



The Volunteer

Issue 8

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

Summer 1997

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This newsletter supplements Marsh Notes by providing in-depth information about Jug Bay volunteers and more details on research projects and other volunteer opportunities. It is prepared and edited by Judy Burke.

You're invited on a sunset cruise--no paddling required

Please join us on a special excursion for volunteers: an evening ride on the Patuxent River on a pontoon boat, *Thursday, September 18, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.* Jean Tierney, a naturalist with Patuxent River Park across the river from the Sanctuary, has agreed to be our guide and boat pilot, as we travel up the river in the dusk and return at sunset. Evening can be a wonderful time to see and hear wildlife, and September 18 will be close to a full moon, so don't miss this opportunity to experience the river in soft light, good company and easy comfort.

Light refreshments will be served.

We will meet at Patuxent River Park. (From Route 4, go south on Route 301 to Croom Road, also known as Route 382. Turn left on Croom Road. After three miles, turn left on Croom Airport Road. After two miles, turn left at the park gate. Go two more miles to the parking lot, and meet at the boat dock.) Please be prompt so we can launch on time.

The boat holds a maximum of 20 people, so we will need to take reservations here at the Sanctuary. Please call soon to sign up.

And for daytrippers, a journey to Otter Point Creek

As part of our thanks for your work at Jug Bay, we are also scheduling a second autumn excursion, this one an all-day event that will take us farther afield to learn about wetlands and woodlands in the upper Chesapeake Bay. On *Friday, November 14*, we will travel to Harford County to visit Otter Point Creek, a component--like Jug Bay--of the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Maryland.

Otter Point, on the western shore, is a 672-acre site of open water, freshwater tidal marshes, forested wetlands and upland hardwood forests. It includes one of the largest tidal freshwater marshes in the upper Bay. The property consists of two disconnected sites. Leight Park, owned by the Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation, has

a year-old visitor center that includes an auditorium, exhibit room and laboratory. This visitor center serves as the Reserve Center for all of Maryland; it will eventually include an exhibit about Jug Bay. The second site, the Melvin G. Bosely Wildlife Conservancy, is owned by the local chapter of the Izaak Walton League and offers extensive hiking.

We plan to meet at the park at 10 a.m. to tour the visitor center with naturalist Heather Helm, then drive to the Conservancy site for a hike, and then return to the center for our bag lunches. Those who like can also walk the three-quarter-mile trail at the park.

The tour can handle a maximum of 30 people, so please call the Sanctuary to make reservations. In the coming weeks, we will give directions to Otter Point (and see if people want to car-pool).

Two new “ringers” at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

(Article from Mike Quinlan)

Two of our most active volunteers, **Mike Quinlan** and **Lloyd Lewis**, recently returned from an eight-day bird-banding training program in Pennsylvania. The program was presented by two experienced banders from the Institute for Bird Populations in Point Reyes, Calif. This is the same organization that manages the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. The Sanctuary, under Director Chris Swarth and volunteer Danny Bystrak, has participated in MAPS since 1990.

The training program, one of eight across the country this summer, was held at the Raystown Field Station of Juniata College near Huntington, Pa. The program is intended to impart essential skills to prospective banders (known as “ringers” in Great Britain, where the activity has a long, active history) and to encourage the establishment of additional MAPS stations.

Banding offers an unparalleled opportunity to see birds up close and learn about their plumages, molt sequences and life histories. Banding programs provide critical information on individual birds and on the size, reproduction and survival of bird populations as well as information on their migration. This information contributes directly to bird conservation.

Each of the nine students in the class examined, weighed, measured and banded from 20 to 25 birds during the week. The nets were open from 6 a.m. to noon. In the afternoon, students were given classroom training until supper. After supper, they opened the nets until dark, or gathered for informal discussions. The students were all non-professionals in the wildlife arena, with Mike and Danny being the most knowledgeable about bird banding from their work at Jug Bay. They return with new confidence in their skills, ready to make even greater contributions to the various bird studies at the Sanctuary, and having thoroughly enjoyed the training. At \$543 for classes, room and

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nd, Mike says, "It was absolutely a bargain. The food was fantastic -- home-cooked meals" by a professor and students at Juniata College.

(The MAPS season at Jug Bay is ending for the summer, but see below for research programs coming up, and contact Judy Burke for more information.)

Migration study of southbound birds is set to take off

Danny Bystrak and a loyal bird crew (Lloyd Lewis, Mike Quinlan, Dave Perry, Julianna White and Dave McNally) have prepared most of the 19 mist nets for their fall migration research on the Farm side of the Sanctuary, and the nets will be opened beginning in early August. The schedule is not confirmed yet, but they will probably open the nets two mornings a week, with the first round each day at 7 a.m.

New volunteers are welcome to join this work of checking the nets, identifying the birds, color-marking their feathers and measuring them before letting them go.

Marbled salamander research gearing up

In the late summer and throughout the fall, we study the marbled salamanders as they move from underground in the woods to the ponds where they breed. We catch the salamanders (and other amphibians) in pitfall traps set up along drift fences around the ponds. We need a lot of volunteer help for this project, because we hope to leave the traps open every day of the week once the migration season gets well under way in September.

If you are interested in helping, please join us for a volunteer orientation on Saturday, August 16, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. We will discuss how to identify and sex different amphibians and review data-recording procedures.

No. 1 way to get muddy: Measure wetland plants

The second phase of our yearly count of plants along transects begins Monday, August 4. This research into annual and long-term changes in plant communities uses sample areas along a straight line. We ran the transects in early June and now will study them again August 4-8 and perhaps the following week. We will probably begin at 9 a.m. and work for about three hours. If you would like to help, please contact Karyn Molines.

In July, Marcy Damon and a hard-working crew studied wetlands plants in another way, sampling them in square plots. Early results include:

--The Cardinal Flower was found in scrub-shrub plots for the first time.

--In the plots that have been known as "Wild Rice plots," the coverage of submerged aquatic vegetation has gone up dramatically, reaching 85 to 95 percent of the area. The Wild Rice is very sparse; it was eaten out by resident Canada Geese.

--Smartweed made its first appearance in two of the Cattail plots.

--There appears to have been a possible reduction in the Cattail population.

Two more chances to go seining for fish

We have two more fish surveys scheduled: on Saturday, August 9, from 9 a.m. to noon, and on Saturday, September 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please call to sign up.

Insider's Look: How to turn your backyard into wildlife habitat

On Saturday, September 13, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Marcy Damon will offer a special training on how to design your home landscape to provide good habitat for wildlife. Animals need food and water, but they also need cover, and this session will delve into both aspects of good habitat. You don't need a lot of space to help local wildlife; you can improve even a small yard with the help of good ideas. Bring a rough sketch of a "bird's eyeview" of your existing backyard (with water sources, species of plants and trees, and structures labeled). Free handouts will be provided. This program is supported by the WindStar Wildlife Institute. Please call the Sanctuary to sign up.

Patuxent partner offering lecture in the field on Sora Rails

Have you ever wondered about the strange sounds coming from the Railroad Bed in the fall? You may have been hearing the recordings of Sora Rails played to attract the migrating birds into mist nets. Those recordings are part of research run by Greg Kearns, a naturalist from Patuxent River Park across the river.

Greg will explain his research in detail at a lecture-in-the-field here on Sunday, September 14, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Save those old clothes for our marsh cleanup

Mark your calendars for a popular fall event: the down-and-dirty cleanup of our marsh. We will work on Sunday, September 21, from noon to 3 p.m., picking up tires, bottles and the other assortment of trash that floats down the Patuxent to our park.