

# The Rookery



## The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 20, Number 4

Winter 2015

### A Successful and Enjoyable “Ducky Day”

On Saturday, October 24, we celebrated the “Day of the Ducks” to officially dedicate the decoy collection donated to us by Friends member and volunteer Dave Sorflaten and to have a few other fun ‘duck-related’ activities. It was an overcast but warm day, and almost 80 people came out to help us celebrate.

Under the big white tent set up in front of the Lodge, Dave told the story of the decoys and regaled his audience with tales of hunting, friendship and mischief over the years. A short official dedication ceremony, led by Friends vice-president and planner of the day Phil Cicconi, followed at the display itself. Two local decoy carvers, Dave Simmons and Charlie Heinefield, showed their craft, and Matt Whitbeck of the Blackwater Refuge staff provided a tour of areas of the Refuge where migrating waterfowl, primarily ducks, are stopping on their journey south. The free refreshments consisted of cider and an impressive choice of cookies provided by local chef Linda Donnelly.

The event was one of those lovely, happy, satisfying days that continue to remind us what a treasure we have in the Refuge and all the people associated with it. ✍



*Dave regaled the crowd with stories of decoy carvers and hunting ducks in “the old days.”*



*Dave with the collection, which his granddaughters helped to dedicate.*

*Matt Whitbeck enjoyed Dave’s talk, then guided a tour to see migrating ducks.*



*Charlie Heinefield (left) and Dave Simmons, local carvers, displayed their handiwork.*

**President's Message****Winter 2015**

Friends:

A few weeks ago, as I stood in the parking lot at Bogles Wharf looking out at the Chester River, the *Pride of Baltimore II* sailed by. Several smaller sailboats flanked her in a welcoming manner. It was a spectacular sight.

My mind wandered, as it often does, to earlier times when this was a common sight at this place. Sailboats, some Skipjacks, skiffs and steamboats traveled these waterways, not for sport but for the necessity of commerce. Jack Shaum, a friend of mine, has just finished a book entitled *Lost Chester River Steamboats*. When Jack called me asking for information about the wharf at Bogles, I was only able to give him the general information that we have recorded on the kiosk there. After talking to Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller, Jack was disappointed that we were not able to supply him with a single picture of the wharf during the steamboat era. There is a picture of the oyster shucking plant that stood on the shore there, but no pictures of the wharf or steamboats at the wharf. Another moment in time lost.

I am appreciative to Jack for writing this book to preserve history for future generations. This experience has given me the opportunity to relive our Refuge's beginnings and think about history, in general. History shows us examples of human condition and social change. I believe we have an obligation to preserve the record of Eastern Neck life. Thank you, Jack, for adding to our knowledge and helping to record and preserve our history in this fine book. (The book is available at the Refuge bookstore; see page 5 for more information.)

Thoreau said, "The winter is thrown to us like a bone to a famishing dog, and we are expected to get the marrow out of it." There is no better place to do that than a walk or ride at Eastern Neck in the heart of the winter. Enjoy.


**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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Eagle Society: \$100  
Blue Heron: \$250  
Tundra Swan: \$500

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Membership

## REFUGE UPDATE

*Editor's Note: Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller and Maintenance Professional Bruce Dempsey have been busy with the usual tasks of maintaining the Refuge for our enjoyment and, of course, for the good of wildlife. So this month we are reprinting an article about the National Wildlife Refuge system which appeared in **The Bay Journal**, a monthly newspaper designed to "inform the public about ecological, scientific, historic and cultural issues and events related to the Chesapeake Bay." It's an excellent overview of the system of which Eastern Neck is a part.*

## Natural areas offer refuge from urban jungle

By Kathy Reshetiloff

Reprinted by permission of *The Bay Journal*

More than 17 million people live and work in the Chesapeake watershed, encompassing 64,000 square miles and parts of Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, New York and the entire District of Columbia. That translates into a busy world full of roads, parking lots, malls, schools, houses and office buildings. In this increasingly concrete world, we need wild places to explore and discover nature. These places also help to calm our unusually busy agendas and help us reflect upon our lives.

Our wildlife needs these natural areas, too. The forests, meadows, wetlands, islands, shorelines, creeks and rivers provide our wildlife with food and water and nesting and resting places. These natural areas, also known as habitats, are critical to the survival of native plants, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals and more.

The National Wildlife Refuge system is a network of public lands set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. Through the system, waterways, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands have been protected and restored, providing much-needed habitat for U.S. wildlife. Refuges contain a priceless gift — wild lands and the perpetuation of diverse and abundant wildlife that are an essential part of our U.S. heritage.

Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island as the first refuge in 1903, the National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to include more than 560 refuges, 38 wetland management districts 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.

Refuges provide habitat for more than 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species, more than 1,000 species of fish, and countless species of invertebrates and plants. More than 380 threatened or endangered plants or animals are protected on wildlife refuges. Each year, millions of migrating birds use refuges as stepping stones while flying thousands of miles between their summer and winter homes.

Refuges are great for people, too. About 98 percent of the land in the National Wildlife Refuge system is open to the public for wildlife-dependent education and recreation.

In 1997, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act was passed to ensure that the system is managed for the protection and conservation of our nation's wildlife resources. The act also directed expanding opportunities for public recreational activities, including photography, fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, environmental education and interpretation.

Depending on the refuge, visitors may explore by car, foot, bike, canoe or kayak. Birding, wildlife observation and photography are some activities that visitors can enjoy. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are also permitted on certain refuges.

Depending on the refuge, one can find visitor centers, wildlife observation facilities, auto tours, interpretive trails and tours, outdoor classrooms or workshops. These activities help build an understanding and appreciation for wildlife, habitat and the role management plays in the stewardship of U.S. resources. Refuges welcome more than 45 million visitors each year.

*For information about the National Wildlife Refuge system, call 800-344-WILD or see [fws.gov/refuges/](http://fws.gov/refuges/)*

## National Wildlife Refuges in the Chesapeake Watershed

Bombay Hook NWR: Smyrna, DE  
 Prime Hook NWR: Milton, DE  
 Blackwater NWR: Cambridge, MD  
 Eastern Neck NWR: Rock Hall, MD  
 Patuxent NWR: Laurel, MD  
 John Heinz NWR at Tinicum: Philadelphia, PA  
 Back Bay NWR: Virginia Beach, VA  
 Chincoteague NWR: Chincoteague, VA  
 Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR: Cape Charles, VA  
 Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck NWR: Lorton, VA  
 Featherstone NWR: Woodbridge, VA (accessible by boat)  
 Great Dismal Swamp NWR: Suffolk, VA  
 James River NWR Hopewell, VA (reservations required)  
 Occoquan Bay NWR: Woodbridge, VA  
 Presquile NWR: Chester, VA (reservations required)  
 Rappahannock River Valley NWR Complex: Warsaw, VA  
 Canaan Valley NWR: Davis, WV



**WINTER WATERFOWL WALKS BEGIN AT REFUGE**

By Gren Whitman

In spite of a light drizzle, 15 hardy birders showed up for the first Winter Waterfowl Walk on November 7 at Eastern Neck NWR, sponsored by the Friends of Eastern Neck and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

With expert commentary by Washington College sophomore Mike Hudson, the group spent over two hours hiking to Panhandle Point, Hail Creek and Shipyard Creek, with an abundant display of waterfowl on display in Hail Creek.

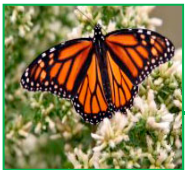
Afterwards, Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller welcomed the group to refuge headquarters to enjoy cocoa and cookies, courtesy of Copper Pearl, a Rock Hall caterer. Friends board member Meg Parry has been especially helpful in organizing the walks.

Four more walks are scheduled as the winter progresses: On December 5, January 2, February 6, and March 5, with a few openings still available for anyone who wants to participate. For information and to register, send an e-mail to Gren Whitman at [easternneckwalks@gmail.com](mailto:easternneckwalks@gmail.com) or call him at 443-691-9370. *✂*



*Walk leader Mike Hudson zooms in on the day's quarry.*

*The loon cookies were delightful – and delicious!*



***DID YOU NOTICE? ARE MONARCHS ON THEIR WAY BACK?***

Cindy reported that she saw many more monarch butterflies on the Refuge this year than in the past few years. I also noticed more on my backyard butterfly bush. A good sign? Monarch numbers have steeply declined in the past few years, and hopefully this signals the beginning of a turnaround.

**A CHANGING OF THE GUARD**

The membership of your board of directors has changed: Jolene L'Tainen has resigned because she and husband Don are moving their primary home to Pennsylvania. We're pleased that Jolene will still be available for bookstore duty and special events. She's been a wonderful asset to the Friends and the board.

Taking her place is Simon Kenyon, a retired veterinarian who, with his wife Sue, moved to Rock Hall after living and working in many places around the world. Simon has already been active at the Refuge with the garden crew. Welcome to the board!

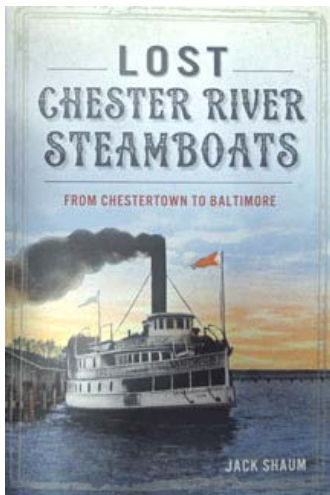
Friends Doings

MORE DUCKY STUFF AT THE BOOKSTORE

In the Fall issue of *The Rookery*, we highlighted duck-related items that bookstore manager Jackie Cicconi had stocked in honor of our Duck Day festivities. But we have still more "duck stuff" for you because that's what the Refuge is all about during the winter season - migrating waterfowl, ducks, Canada geese and, of course, our beloved (and famous) tundra swans. So we decided to continue to feature duck-themed items in this newsletter too. In addition to our soft green and tan T-shirts with mallard prints, we also have a lovely royal blue tee (\$14.95) that's a little more dramatic. ►



◀ We can't forget one of our best selling items throughout the year - our cotton Wheel House brand socks that sell for \$7.95. There are mallards on these, too. Think stocking stuffers? And speaking of stocking stuffers, why not a few duck-themed bookmarks for all the people in the family who still read 'real' books (e-books are OK but...). We have two styles: the square magnetic ones that are really very handy for marking the exact place on a page where you stopped reading, and the more conventional, vertical style. Both are priced at \$1.99 - great deals! (The square ones shown here are only two of more than 80 different designs featuring other birds, butterflies and various flowers.)►



◀ But enough ducks for now. In her president's message, Melissa introduced you to *Lost Chester River Steamboats*, written by Jack Shaum, a long-time writer and news reporter who lives near Chestertown. We have copies available in the bookstore now (\$21.99). His reason for writing this book, Jack says, is that very little has been written about the steamboats that were the economic lifeblood of the Eastern Shore for over a century, when roads were primitive, railroads not yet on the scene, and the waters of the Bay and its rivers were the highways of commerce. Jack writes a well-researched tale. We also have some vested interest in the book: both Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller and Melissa are thanked in the *Acknowledgments*, Bogles Wharf is mentioned as playing a part in the story of these remarkable boats, and our *Before the Refuge* book by Dave and Eloise Blanpied is listed in the bibliography. If you're at all interested in local history, this book should appeal to you. ✍

Again, we want to thank all our wonderful bookstore volunteers for their unselfish dedication to staffing the store throughout the year. They are the face of the Refuge to the visiting public, and many have remarked how friendly and helpful they are. The Friends couldn't do without them -- the bookstore contributes half of all the dollars we have to spend on helping the Refuge fulfill its mission. Thank you, thank you!

**And Happy Holidays to all!**



**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. It's very gratifying to know that so many (almost 250 people) love the Refuge enough to continue to donate to our efforts to keep it a wonderful place for wildlife and visitors alike. 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**

Joyce M. Purcell  
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