

Exploring the Parris Glendening Nature Preserve at Jug Bay

by Chris Swarth

Although recreational uses of the Parris Glendening Nature Preserve have not been defined, we are preparing the land for future public access. We will soon begin a planning process, with an opportunity for public input, to formulate policies and appropriate uses of the Preserve. Until that time, unauthorized access, dogs, and horses will be prohibited. Former uses such as sand mining, logging, hunting, dumping, and off-road vehicles have been stopped. During this planning phase, you may enjoy the new Preserve by taking a naturalist-led hike (see p. 4) or by joining one of our volunteer work crews. Call Christina Santoni for details.

Preparing the new 620-acre Preserve for public access requires that we learn how this land was used in the past. Wild lands, even those labeled “pristine,” usually bear some signs of human use. The Sanctuary staff has been making frequent trips to the Preserve in order to get familiar with its habitats, trails and environmentally-sensitive areas. Old logging roads crisscross the entire parcel. Some will be converted into hiking trails, while others will be abandoned so that natural vegetation can return. With familiarity comes growing excitement as we discover the subtle beauty of this newest county park!

Steady progress has been made in the past five months:

* Environmental Chief Brian Woodward and state resource planner Jean Lippahrt with Maryland’s Program Open Space, have completed the formal environmental easement document, which permanently limits development and ensures that the Preserve remains wild and natural.

* The county survey crew, headed by Dave Brice and Clint Cosner and under the direction of chief Jeff Bathras, completed a survey of the perimeter and the interior in record time.

* Volunteer David Linthicum, our

resident cartographer, made a field map based on the county survey and aerial photos. Thanks Dave!

* Signs and gates have been placed along the external boundaries and access points to inform the public that this land is now a county park. We are working with the State Highway Administration to close off two chronic dumping spots on the north edge of the Preserve.

* In an old rifle and skeet shooting range we removed target stands. Using metal detectors, Quiet Waters Park rangers Brad Hunt and Dave Kidwell discovered live rounds in the soil and removed them.

* An old hunter’s shelter has been removed and replaced with a small dirt parking lot.

* In February and March, Eagle scout candidate Chris Boyer of Crownsville and his troop are locating and mapping old hunting blinds and deer stands for removal, and identifying and mapping the largest trees in the Preserve.



* A horse-boarding stable occupied the northeast corner for over twenty years. Some of the pastureland here will be turned into meadows for wildlife. We are removing old, dangerous outbuildings and fencing. As might be imagined, we also inherited abandoned old farm vehicles and trash dumps; these, too, are slated for removal.

New Earthworm Species Found

The Patuxent River recently earned a new distinction by having a new species of earthworm named after it. The earthworm *Diplocardia patuxentis* was discovered at Jug Bay by Dr. Csaba Csuzdi, an earthworm taxonomist of the Hungarian Natural History Museum, and Dr. Kathy Szlavecz, an ecologist at the Johns Hopkins University and a member of the Jug Bay Scientific Advisory Committee. The scientists dug specimens from the bank of Two Run Creek last April, when Csaba visited the United States. The Sanctuary’s openness to scientists who are conducting biological research has culminated in such new discoveries and in valuable information about natural systems as well.

Of the eleven species of earthworms identified at Jug Bay, six species are native. This ratio of native species is unusually high compared to other sites. The high proportion of native earthworms may occur at the Sanctuary because the land bordering the creek is relatively undisturbed, and because many native earthworm species prefer wet habitats.

The genus *Diplocardia* is native to North America and contains over fifty known species. Another species in this genus, *D. texensis* was also found at the junction of Otter Point trail and Railroad Bed trail. *Diplocardia* species are generally small (less than 10 cm), thin, whitish worms.

Apparently, Jug Bay is a sanctuary for many animal groups besides vertebrates!