is a great project and one of our top priorities.



The old mulberry trees were cut (left) and new dogwood and service berry planted (below) to provide more native habitat.



Hail Point and Cedar Point Shoreline Project

Eastern Neck’s Hail Creek is a popular area for waterfowl to feed and seek shelter from waves and cold winter winds. The creek was threatened by the erosion

Whitetail Deer Hunts

This year’s deer hunting has wrapped up. Due to changes in policy and the need to reduce staff time, we did not have a check-out station, therefore we do not know the number of deer harvested during our October and November hunts. However, the state collects this information from hunters who call into a database; we will receive the information from the state later this year. The season went well with few weather upsets. The deer hunt prevents deer starvation and reduces incidents of deer/vehicle collisions. The hunt also provides families with a long hunting heritage to continue the family tradition. We register many grandfathers, fathers and sons and the occasional grandmother, mother and daughters or sons. We look forward to continuing to conduct a managed deer hunt.

(Continued on page 4)

(Refuge Update – Continued)

Friends Social

A month ago I was looking forward to meeting many of you or talking to the many of you I already know at the Friends Social on October 25. I worked with volunteers to clean up the place inside and out. Then I picked up the flu while attending a class in Philadelphia. I am sorry I could not join the event. I was anxious to hear how it went and luckily Meg Parry stopped by my house after the event. Of course we talked at a safe distance! The Friends membership has given the Refuge time and support to do many projects over the years. I look forward to continuing the great relationship we have and working on more projects. Thank you for all your support.

Tundra Swans

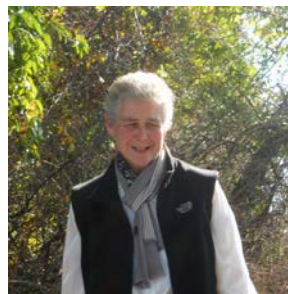
It is almost swan time! Fifty tundra swans were spotted around the Refuge but have since moved farther south. Seeing a Refuge in all seasons is such a delight. The terns have passed through, pawpaw fruit and walnut fruit has ripened and fallen, the leaves have changed, ducks and swans will arrive for the winter and come January/February owls will be quiet as they settle into their nesting season. Always something to see at the Refuge, so please visit anytime this winter.



Bricker Kayak Put-in Dedication



Before construction (left), the put-in was strewn with large rocks. The finished put-in (right) is a gently sloped pebbled ramp.



Friends president Melissa Baile welcomed the group and related the long history of the put-in's creation.



Phil Cicconi (red hat at left) regaled the group with anecdotes about his friend Owen (above). At left, Anne and her daughters toasted the sign of dedication to end the ceremony.

Friends Doings in the Bookstore: The Birds and the Bees

Over the years, we have had quite a few bird books of various types for sale at the bookstore, everything from the full-size *Sibley Guide to Birds* to *Good Birders Don't Wear White*. And we've had books about other animals as well, both for adults and children. We've given good PR to butterflies, too, with at least half a dozen books or foldouts in inventory right now. But this may be the first time we've emphasized bees, those wonderful pollinators that have recently been in the news because their numbers seem to be dwindling at an alarming rate. We now have a definitive book about this crisis, *KEEPING THE BEES: Why All Bees Are at Risk and What we Can do to Save Them (\$15.99)*. This is a must-read for anyone concerned about our food (and flower) supply as well as ecology in general.



On the more gentle side of this topic, we added a bee to our collection of popular brush art ornaments. He's simple and (if I may say so) *cute*. All of these natural-material ornaments are perfect for holiday gift-giving or for your own holiday tree. They're priced at only \$7.95. Come and see the large selection of animals and birds in this collection some-time soon.

Turning to another new item: Just in time for the cold weather, we have a new style of mug. These are BIG, so they'll hold a lot of your chosen warm beverage. They're from a group called the American Expedition "Vintage Bird Postcard Series" and we have four different birds, one of which is pictured here. They are stoneware, dishwasher and microwave safe, and at \$8.50 are a bargain. And quite stunning too. Come and shop at the bookstore for some of your holiday surprises!



ANOTHER FRIENDS PROJECT IS ON THE WAY!

At its November board meeting, the members approved Refuge manager Cindy Beemiller's request for the purchase of a new gazebo for the head of the Bayview observation trail. The gazebo that is currently in place there is in very bad condition and will be demolished, since it may be a danger to anyone who tries to use it. (See the picture of the floor at right.) The new gazebo, to be purchased from the same local company that built our outdoor benches, will be larger and made of sturdier material. This transition will happen very soon, too, because the company has it in stock. Cindy tells me it may be in place by mid-December! Look for more news about this in the next newsletter.




The old gazebo (above) may be rustic, but it almost can't be seen, and its floor (right) is actually dangerous.



THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

It's that time of year when we thank our members who contributed \$100 or more in the past six months. I'm always amazed at how generous our members are - and at how many long-time members increase their membership levels. 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

Herbert M. Cullis and Barbara Kilby
Heather Davidson and Joe Lupsha
Bob and Bonnie Ford
Jane Nitsche and Gerry Cohee
Michael J. Saxton

Eagle Society

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Don R. Clemens Steve and Virginia Croker
Judy Kelly Bob and Marilyn Parks Susan Reinsch
Ed and Karen Robison Peter and Nicole Selhorst
Robert Steinwurtzel Alexandra Totten
Dr. Clifton and Mrs. Joan West Carol LeBlanc
Ted and Gretchen Knowles

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