

# The Rookery



## The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 20, Number 2

Summer 2015

### New Gazebo Dedication

In the March *Rookery* we detailed the story of the new gazebo which was to be dedicated to the memory of George and Jean Bankey, longtime Refuge volunteers who passed away last year. On May 13, an intimate group of friends, family and Refuge staff attended a short but poignant ceremony to finally celebrate the Bankeys' love of and dedication to the Refuge. Friends vice-president Phil Cicconi related some of his memories of working with George on several projects, some dating back to the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Then the Bankeys' son, daughter and granddaughter cut a gold ribbon over the gazebo's entrance and made it all official.

At this writing, the gazebo still isn't in what is to be its permanent position, so it will be moved when ground conditions permit. It should offer not only a view of the Bayview/ Butterfly Garden but also be a welcome shady spot to sit and enjoy the beauty of the Refuge, a natural area dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. George and Jean would approve, I think. *✍*



*Phil Cicconi remembered his friends (left).*

*The Bankeys' son Bob, daughter Laura and granddaughter Abby cut the ribbon to officially open the gazebo (below).*



**President's Message****Summer 2015**

Friends:

It's turtle season! That short three or four weeks when you see turtles journeying across roads and weird places to lay their eggs. What a neat opportunity to see them up close and personal. Please watch out for them. Slow down. I stopped on two separate occasions this week to help Box turtles across the road. A Terrapin (the state reptile of Maryland, of course) was reported to have been helped across the road on the Refuge last week. Remember, place them in the direction that they are going on the other side of the road.

There are lots of birds to see at the Refuge right now. On a short walk I saw: Indigo Bunting, Bluebird, Cardinal, Sparrow, Osprey, Eagle, Red-winged Blackbird, Swallows and a Black Vulture.

The butterflies are coming! Everyday more and more arrive. Spring Azure, Zebra Swallowtail and Black Swallowtails have already been spotted. The Refuge is lucky to have an excited group of gardeners taking care of the butterflies' food source. (See page 5) They do a great job. Thank you very much for all your work.

West of the Headquarters pond, in the field to the right, a family of five kits and their mother fox have been sighted. I am sure there are many more in other locations. Spring is surely here and summer is right around the corner.

Thank you to all the volunteers who attended the volunteer dinner. I am sorry that I was unable to attend. I love this opportunity to thank our volunteers and talk and get to know them better. Our board members who were present report to me that everyone had a good time and that the event was widely attended.

Enjoy your summer! Slow down and enjoy nature.


**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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Friends of Eastern Neck  
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Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

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**REFUGE UPDATE**

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

**Treated seed**

Farming of crops is a Refuge tool to achieve wild-life goals. Eastern Neck's farm program is a management tool for Canada geese and wintering waterfowl. More than 100,000 Canada geese winter in the Chester River and thousands utilize the Refuge for shelter and food. Therefore, the Refuge conserves the regional waterfowl population by providing waterfowl with safe ground and accessible high energy forage.

However, there is a buzz about the impacts of neonicotinoid insecticides on pollinators, specifically bees. Neonicotinoid insecticides are often infused into seeds to kill insects that feed on roots or plant sap. But because some research has indicated that bees and other pollinators are also negatively affected by these insecticides, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is phasing out neonicotinoid chemical seed treatments from all farming programs on Refuges nationwide by the end of this year. Research also shows that Refuges can meet and have met wildlife goals without seed treatments. Eastern Neck discontinued use of treated seed last year.

**Wildflower planting**

You may have heard that monarch butterfly populations have seriously declined. The losses are due to loss of habitat and available milkweed. The monarch butterfly lays its eggs only on milkweed and its caterpillars eat only milkweed leaves. The Refuge has planted milkweed seeds and other wildflowers for pollinators in the fields around the lodge, bunkhouse, Bayview Garden and in fields once used for farming.

If you want to help restore monarch populations by planting milkweed seeds, they are available online. Make sure you do your research; there are different types of milkweed (for example: tropical), and some are toxic, like the neonicotinoid-treated ones above. A single caterpillar can eat 20+ large leaves. You will want to have enough plants to keep those hungry caterpillars going!



**Tree planting**

Refuge staff from Eastern Neck and Blackwater, including the fire crew, planted about 4,000 saplings

around the Wickes parking lot and along Cedar Point Road just beyond the end of Eastern Neck Road south of Wickes. Tree species included plum, oak, cherry, walnut and sycamore.

Trees will shade out invasive plants like mile-a-minute weed. The biologists have had success in reducing or eliminating invasives from these areas.

**Dinner**

Looks like all the volunteers had a great time at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. I always enjoy it. (See page 4) We had special guests at dinner – the Bankey family. The Bankey family came first to dedicate the new gazebo at Bayview Trail to George and Jean Bankey (see page 1). George contributed many volunteer hours to the Refuge working on mowing, deer hunts, bird surveys and more. We are forever grateful for his and all of our volunteers' contributions.

**Staffing**

I want to introduce you to two new employees. June Chiu is our summer bio-technician. Like previous summer bio-techs, June will be spraying, cutting and attacking, by all means deemed efficient, invasive plants. June's position is for six months within the Refuge complex of Blackwater and Eastern Neck.

Another new arrival comes to us from Blackwater: Bruce Dempsey. Bruce has swapped places with Dustin Murray, our previous Maintenance Professional. Since Bruce walked in the door on April 20, I have had him running around moving gazebos, cleaning up for the Volunteer Dinner, mowing fields, re-shaping ponds so they drain better, dressing roads and so many other tasks. I look forward to the fishing event so he can pause and get to know the place. When you meet Bruce, make sure you thank him for hitting the ground running.

**Bee survey**

We are lucky to be so close to the Patuxent Research Refuge (near Laurel, MD on the Western shore). This Refuge houses other agencies including the US Geological Survey (USGS). The lucky part is that



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

several researchers employed by USGS have surveyed or worked on Eastern Neck. Last year and this year it is Sam Droege, featured in *Audubon Magazine*'s November-December 2014 issue, who surveys for bees on the Refuge.

### Fishing Event

The 2015 Fishing Event will be June 13 from 9 am to 1 pm. Please contact me if you would like to volunteer. This is a popular event when the weather is sunny. Last year we hosted a record 98 kids and their families. We have begun mowing the parking lot, filling in beaver holes around the pond and working with the state to stock the pond with fish. The Friends of Eastern Neck has ordered t-shirts and will provide bait (for the fish) and lunch (for the people). Looking forward to seeing you there!

Fishing fun  
for the kids!



Saturday, June 13  
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.



Cindy and Suzanne

### VOLUNTEER DINNER



Good crowd, good food!



Bob



Leslie



<Meg



Carol

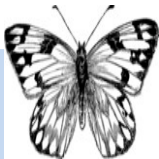
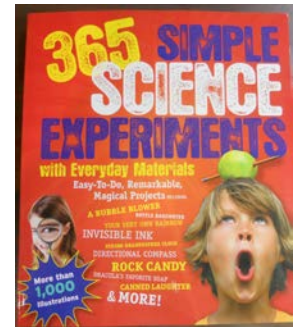
## Friends Doings

## GO LOW-TECH THIS SUMMER WITH YOUR KIDS

It's well known that all sorts of experts, from psychologists to doctors, are criticizing this couch potato generation of kids who seem to be continually playing video games, texting or reading e-books on their tablets. Too many electronics, they say; too little creative activity. If you'd like to try to get your kids or grandkids to use the electronic gadgets less and their imaginations more this summer, we've got just the books for you at the bookstore (that's right, real books) that are chock full of wonderful experiments and activities to do just that. One is called *The Kids' Outdoor Adventure Book/448 Great Things to do in Nature before you grow up (\$18.95)*. It introduces itself as written by adults who grew up at the beginning of the electronic age but still did things outdoors, and who hope to "reverse the unhealthy trend of overscheduled indoor kids." The book is divided into groups of activities to do during the four seasons. It could be called a kids' bucket list, but it also encourages the kids to get their parents outside as much as possible! This is a real keeper and, if you want to do all 448 activities, the fun could last for years.

Another book is a little different in that most of the activities can be done indoors (save them for rainy days!) - *365 Simple Science Experiments with Everyday Materials (\$12.95)*. With experiments titled "Invisible Ink," "Dirty Words: Soil, Sand, Humus and Mud," "Clutching at Straws" and (are you ready for this?) "Dracula's Favorite Soap", who couldn't be intrigued?

There's also a *Cooking in a Can* book (\$9.99). Wonder what that's all about... All of these books would be good for kids ages nine to early teens. Think about giving them a try. ✂



## A GREAT NEW START!

The Butterfly Garden will experience a rebirth this summer with a new volunteer crew making sure it's still a wonderful experience for both people and butterflies. No fewer than two Master Gardeners are on the six-person team that met a few weeks ago to begin planning how to take the garden from its present state to an even more beautiful showpiece than before. They've agreed to meet every first and third Thursday of the month to lay out necessary activities, and then working whenever they can to make sure the plans are fulfilled. I've met with this group, and I can't tell you how impressed I am with their knowledge and their enthusiasm for this project.


Of course, they can always use more help. It's a big garden! If you're interested, call Cindy (410-639-7056) and she'll have one of the group's leaders get in touch with you.

## BUTTERFLIES

What's a group of butterflies called? The most often used name is "flutter" but, as with any other group of insects, it can also be called a "swarm." Or, if you prefer, a "rabble," a "flight" or even a "kaleidoscope." ✂

**THANKS AGAIN TO OUR SUPPORTERS**

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 - 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

**Eagle Society**

Bob and Barbara Brillhart    Allen and Arlene Katz  
William and Barbara Noll    Steve and Virginia Croker  
Vic and Patricia Pfeiffer    Jim and Joanne Rich  
James and Ann Goodman    Ford and Marilee Schumann  
Bob and Linda Kramer    Don and Jolene L'Tainen  
Leslie A. Palmer    Dr. and Mrs. William Rienhoff III  
Alexandra Totten    Thomas and Marian Wenger  
Matt and Michele Whitbeck    Jim and Susan Shea  
Elizabeth R. O'Donoghue    Ellen Uzelac    Dayle Baile

**Blue Heron**

The Fordi Family  
Jane Nitsche and Gerry Cohee  
Gerry Nitsche and Barry Serviente

*The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.  
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