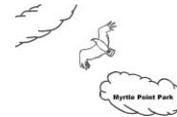




To The Point Fall 2007



Newsletter of the Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.

CLEANINGUP AND FLOATING AN OPPORTUNITY!

On Saturday, April 14th a great group of volunteers, including a well organized group of Cub Scouts from Pack 1203 and Brownies, showed up to help cleanup Myrtle Point Park. They were, indeed, a no nonsense group as they set about the task of cleaning up the Park.



Off to the beach with bags and buckets.



Trash out of the woods makes a safer habitat for the animals.



Trash from the beach includes a fisherman's loss.

And then Mary Piotrowski found a length of pier that could be used as an educational tool at the pond!



Mary floats the platform further up the beach, closer to the steps.



Preparing to take it up the beach and **UP THE STEPS!**



WHEW! Finally up the steps and at the top. Not through yet....



Almost there!!



In place and in use.



Done and a cleaner park.

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELPED MAKE MYRTLE POINT PARK A CLEANER PARK FOR VISITORS AND RESIDENT ANIMALS. ONE MORE STEP TO IMPROVE THE WATER QUALITY OF THE PATUXENT RIVER AND CHESAPEAKE BAY. AGAIN – THANK YOU!



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From the President's Desk

Jack Witten
(301) 373-5445

It's been a long hot dry summer for southern Maryland. So my visit to Myrtle Point Park on August 22nd was something of an anomaly, it had been raining and the ground was actually wet. This time of year is often pretty slow as wildlife goes, the birds are quiet and the lack of flowers and moisture have kept down the number of insects and other animals. Still I managed a couple of pictures of deer, missing another one of a very quick rabbit bouncing across the trail. A few birds welcomed me as I wandered around the front section of the park. The white-eyed vireos were calling from the parking lot and a mocking bird eyed me as I walked another path. Cardinals were the only other species I recorded during my brief stay.

My real purpose in visiting the Park on that day was to check the site we have picked for our proposed planting project. The weeds that were knee high the previous month, now loomed over my head. Since we want to clear this area in to prepare it for planting native wildflowers and shrubs, I put on my work gloves and tried to pull up a couple of them. Surprisingly they came up quite easily. This was encouraging, but I stopped with this little experiment, because we do not yet have permission to go forward with our project.

At our last board meeting we did hammer out some of the details for the project and have left it in Kellie's talented hands to flesh out our discussion. Once we have a more detailed plan and addressed the issue of tilling (thank you Warren) and water, we think we have a winner. Look in this issue for more information about what we would like to do.

Our next scheduled event at the Park will be a field trip planned by Southern Maryland Audubon Society. The date is Sunday October 21st starting at 9 a.m. I'll be leading the trip and it is billed as family friendly. I think that kind of describes the park as well. The trails are easy to navigate, the price is right (free), and the educational opportunities are excellent. Please consider joining me as we start a new season at the Park.



Bob Boxwell

Look For These Fall Birds at Myrtle Point Park

Great Blue Heron
 Great Egret (on migration)
 Snowy Egret (on migration)
 Mute Swan
 Canada Goose
 Black Vulture
 Turkey Vulture
 Osprey (on migration)
 Bald Eagle
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Ring-billed Gull
 Herring Gull
 Great Black-backed Gull
 Laughing Gull (on migration)
 Mourning Dove
 Great Horned Owl
 Barred Owl
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird (on migration)
 Belted Kingfisher
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Blue Jay
 American Crow



Fish Crow
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Carolina Wren
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Eastern Bluebird
 Gray Catbird
 Northern Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 Cedar Waxwing
 European Starling
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Northern Cardinal
 Eastern Towhee
 Chipping Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Red-winged-Blackbird
 Common Grackle
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 House Finch
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow

Fall is also a marvelous time to see many other migrating species – particularly warblers. Later on, as winter approaches, an assortment of waterfowl will arrive to spend the colder months in the water off Myrtle Point.

Bev Walker



FALL YOUTH BIRDING TRIP

Sunday, October 21st , 9 AM – Noon
Myrtle Point Park

Leader: Bob Boxwell, 410-394-1300, bobboxwell@hotmail.com.

A diverse habitat which should make for an interesting morning.

From Calvert County: take Route 4 across the Thomas Johnson Bridge and turn right on Patuxent Boulevard, approximately 2 1/4 miles west of the bridge.

From St. Mary's County: take Route 4 towards Solomons, turn left on Patuxent Boulevard.

Follow to the end of Patuxent Boulevard and meet in the parking lot on the left.

No fee, no facilities.

**LEONARDTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AT MYRTLE POINT PARK**

The first middle school to develop an environmental study at Myrtle Point Park (MPP) did so collaborating with Friends of Myrtle Point (FOMPP) Educators and Environmental Educators from around the Southern Maryland area. Sixth grade teachers, Nathan Swick, Jennifer Dade and Jennifer Carter with close to 400 students and parents who acted as guides for all of the rotating groups descended on Myrtle Point Park in two groups; April 17th and 24th. The 17th was windy and end of winter cold. Our findings that day would reflect that. But the 24th was spring at its best and the results were quite different. But both groups did the same activities and performed equally well. Their data helps add to our ongoing research and record keeping we have maintained since we formed.



We had several meetings to carefully plan with Environmental Educational Coordinator Margarita Rochow, Kurt Wright Lead Instructor at Elms Environmental Center for St. Mary's County, Bob Boxwell Director Cove Point Natural Heritage Center in Lusby, Dudley Lindsley, FOMPP, Mary Piotrowski Naturalist St. Mary's County Public Schools MPP and Ginny Piotrowski 7th Grade Leonardtown Middle School (LMS) Teacher Biology. These were also the instructors for both days and Mary Roderick retired St. Mary's County teacher joined us the second day to assist.

We set up stations at three of the beaches; Red Oak, Thomas Point and Ghost Beach where three of our professionals met students and assisted them as the dip netted and identified both flora and fauna and recorded information about the ecosystem. They also traveled to a deeper wooded location where they again examined the mature trees and discussed native and non-native species; a serious and pervasive topic here and worldwide. They spent time at a learning exercise where they investigated a predator/prey relationship and drew conclusion from the "hunt".



The FOMPP and many helping hands had assisted in clearing the farm pond and installing a small dock found in another part of the park. So one new first time ever activity netting at the freshwater pond. This was extremely well received; maybe first as the mud and yuk was a little daunting. But once the first creatures found everyone was excited and everyone became involved. Fortunately, the students had contributed enough towards the trip and nets were purchased for the school to permanently have them in Lab supplies and enough were on hand for each at that station to participate.



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One of the best results of this event is that a format has been set for any future Middle school to prepare a field trip of this magnitude. The scheduling and coordinating of that many students while trying to move them through short distances and yet meeting curriculum needs took a tremendous amount of work.

Most of the notes I have are from my station, the pond, so I apologize for not reporting more thoroughly on the other locations.

Some of the discoveries I have in my notes as I manned the freshwater pond are as follows: at the base of a tree at the waters edge is a fairly complete fawn skeleton which all the students did examine but refrained from touching. I did take away the skull cap as it was April and there are tiny antler buds of about 2 inches making it one of the smallest bucks I've retrieved. About 100 ft. away in the woods behind a log which is hard to find is the skeleton of a doe in the same state of decomposition. I posed the question to the students why would they both be dead here and at the same time? I never did answer it but I did pick up a shotgun shell beside the fawn carcass. This pond is manmade by a dirt berm separating it from the marsh and Patuxent River on the other side. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) does issue duck hunting permits out here.



There are grey fox dens all around this pond and bones around every entrance of the den. No, a fox won't bring an adult deer down. On the 17th the students barely brought up dragonfly larvae and

one very dark brown spring peeper. No adult dragonflies are in flight. The leaves also held a few ½ inch still estivating leeches which totally grossed everyone out. We always pulled them up in pairs. I have always noted leeches will not become active until the water is 50 degrees and the air is 80 degrees. We are of course hearing peepers and an occasional wood frog. We did bring up yellow spotted salamander egg masses and could see the larvae inside. Pretty cool. We also pulled up a few tadpoles but not many. I have no notes from the other stations other than it was cold and windy at the waterfront.

MPP April 24th LMS: Gorgeous weather as the last few days were in the 80's. A whole different ball game as far as the data collected by the 6th graders today. I am sharing their information as it serves as a way of recording more information about the Park for future reference. This technique has proven to be helpful on several occasions.

Close to 200 students and their chaperones circulated through their stations and today the leaves were



out on most the trees with a light green pollen gently floating down on everything. Even the birds were singing. After the heavy rains of last week the puddles drying this week allowed for the tracks of animals pausing to get a rare freshwater drink to be recorded. Deer raccoon and fox were very everywhere. Also we saw lots of mosquito larvae starting. Autumn olive was blooming on the edge of the woods and Bob Boxwell and I both noted that it had not been prevalent in the Park when we first came a decade ago but that it is very invasive and birds in particular have really spread it. We might want to control that particular plant before it takes off any further.

At the pond we pulled up a Spring peeper and the males throat was so swollen as to be translucent. He remained like that for the morning and was just spectacular. A diving predaceous beetle with the tiny perfect rows of diamond like eggs on its back was netted. That was thrilling to share with everyone and then a second one was brought up! I reminded everybody beetles have a heck of a pinch. We captured a grey tree frog, heard several bull frogs, heard American Toads and saw them along the trails. Dudley Lindsley down on Ghost Beach, no surprise, had a Northern Water snake as did Bob at Red Oak Pond. We started pulling up dragonfly larvae of several species and adults flew all about the pond. The best fun were the tadpoles. The two and three year old giant green and bullfrog tadpoles were as big as your fist!



And we would sometimes net full nets of Itty bitty newly hatched woodfrog tadpoles. Plenty of yellow-spotted salamander egg masses and their larvae. Nothing is breaking the water here. No fish. No turtles. Wonder if this will dry up come summer. Is this more of a vernal pool or a pond? Pond duckweed is covering the top quickly. Blackflies active but ticks not too bad. Yet. Three mallards kept us company. Cardinals, robins, osprey, videos, towhee, thrasher, bluebirds are all down here at this little pond.

Deer tracks and sign are so numerous you begin to disregard them. Poison ivy is also present. Black willow grows beside and in the pond which isn't bad as it may keep the temperature down. There is an SAV but it doesn't look friendly. The other side of the berm is where the native action is...but that is for another exploration. The pond serves as one of the only sources of fresh water on M.P. We have tended to ignore it. But it may well be one of the more important resources already in existence at the Park that will not need additional money and will not be disturbed to be useful to education and as a needed natural resource.



Let's be sure to see it is cared for in the next few years.

SAVE THE DATE!

“Organic Frederick” - A showing of the **award winning documentary** which examines how organics are entering the American mainstream, one community at a time. This debut showing will be at the **Good Earth Health Food Store in Leonardtown on First Friday, September 7, 2007 at 5 p.m.** Organic food/snacks will be served. It is only a 28 minute film, so you can do all the fun things at Leonardtown's First Fridays that evening. Start with this inspiring film!

Tuesday, September 18th: The Potomac River Association invites you to join us for a Potluck Dinner. The theme is *Working Together to Foster Sustainable Living Practices*. Location: Chesapeake Bay Field Lab on St. George Island. There will be a Rain Barrel/Rain Garden Workshop at 5:30 followed by dinner at 6:00. What to bring: Food or Drink to Share; Lawn Chair; You own reusable Plate, Silverware, and Drinking Vessel. Remember, think sustainable items. Organization members who will be present include: Potomac River Association, Chesapeake Bay Field Lab, Lower Potomac Tributary Team and the St. Mary's Rivershed Association. For reservations and additional information, please, contact: Dudley Lindsley – 301-373-2551; e-mail: dlindsley@verizon.net.

RiverFest 2007 sponsored by the The St. Mary's River Watershed Association will be held from Noon to 4:00 PM, Saturday, **September 29, 2007** at the Chesapeake Bay Field Lab on St. George Island. Festivities will include skipjack rides, oyster tonging, water quality sampling, seine netting, bird walks, exhibits, pumpkin painting, food, drinks, and much more.

Patuxent River Appreciation Days 2007, Saturday, October 6th and Sunday October 7th,
10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland. For information: <http://www.pradinc.org/>

Summerseat Farm Third Annual Homecrafted Quilt Auction, Saturday, October 20, 2007, Preview – 9 a.m., Auction – 10 a.m. Baked Goods and Crafts will be available. Call 301-373-3573 for information or visit the website: www.summerseat.org. Summerseat is located just north of Route 247 (Loveville Road), watch for the signs.

Friends of Myrtle Point Meetings are open to the public on the third Monday of the month. Call Dudley Lindsley, 301-373-2551; e-mail: dlindsley@verizon.net for additional information.

Fall Youth Birding Trip: Sunday, October 21st , 9 AM – Noon, Myrtle Point Park. **Leader: Bob Boxwell,** 410-394-1300, bobboxwell@hotmail.com. A diverse habitat which should make for an interesting morning. .

Invasive Species Removal at Hellen Creek Preserve and Myrtle Point Park

For more information or to receive updates about workdays email or call: Bob Boxwell, Executive Director, Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust, P.O. Box 336, Lusby, MD 20657, 410-394-1300, bobboxwell@hotmail.com

Join the Holly Arboretum Volunteer Crew at Warrior's Rest - Work includes invasive vine removal, mulching, mowing, and pruning. Contact: American Chestnut Land Trust, P.O. Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676, 410-586-1570



Site of a recent bocce ball tournament.

A PROPOSED PROJECT – A DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

On 16 July 2007 Board Members of the Friends of Myrtle Point Park met at the park entrance to survey the park for a garden location. This was the first step the group has taken to develop a small garden of native species as an educational project a reality. Luckily the garden was delayed and didn't get planted this spring. This summer's drought would have killed a great idea before it ever had a chance.

When we met at the park and Bob Boxwell led us to the second suggested location, we knew we had our perfect garden site. At the end of the grass parking, along the lane to the right of the bulletin board is our proposed Demonstration Garden site. It is the area that was scrapped and refilled about a couple of years ago making it a site with less entrenched plants in the center and a good group of sheltering shrubs around the edges. Across the lane from the garden site is a partially shaded area with walnut and cedar trees. With very limited light pruning it will be a lovely location to rest after a hike in the park or after viewing the Demonstration Garden.



The Friends of Myrtle Point Park will be responsible for finding the funding, doing the planning, installing the garden and maintaining the garden through the first year. Currently the garden is expected to act as a test site for a small working group. Imagine a garden in approximately the shape of a hand. The palm of the hand would be where Mary Piotrowski has her test plot for tall grasses, wild flowers or ferns. Anything she wants to test as deer resistant and hardy. Each finger or finger pad would be another test plot; a plot for each member or group of members who would be willing to be responsible for it for a year. Between the plots we could place paths of mulch from the county. Of course, the Friends of Myrtle Point Park garden will take more than imagination; it will take planning and some sweat equity.

Mary has been interviewing various folks that deal with the deer browse problem on a regular basis to cross reference some of the better plant choices.

Board Member Kellie Gofus has written a proposal to be submitted to St. Mary's County Recreation and Parks for approval.

If you would like to join this project, please come to the next meeting of the Friends of Myrtle Point Park as we continue to discuss proposed garden designs and plants. We look forward to seeing you again or meeting you for the first time, please come and join us.



Additional contact information:

Website: <http://www.myrtlepoint.org>

E-mail: dilindsley@verizon.net Phone: Dudley Lindsley – 301-373-2551

The Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc. is interested in having an active involved membership. Our existing membership has provided excellent support in the past and now we are actively looking for new members to join with us in our current and future projects. If you haven't been to a meeting lately, please come, and if you have been thinking about joining, **now** is a wonderful time.

One of the things we would like to expand is our Myrtle Point Park species lists. These include birds, flowers, trees, insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, etc. John M. Parrish, Ecologist, Botanist, Maryland Native Plant Society in 1998 provided some fascinating species lists that will be used as a basis for creating a complete ecological picture of the Myrtle Point Park. Anyone with an interest and the ability to identify and describe their wildlife finds (plant or animal) clearly, can contribute to this effort. This effort will be the focus of our next meeting on 17 September at the Higher Education Building.

Hope to see you...

The next event will be the Fall Youth Birding Trip on October 21st with Bob Boxwell.

Return to:

Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.; P.O. Box 1433; California, Maryland 20619-1433

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Membership: _____ Individual(s) - \$10.00 (check to Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.)

_____ Families - \$25.00 (check to Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.)

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