



To The Point Spring 2007



Newsletter of the Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.



The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a system of over 130 of the Chesapeake Bay's special places.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways are the places to experience, first-hand, Chesapeake life and culture. Gateways are the Bay's hidden treasures – each communicating a unique relationship and story of the Chesapeake. Gateways are parks, wildlife refuges, maritime museums, historic sites and water trails. They are places you can go to explore, enjoy, relax, learn or simply renew your spirit. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network connects you with the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers through 150 exceptional parks, wildlife refuges, museums, sailing ships, historic communities, trails and more.

Find out more about The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network: <http://www.baygateways.net>

Myrtle Point Park Was Accepted into the Gateways Network in April 2006

Myrtle Point Park is a culturally rich site that offers abundant Bay-related natural, historic and recreational resources. The 192-acre natural park is located on the western shore of the Patuxent River and is about 5 miles from the confluence of the river with the Chesapeake Bay.



The park is distinguished by its nearly two miles of pristine shoreline, tidal wetlands, salt ponds, mature forests, network of nature trails and documented archeological sites. It provides a tranquil setting for activities such as hiking, picnicking, bird watching, beach combing, fishing and environmental education.

Myrtle Point Park is generally open from dawn until dusk, year round. The park main gate opens at 7:00 a.m. The evening gate closing times are:

- April, May & June - 8:00 p.m.
- July & August - 9:00 p.m.
- September, October & November - 8:00 p.m.

December, January, February & March - the park gate closed to vehicles, but open to walk-in patrons.

This is a passive natural park, with opportunities for hiking, bird watching and nature interpretation



<http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/recreate/facilities/myrtlepointpark.asp>.



FOMPP Board of Directors - 2006

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From the President's Desk

Friends of Myrtle Point Park Annual Meeting

The fifth Annual Meeting of the Friends of Myrtle Point Park will be held on Monday, March 19th, 2007 at 7:00 p.m., in the Higher Education Center located on Airport View Road in California, Maryland. There will be an annual report with highlights from the education committee and election of the board of directors.

This is your opportunity to tell us what you would like to see happen at the park this year. We welcome new blood on the board of directors, but anyone interested in the park should take advantage of this opportunity.

We will have some light refreshment and our normal informative and fun time when the Board gathers. As some of you may know I have served on many boards, this one is always entertaining and I come out feeling better than when I entered. For more information contact me at: bobboxwell@hotmail.com or **410-394-1300**.

Hope to see you on March 19th.

Bob Boxwell



Visit the FOMPP Website:
www.myrtlepoint.org

2007 Myrtle Point Park Cleanup Date Set

The annual Patuxent River Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday April 14th. Myrtle Point is one of a number of sites on the Patuxent and the FOMPP plan on beginning their work at 9:00 a.m. and running until noon. In past years we have been joined by scout troops, the Patuxent Roughnecks (a volunteer group working on special river projects), the Southern Maryland Parrot Head Club, board members, regular members, and people from the community.

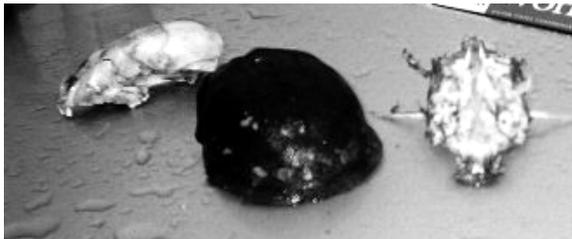


For those planning to join us, please come to the picnic area where we will have a sign in sheet. Here you will get your assignment, trash bags, buckets, and work gloves. It is advisable to wear sturdy work clothes and shoes. Please, check back in to the picnic area and let us know what you found, how much trash you picked up, and if we need to give any area additional attention. Last year we found two areas that can only be described as trash middens. Hopefully we won't find more this year, but there is still work to be done on them.

As in the past we have the cooperation of the county through their board of Recreation and Parks. This group has a lot on its plate and they need the help of volunteers to be able and perform all the tasks assigned to them. Myrtle Point, being a fairly new park, has always been heavily dependent on volunteers. So as a user of the park, this is your chance to give back. As a participant in these efforts I can tell you this is a fun and rewarding way to spend an hour or the whole morning.



If you have a group interested in joining us, please contact us in advance at **410-394-1300** or by e-mail at bobboxwell@hotmail.com.



Treasures found during Myrtle Point Cleanup - 2006



Some of the trash removed from the beach, woods and water – to make a cleaner Park for you to enjoy.

"To clean up a river, somebody has to get dirty!"
Fred Tutman, Patuxent Riverkeeper

Are We Feeling the Effects of Global Warming?

Whether you think global warming has an impact on your way of life may depend on where you are living. Certainly the South Pacific islands where the sea level is threatening to envelope the land or the Chilean villages whose water supply is dependent of glacier melt from the Andes, the consequences are quite real. But in this county it may depend on what side of Appalachians you reside. The icy cold subfreezing blizzards battering Colorado may make global warming the furthest thing from its resident's minds. While the unusually mild spring like conditions along the Eastern seaboard makes global warming feel like a reality.

Actually in this county, which recorded the highest ever average temperature in the lower 48 in 2006, these weather extremes are exactly what we can expect from global warming. Colder, stronger, and longer lasting winter storms are one manifestation. Many attribute the incredible 2005 hurricane season to the unusually warm waters in the Gulf of Mexico. Increases in oceanic temperatures are a sign of global warming.

While it is not usual to see bulbs sprouting or dandelions in bloom in the winter and I've seen forsythia in bloom early (the entire Coster/Mill Bridge Road stretch on 2/4 is busting out), a message from Mary P. surprised me. She found a honeysuckle bush in blossom at the park. Honey bees swarmed around the blossoms and their legs were covered in pollen. Well, I heard the sugar maple sap is running already (usually March) and they are working the trees in New England.

I often look to nature for the signs of the seasons. Ospreys returning to Bay for me signal the beginning of spring. The influx of sparrows usher in the fall and the waterfowl mean winter is here. But the contradictory signs I'm seeing this year make me wonder if my indicators are no longer valid. But at least for me, they certainly lend credence to the veracity of global warming. – Bob Boxwell

What is the Cool City Campaign?

These are cities that have made a commitment to stopping global warming by signing the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. The Cool Cities campaign helps cities turn their commitments into action by pushing for smart energy solutions.

As the mayor of Baltimore, now Governor Martin O'Malley, signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement--the first step to becoming a Cool City.

Sierra Club Southern Maryland Group has more information about this campaign – check their website: <http://maryland.sierraclub.org/southern-md/>

A good website to visit: EO Library: Global Warming - <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Library/GlobalWarming/>

A good first action:

Use Compact Fluorescent Bulbs



By making simple changes, you can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere and help stop global warming.

Winter – February and March: Signs of the Season

With winter finally upon us, tracks and scat are the best indicators of wildlife activity at the Park. The best places to check are the park's many beaches (Kingfisher Pond, the Main Beach and Thomas Point). They will be so littered with tracks as to overwhelm you.

Otters with their saucer size perfectly round paws, fur covering any sign of nails in the sand – should dominate near the brackish water. This time of year crushed oyster shell bits and slime indicates it is fairly fresh scat. If it snows, seriously look for slide areas. Stay near the water and forest edge.



The most prevalent omnivore is the grey fox with its four toed paw. It always walks in a perfectly place one paw after another straight line. You cannot miss this wetland and forest fox. It is an omnivore and scat will reveal all the food it has eaten. In winter you should expect there to be the fur of mice and voles, but berry seed and even insect exoskeletons do turn up.



Deer tracks are well known to all as they are virtually a backyard visitor. Watch for the variety of scat and buck rubs from where the velvet was rubbed off in the late summer. Look for dropped antlers in the deeper woods before the rodents or other deer gnaw on them. See if you can spot a buck scrape while off the trail. All of these signs can be found at the park.



The sign of another creature are 10 inch scrapings found at the water's edge. They are filled with funny little packing peanut shaped droppings. They obviously belong to a fiber eater. Around the inlet on Mill Creek you can find a lot of them. This creature is a prolific eater and pooper. Several, white feathers floating around confirm the awful truth that Mute Swans have been residing and feeding here. This is not good news. The Mute Swan has shoveling feet that rip out all the vegetation by the roots and do so 12 months of the year effectively



Mute Swan



Whistling Swan

killing entire creeks and ecosystems. These are not the Whistling or Tundra Swans that migrate back and forth from the far North each summer to breed. These native species have lost habitat and their numbers have dwindled. To make a bad situation worse the Mute Swan was erroneously labeled a Migratory bird, and cannot be hunted. This year the Mute Swan is being



Tundra Swan

delisted, the removal of a species from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants and Maryland is following their lead. Hopefully, some of the damage will be reversed. Watch for information in the media on this situation.

Winter means the leaves are off and visibility is good, ticks are not as big and issue and snakes are hibernating. So this is a good time to boldly go where it is possible no man has gone before! Check out the monoculture Virginia Pine stand off the Deep Woods and Kingfisher Trail. Walk through it for a distance. This is a unique type of forest as it is a monoculture (all one species). You can determine age by counting branch rings. **From these clues can you determine if the tree was planted or if it came in naturally after a disaster or harvest?** This area has almost no other plants growing underneath for two very good reasons - no sunlight and the high acidic content of the soil. Virginia pines are native and have long been harvested for the pulp and paper industry.



This is the time to notice the evergreens underfoot. Pippissisiwa, partridge berry, Rattlesnake plantain, all of the various mosses; cushion, British, Pixie cup, Hair cap, Ebony spleenwort, putty root, lichen, reindeer moss, ostrich plume moss, and oyster shell fungus. These are



Winter – February and March: Signs of the Season (Continued)

beautiful highly adaptive plants whose waxy coats hold water in during the drought of winter thus they remain evergreen and alive. Remember, winter is not an issue of cold. Winter is an issue of food for animals and lack of water for plants. So, how have each adapted?

Winter is also the season for owls. It's a great time to go calling. If we get another warm spell leave the windows open at night and listen for them. Barred, Great Horned and Screech Owls are our regular breeders. The first two have been mating and this is now family time.



The egg masses are coming, the egg masses are coming!!! Salamander and frog eggs will start to turn up as early as February in vernal pools as soon as a warm rainy night hits (and it already has). Wood frogs will leave a stringy black caviar like strand and attach it



loosely to a twig or stick. The spotted salamander lays softball size firm Jell-O balls with individual egg dots enclosed inside. These must be seen by every child at least once in order to be a kid. Don't handle them as they are tender and we are acidic. Do not disturb the eggs since last year was the driest



March on record and very few masses were laid and few reached maturity. Salamanders return to their pool of origin to lay eggs. There are other salamanders to look for such as the Forest Marbled or Red belly under rotting logs. In fact during February and March rotting logs are great places to find action when all else seems dull and void of life.

It is time to get your ears tuned to the frog calls of Southern Maryland so you can begin to record what you hear but may not see. Peepers, Leopard Wood, Pickerel, Green and Bull toads are coming

This is also the time to get your Bluebird house made or purchased and put up. **The scouts are out!!!! Hurry!**

Get your hummingbird feeders clean and ready to go with clear, appropriate food in March. Don't wait until the last minute when the warm breath of May air reminds you to do so. The hummers are here by then.



Get a journal and record your sightings – reptile, bird, weather, tree, plant, tracks. Even things you do not recognize; it may be that you spotted the first coyote in the County and did not recognize it for what it was at the time.

Even in late winter be aware that ticks may be a surprise hitchhiker, especially if you spend time in their territory. I have taken ticks off in every month of the year. Do not let poison ivy fool you in the winter just because the leaves are off the vine. The "hairy" vines are oily and poisonous all year.



Around St. Patrick's Day or before you should go out looking for "Elves". In fact you are searching for Skunk cabbage poking out. This is the first flowering plant of spring. It is a wetland or bog plant so scout ahead. This is a wonderful children event. Once found and once fooled you invite them to smell "Old stinky". Explain this plant does not invite insects with a sweet fragrance to come hither so it can be pollinated instead it smells like rotting flesh to which flies are attracted and thus it is pollinated. Kids love it. Lessons taught and we get outside in the wintertime. Chasing elves, what a great way to end one season and begin another.



Mary Piotrowski (edited by Bob Boxwell) 1/07

Things to Do, Places to Go...



Hikers complete the Valentine's Day Outing in 2006 on a cool, dreary and damp day!

February 11th - Valentine's Outing to Myrtle Point Park: Join Bob Boxwell in a heart healthy hike around Myrtle Point Park on Sunday, February 11th, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Meet at the gate and investigate the winter scene at the park. Bring binoculars, dress in layers, and wear sturdy footwear as winter can often be a muddy experience.



For more details contact Bob at 410-394-1300 or bobboxwell@hotmail.com.

Invasive Species Removal at Chapman Forest and Ruth Swann Park - First Sundays and following Saturday, monthly. Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information and map check out www.chapmanforest.org or contact Marc Imlay at 301-699-6204 or 301-283-0808.

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

Green Forum: Sustainable Building Today for a Greener St. Mary's Tomorrow - Saturday, February 24, 2007. The St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment is hosting a forum at the Forrest Career and Technology Center from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to highlight green building techniques to encourage a wider use in public buildings and residential settings. Speakers from St. Mary's College, the St. Mary's Public Schools, SMECO, and MetCom will discuss how they are incorporating the principles of green building in recent projects and how these impact life in St. Mary's County. Green vendors will be available to explain how individuals can adopt green habits.

Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc. Annual Meeting: Monday, March 19th, Higher Education Center, California, 7: 00 p.m. Open to the public. Please, mark the date!

Sierra Club Southern Maryland Group will be showing the Al Gore DVD on rapid climate change at the following locations:

Thursday, March 22nd, Charlotte Hall Library, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 24th, Lexington Park Library, 2:30 p.m.

Monday, March 26th, Leonardtown Library, 7:00 p.m.

For additional information, please, contact Dudley Lindsley, 301-373-2551, e-mail:

dlindsley@verizon.net

Things to Do, Places to Go...(Continued)

Annual Cleanup at Myrtle Point Park: Saturday April 14th - 9:00 a.m. to Noon

Come join in our effort as part of the annual Patuxent River Cleanup. We will be meeting at the picnic area at the park. A person will be stationed there with bags and gloves (bring your own if you have them the supply is limited). You will be directed to the various sites we will be working on throughout the park. It is a great opportunity to do something positive for the park, the environment, and yourself. Please contact Bob Boxwell at 410-394-1300 if you have any questions.

Join us to celebrate Earth Day on the Square in Leonardtown, Sunday, April 22nd, 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Earth Day is the world's premier global environmental celebration, held on 22 April every year since 1970. Its purpose is to increase awareness, responsibility and action toward a clean, healthy future for all living things using events, campaigns and networking as catalysts. Earth Day 2007 will highlight an inclusive global environmental theme (to be determined), which will be promoted through educational and community learning materials, available at www.earthday.net/goals. These include information and resources for taking action on key issues such as climate change, forests, biodiversity, water, and energy.



Earth Day offers a unique opportunity to join with other concerned citizens around the world who are working toward a sustainable future for all of us. The Earth Day Network invites you to use the leverage of Earth Day to highlight issues that are of greatest concern in your community.

For additional information, please, contact Dudley Lindsley, 301-373-2551, e-mail: dlindsley@verizon.net

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center Herb Sale, Saturday, May 5th, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Native Perennials from Lower Marlboro Nursery, Nature Art Show & Sale. Call 410-535-5327 for information.

Summerseat Farm Annual Plant Sale, Saturday, May 12th, 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Vegetables, Perennials, Annuals, Herbs, Shrubs, Baked Goods, Crafts and Other Surprises. Call 301-373-6607 for information. Summerseat is located just north of Route 247 (Loveville Road), watch for the signs.



Potomac River Swim for the Environment: Saturday, June 2, 2007.

A 7.5 Mile Swim for the Environment. Swimmers will leave Point Lookout State Park to be boated to Hull Neck, Virginia for the official start. The Swim is a major fundraiser for several local environmental groups. For additional information:

Mailing Address: Potomac River Swim for the Environment, c/o [Cheryl Wagner](mailto:CherylWagner), 3103 Hawthorne Drive, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1040

Email: cherylw@crosslink.net

Web: www.crosslink.net/~cherylw/pr2007i.htm

Check calendars for the Annual Bernie Fowler Wade-In, normally, the second Sunday in June. We are so grateful that Bernie remains the voice for the Patuxent River. His Wade-In highlights clarity problems for the River and Bay.



The Protection and Restoration of Mill Creek and the Lower Patuxent River

There is a newly organized Lower Patuxent Mud-Busters (LPMB) group which hopes to prevent further degradation of the Lower Patuxent River Watershed from erosion and sedimentation pollution, to preserve existing areas, and to restore damaged Watershed areas.

This is a major step forward for the restoration of the Patuxent and Chesapeake Bay. Hopefully, other communities will follow this lead to organize to protect the bodies of water in their region.

Friends of Myrtle Point Park Original Recommendations Revisited

- Expand the trails systems by converting roads to trails and adding new trails
- Construct a handicapped accessible boardwalk along one of the marshes, with access to the beach
- Locate a launch site for kayaks and canoes
- Begin restoration with a demonstration plot (perhaps grant funded) where alien plants are removed and native plants restored
- Develop educational materials, including interpretive signs, to be used with nature study programs
- Establish two picnic groves with small cleared areas for volleyball, horseshoes pitching, kite flying and similar activities
- If financially feasible, restore one of the barns to a condition suitable for nature study and other similar education programs
- Continue the positive relationship between the FOMPP, the County Government and R&P offices by providing volunteer support and writing grant proposals

The Friends of Myrtle Point Park stand willing and able to work diligently on these recommendations. We believe that Myrtle Point Park can become a place where all residents of St. Mary's County can enjoy the outdoors, with all the attendant benefits to body, mind and spirit. Further, this nature park can be a regional showplace and a legacy for future generations.

We hope you will join us as we continue to work to fulfill our recommendations.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION:

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.)

Interests:

_____ Historical/Archeological

_____ Invasive Plant Removal

_____ Trail Maintenance

_____ Education

_____ Public Relations

_____ Species Identification

_____ Other: _____

Friends of Myrtle Point Park, Inc.
P.O. Box 1433
California, MD 20619

**Friends of Myrtle Point Park Annual Meeting
Monday March 19th, 7:00 p.m.,
Higher Education Center**