



Dedicated to Community-Based Conservation of Natural Resources through
Environmental Education and Outreach on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay

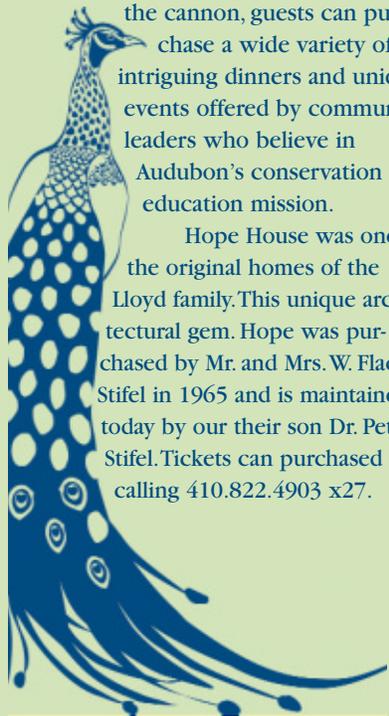
TOUR, TOAST & TASTE 2010
An Evening of
Culinary Adventure
at Hope House Farm

Benefiting Pickering Creek
Audubon Center

Saturday, June 12, 2010
5:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Pickering Creek Audubon Center will host the third Tour, Toast and Taste at Hope House in Easton this June. The evening begins as you pass through several miles of wooded lane, passing Maryland Champion trees and glorious views of Woodland Creek. Arriving at the home you enter the house and learn about the history of the home and some of its special contents and stories from docents and our host Dr. Peter B. Stifel. Guests exit the rear of the house too enjoy formal garden features and beautiful views of the waterfront. Delectable wines and delicious hors d'oeuvres will be available under the tent, and at the sound of the cannon, guests can purchase a wide variety of intriguing dinners and unique events offered by community leaders who believe in Audubon's conservation and education mission.

Hope House was one of the original homes of the Lloyd family. This unique architectural gem. Hope was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. W. Flaccus Stifel in 1965 and is maintained today by our their son Dr. Peter Stifel. Tickets can purchased by calling 410.822.4903 x27.



Audubon Watershed Experience Gives Students a Hands-on Connection to Their Bay *By Kelsey Frey*

This season the Audubon Watershed Experience (AWE) reaches new distances as we work with new high schools throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. We're currently working with 10 teachers in 27 classes at seven high schools.

High school students from a diversity of backgrounds gather on the Pickering Creek Audubon Center grounds each spring to take a closer look at the environment they've grown up around but barely noticed (A Day on the Chesapeake Bay). For some students, walking off the gravel and onto the natural trail is a big leap. Others can't wait to show off their fishing skills to their peers. All students leave with an experience they'll remember.

In a busy, breathless five hours our educators teach students how to use binoculars, GPS units, fishing rods, field guides, waders, seine nets, and water quality tests. During a trek through the habitats of Pickering adorned with binoculars we frequently pause to admire woodpecker holes, crayfish burrows, and squirrel nests. Later, students don chest waders and venture into the creek to seine for creatures liv-



A motion sensor camera captures three raccoons traveling along the wetland boardwalk.

ing unnoticed in the murky waters. The pressure of the water in our chest waders feels like we're walking on the moon. At the end of the day, everyone has done at least two things they've never done before and each student has a new perspective on the importance of the health of our Bay.

This spring we're adding motion sensor cameras to the technological mix. Students will get to hypothesize which animals they think visit each habitat type we hike through (forest, tidal wetland, and forest edge). Then students will be able to check their hypothesis using the

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Students seine for mummichogs and Atlantic silversides in Pickering Creek during A Day on the Chesapeake Bay.

Connecting all generations with nature

Walking in the Woods

Kristina Catanese, Seasonal Educator

Every year my physician asks me, "Are you getting enough exercise?" Lately I've been able to tell her, "I've been walking." Living at Pickering Creek Audubon Center, walking has become not a chore, but a pleasure. And even if you don't need an excuse to exercise, there are plenty of other excuses to enjoy over three-and-a-half miles of hiking trails at Pickering Creek Audubon Center.

You'll get a chance to see lots of different ecosystems. The Farm-to-Bay loop passes through beech forest, pine forest, and wetlands. You can also take the Succession Spur to see a young forest! Until 10 years ago, this land was tilled; see what a forest looks like as it's growing back.

You might even learn something! There are interpretive signs all along the trail that explain interesting tidbits, from describing wetland birds to identifying common plants in the field. Make walking a family activity and bring your little ones on the 0.3-mile children's loop.

Lots of creatures scurry through the woods, fields, and wetlands bordering the hiking trails. Maybe you could catch a glimpse of an endangered Delmarva Fox Squirrel or a herd of white-tailed deer in the fields along the farm lane. Keep your eyes and ears peeled this spring for an abundance of frogs and turtles in the wetlands. Pickering Creek is a dream come true for birdwatchers. If you'd like to borrow binoculars, stop by our main office Monday-Friday, 9-5.

So, just pick an excuse! Make time this year to head out to Pickering Creek's hiking trails.

Hiking trails wind through a beautiful beech forest in the fall. Article over with photo



Assistant Naturalist Program Launched

by Kelsey Frey

This April Pickering Creek Audubon Center's traditional EcoCamp Junior Counselor Program spreads its wings and becomes the year-round Assistant Naturalist Club. Not only will this year's Assistant Naturalists get an amazing leadership experience at EcoCamp, they will also spend time throughout the year volunteering, socializing, and traveling to learn more about natural history and conservation in our area.

The Assistant Naturalist club focuses on four core areas: leadership skills, conservation careers, volunteer service, and natural history awareness. Students receive two days of training before EcoCamp in leadership skills such as speaking to groups, group management, and flexibility. The club will get to meet a variety of conservation professionals while exploring conservation centers on the Delmarva Peninsula. Some of the first season's highlights include meeting horseshoe crab researchers at the Dupont Nature Center on the Delaware Bay, meeting diamond-back terrapin scientists at Poplar Island, and meeting master bird-banders at Nassawango Creek Nature Preserve near Salisbury. Naturalists will take conservation action by volunteering at Pickering Creek Audubon Center including joining a wood duck monitoring team and



An Assistant Naturalist acts as a role model at EcoCamp.

helping to raise oyster spat. Naturalists will get the opportunity to enjoy numerous natural history adventures including identifying frogs during spring migration, looking for shorebirds as they devour fresh horseshoe crab eggs, and photographing the coastal wetland habitats of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Priority habitats

These experiences combine to produce enthusiastic environmental stewards. They'll practice sharing their new knowledge with others during EcoCamp and naturalist-led reptile programs. Assistant Naturalists will graduate high school with the confidence and passion to continue teaching others about conservation in their communities, future careers, and everyday lives.

To learn more about the club visit pickeringcreek.org/ecocamp or call Kelsey Frey, 410-822-4903.

New Volunteer Coordinator, Naturalist at Heart

by Samantha Pitts

It doesn't seem so long ago that I was exploring the backyard of my childhood home on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. It was there, while peering at ants marching along invisible trails, catching fireflies in jars, and listening to the calls of birds that I fell in love with the natural world. My mother recalls, even now, her dismay at my childish rescue of injured creatures. These childhood pursuits were the beginnings of a wonderful love affair that has flourished over the years.

This appreciation for the natural world certainly influenced my career choices. I've always gravitated towards jobs that allow me to share my love of nature and spark the conservation consciousness of others. I moved back home in 1997 to work as the Education



Coordinator at the Virginia Coast Reserve, a preserve of The Nature Conservancy. There, I endeavored to connect diverse local audiences with the wonders of the barrier island ecosystem and extraordinary fall migration of songbirds and raptors along the Virginia coast.

I've taught middle school science for the past three years. Teaching certainly had its own share of rewards. However, I missed being more connected with nature and working within the community to promote conservation. When I saw the job announcement for a volunteer coordinator and teacher naturalist, I knew that this was the right fit for me. I'm thrilled to be here. I look forward to getting to know Pickering Creek volunteers and engaging students in hand-on activities that help them develop their own personal connection with nature.

2010 Family Programs at PCAC

Please call Pickering Creek at 410/822-4903 for more information and to register. Registration is required for all programs. A full program list is always available at www.pickeringcreek.org



Spring Into Nature Walk

Sunday, April 11, 10 AM-12 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$5/adult; Free/child

Leader: Mandy Smith

Start the season off right and join us as we walk through the woods of Pickering in search of signs of spring. See mayapple, bloodroot and jack-in-the-pulpit blooming. Hear the trills of migratory birds high up in the tree canopies that are ready to burst with green. After the walk, enjoy a cup of tea and a seat next to the Creek. Binoculars and field guides provided or bring your own.

Amphibian and Reptile Search!

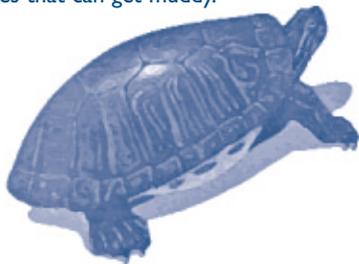
Wednesday, April 28, 7-8:30 PM

Location: Welcome Center

Cost: \$5/adult; Free/child

Leader: Andy Adams

Hike around Pickering Creek's wetlands and forests, looking and listening for springtime frogs, turtles, or maybe even snakes! Grab a net and sweep it through the water to pull up some more amphibians and reptiles. Let's see what we can find! Dip nets provided; wear shoes that can get muddy.



Nighttime Nature Walk

Thursday, May 20, 7:30-9 PM

Location: Welcome Center

Cost: \$5/adult; Free/child

Leader: Andy Adams

The nighttime is a wonderful time to explore! Come and see Pickering Creek in a whole new light (or lack thereof) as nature takes a different tone when the sun goes down. Learn about the nighttime habits of some animals then take a guided walk around the Pickering Creek grounds to see and hear these creatures first-hand!

Spring Family Canoe

Sunday, May 23, 1-3 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Leader: Andy Adams and Kristina Catanese

Paddle down the beautiful Pickering Creek this spring. We will look for amazing birds like the Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagles, and Ospreys and maybe see an endangered Delmarva Fox Squirrel on the shore. Canoes, paddles and PFDs provided.



Summer Family Canoe

Sunday, June 27, 1-3 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child

Leader: Mandy Smith

First, we'll cover all the basics of canoeing. Then we'll test your new skills on the water and go for a paddle on Pickering Creek. Look to the skies for osprey and eagles, see Diamond-back Terrapin heads pop up and Cow-nose Rays gliding by. We provide canoes and PFDs, but you may also bring your own.

Forest Bird Walk

Sunday, July 11, 9-11 AM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$5/adult; Free/child

Leader: Mandy Smith

Families will learn how to use binoculars, look for birds in the skies, forests and shores of Pickering Creek, look through our viewing scope to get an even better view, and explore some other creatures living throughout the forest. We hope to see herons, egrets, ospreys, eagles, barn swallows, wood thrushes and more! Binoculars and field guides will be provided or you may bring your own.

Seining and Wading for Families

Sunday, July 25, 1-3 PM

Location: Main Office

Cost: \$5/adult; Free/child

Leader: Mandy Smith

Adults and young adults will get to wear chest waders into Pickering Creek and use our seine nets to catch small fish, jellies, and crustaceans to show our young audience up close.

Children are invited to wear water shoes and get their feet wet exploring the edge of the sandy creek. We'll get to meet some Killifish, Atlantic Silversides, Mummichogs, and Grass Shrimp.

Programs at Talbot County Free Library

Chesapeake Creatures

Wednesday April 7, 4-5 PM

It's easy enough to drive through Maryland and catch a glimpse of the Chesapeake Bay, but did you ever wonder what you might find under the surface or above it? Come and learn about the creatures that call the Chesapeake Bay home. Ages 4 and up with accompanying adult.

The Buzz About Bugs

Wednesday May 5, 4-5 PM

Springtime is a busy time in the bug world! Come learn about bugs ranging from the beautiful, like butterflies, ladybugs, and the giant Luna moth – to the industrious, like honeybees and spiders – to the just plain creepy crawly insects like the assassin bug or the horse fly. Ages 4 and up with accompanying adult.

St. Michaels

There are no fees for these programs, however donations to Pickering Creek Audubon Center are greatly appreciated. Call 410-822-1626 to register for Easton programs, and 410-745-5877 to register for programs in St. Michaels.



Value of Volunteers

by *Samantha Pitts*

Those of us on staff at Pickering Creek Audubon Center don't take volunteers lightly. Why? They are an important part of what keeps programs at Pickering humming along. Volunteers maintain the buildings where we conduct ecology programs and the office space where we work. They support staff as we engage thousands of local school children in meaningful outdoor experiences each year. They assist in keeping over three and a half miles of trails safe and accessible to visitors 365 days a year. Volunteers donate valuable skills and expertise in fields such as landscape management, mechanics, carpentry, horticulture, staff training and information systems, to name a few. Volunteer contributions of time and energy get important work done in the moment, provide us with important services we cannot afford, and provide valuable in-kind match used to raise much needed funding. In short, volunteers allow us to accomplish significantly more vital conservation work than we could with our limited staff.

Volunteering at Pickering Creek is a great way to support a cause you care about. Volunteerism also benefits the volunteer beyond satisfaction gained by participating in community service. It is a great way to meet like-minded individuals, learn new skills, or indulge in a personal passion. Are you often stuck indoors and itching to get out? Maintaining a trail, getting rid of invasive plants, or gardening at the center are great ways to get outdoors and get some exercise. Are you looking for an activity that meaningfully engages the whole family? Getting the family out together on a volunteer workday allows parents to communicate the value of community service and a strong work ethic through their own example. Do you enjoy watching wildlife and want to learn more? Monitoring nest boxes or participating in habitat restoration activities will provide a valuable and enjoyable learning experience. Are you mechanically inclined and love working with your hands? There are all sorts of mechanical and construction challenges to take on, from building trail boardwalks to repair and maintenance of farm equipment. Do you enjoy meeting new people? Volunteering as a Pickering Creek display attendant is a great way to meet a variety of people and enjoy local events.

Consider volunteering at Pickering Creek Audubon Center if you don't already. Are you already a volunteer? See what's new. Check out the list of upcoming volunteer events.

Volunteer Events

Planting Natives Workshop

March 25, 6:30-8:00 pm

Do you enjoy gardening? The planting natives workshop will introduce you to a wide variety of native plants that can enhance your yard while benefiting birds and other wildlife. Learn how you can volunteer for our native landscaping and invasives removal projects Pickering Creek.

Water Monitoring Workshop

April 14, 6:30-8:00 pm

Are you interested in learning more about water quality? Learn how to take common water quality measurements and why these are important indicators for the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Then join Pickering Creek staff as part of our water monitoring team.

Earth Day Work Day

April 18, 10:00 am-3:00 pm

Celebrate Earth Day by making a positive impact on our planet. Join Pickering Creek staff for our spring workday. Enjoy fresh air and good company as you help us keep Pickering Creek a safe, accessible place for people to enjoy nature and enhance habitat for the benefit of wildlife. Pack lunch, dress for work outdoors, and join us at 10 am. Choose what you would like to do when you arrive.

Volunteer Recognition Dinner

May 2, 5:00-7:00 pm

Join Pickering Creek staff for a wonderful evening of food and friends at our annual volunteer recognition dinner. Look for an invitation for you and a friend to join us in early May. Thank you for all that you do throughout the year.

Event Volunteer Orientation

May 13, 6:30-8:00 pm

Do you enjoy meeting new people and would love to get the word out about all that Pickering Creek has to offer? We are looking for you! Event volunteers are needed to go to festivals and community events throughout the year with our display material. The person at our display booth is the most important part of our presence at an event. Join staff on May 13 to see the display and receive an orientation that is sure to take away any nervous butterflies and prepare you to meet the public as an event volunteer.

Contact the volunteer coordinator at (410) 822-4903 or spitts@audubon.org for more information or to register for these events.

We conducted 393 programs last year for 12,000 participants! Your support makes our work to connect people with nature possible—donate at www.pickeringcreek.org today.

Paradise Found: Pickering Creek's wetlands prove to be a haven for both wildlife and visitors alike.

As part of Pickering Creek Audubon Center's ever-growing grounds and facilities, the wetlands to the left of Audubon Lane greatly add to the wonderful dynamic of natural landscapes and teaching tools of the Center. Formerly agricultural fields, the wetlands were created between 2002 and 2005 with significant assistance from of habitat partner, Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage. The wetlands attract a wealth of different birds as well as other wildlife by providing perfect shelter and plenty of food. The animals, in turn, attract hikers and both expert and novice bird watchers. Many people are familiar with the more common and easily recognizable birds of the wetlands, such as the Canada goose, mallard, and wood duck. There are other animals that call these wetlands home, too. One needs only to know where to look and what to look for.

A winter resident of the wetlands is the Northern Pintail. They can be distinguished from other ducks by their long, thin tail, from which they get their name. A white chest characterizes the male with a stripe extending up the neck, a reddish brown head, and an extremely long tail. The female, as with most ducks, has duller colors, being brown with a white chin and white outlining the back feathers. The pintail uses the dabbling technique (submerging the head so only the back end is sticking out of the water) to feed on a variety of aquatic plants and invertebrates. It is one of the earliest ducks to start the breeding season, beginning to find mates while there is ice on the water.

The Northern Shoveler is a medium-sized duck that can be seen dabbling in the wetlands. The male has a green head, white belly, and yellow eyes. The females have grayish-brown feathers and brown eyes. Named for its pronounced long, wide bill, the shoveler can be easily distinguished from other ducks. Their bill is filled with small comb-like projections that are perfect for filtering small invertebrates from the water. The shoveler is a monogamous bird, staying with one female much

longer than your average duck. When frightened off of a nest, the female shoveler defecates on her eggs to deter any predators from eating them.

Along with these fascinating waterfowl, many other animals thrive in the wetlands, such as green-winged teals, yellowlegs, great blue herons, bald eagles, deer, foxes, raccoons, painted and snapping turtles, water snakes, and small fish. In the springtime and throughout the summer, the wetlands come alive with the sounds of frogs and toads as the males use their species-specific calls to attract and find mates. Pickering Creek's wetlands boast a wide variety of amphibians, including green frogs, bullfrogs, leopard frogs, cricket frogs, chorus frogs, spring peepers, green and gray tree frogs, Fowler's toads, and spadefoot toads. Each of these species utilizes the wetlands as a breeding ground and nursery, where water is plentiful and there are few predators. Keep an eye and ear open for them!

Thanks to a grant from the Maryland State Highway Administration, Pickering Creek has begun to enhance the wetlands trail, adding one mile of trail and two bird blinds last year and identification signs, trail maps, brochures, boardwalks, and a large observation deck overlooking the wetlands allowing for a stunning view of the entire wetlands coming this year. This year's project is anticipated to begin in March with completion by October. With this addition to the wetlands complex, visitors will undoubtedly be treated to a vast array of different sights, including the fascinating wildlife that call this unique habitat "paradise." So grab your field guides, your best pair of binoculars, or just some old sneakers and come down to Pickering Creek to experience the beauty of this special habitat for yourself!



motion sensor camera's photos from each habitat. We've already caught pictures of a diversity of mammals and even a great blue heron!

After the students visit us on our turf, we head back to the classroom for an environmental issues workshop called Making Connections. Small groups of students investigate one environmental problem affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

We provide recent newspaper articles, brochures, photographs, and intriguing objects to each group to help them answer a few simple discussion questions. As students rummage through their resources, interesting newspaper headings and colorful photographs catch their attention. Students investigating oyster decline learn that oysters start their lives as free-swimming larvae

...each group explains their environmental problem and some interesting things they learned with the class.

and are an important food source for other organisms at that stage. Others investigating light pollution learn that at a high school in West Virginia thousands of dead birds were found after being attracted to lights and crashing into windows during a migration flight. Other students will learn that diamond-back terrapins rely on natural shorelines to lay their eggs- a habitat that is disappearing quickly to rip rap and bulkheads. At the end of the class period each group explains their environmental problem and some interesting things they learned with the class.

As our students return to volunteer at EcoCamp and volunteer work-days, we can see that our time together has inspired the decision-makers of tomorrow to start getting involved today.

Audubon Watershed Experience is a four-part program for high school students including Chesapeake Bay 101, A Day on the Chesapeake Bay, Making Connections, and Pass it On!. Two parts of the program, A Day on the Chesapeake Bay and Making Connections, were highlighted here. For more details visit the AWE website at <http://audubonawe.squarespace.com>.

Audubon Watershed Experience programs for Talbot and Wicomico County youth are supported through grants from the NOAA B-Wet program and the Waterfowl Festival.

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PICKERING CREEK Audubon CENTER

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EcoCamp 2010

Get your hiking shoes and lunch boxes ready for another nature packed summer at EcoCamp. We'll spend our weeks running through the sprinkler, canoeing, catching minnows, and playing camouflage. Our camp books will be bursting with stories and pictures of our adventures. We'll discover the secrets of our natural surroundings through hikes, adventures, games, challenges, and crafts. Join the fun! (Camp weeks are organized by the grade your child is entering this coming fall.)

Grades K-1: Fledglings

Each session campers will explore the outdoors through active games, nature crafts, songs, hands-on discoveries with wildlife, and short walks.

Tues July 6- Fri July 9, Session 1: 9am-12pm, Session 2: 1pm- 4pm
Tues Aug 3- Fri Aug 6, Session 1: 9am-12pm, Session 2: 1pm- 4pm

Grades 2-4: Larks

Each week campers will explore their wildlife theme, canoe, hike and play throughout the wildlife preserve, and seine for aquatic wildlife in Pickering Creek. Larks camps are 9am-4pm.

Mon June 28- Fri July 2, The Animal Kingdom: Investigate different animal groups each day. Mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish, and insects.

Mon July 12- Fri July 16, Crafty Creatures: Compare animal and human craftiness as we investigate ways animals build homes, find food, and escape predators. Connect with your inner-craftiness by doing art projects.

Mon July 26- Fri July 30 Nature Up Close: Investigate parts of nature that are easily overlooked. Use microscopes to investigate water and soil samples. Use binoculars to see into the trees, and magnifying glasses to look at creatures. Explore unique traits of animal feathers and fur and insect adaptations. Practice macro photography.

Mon Aug 9- Fri Aug 13, Science in Nature: Investigate the environment from a scientific perspective. Use microscopes, dissect owl pellets, make spore prints from mushrooms, conduct a turtle race and more.

Mon Aug 16- Thurs Aug 19, The Animal Kingdom: Investigate different animal groups each day. Mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, fish, and insects.

Grades 5-7: Shrikes

Each week campers will canoe, play games in canoes, go geocaching, hike and play games throughout the wildlife preserve, go fishing, and seine for aquatic wildlife in Pickering Creek. Shrike camps are 9am- 4pm.

Tues July 20- Fri July 23 and Tues Aug 3- Fri Aug 6

To register contact Kelsey Frey, EcoCamp Director, kfrey@pickeringcreek.org, 410-822-4903, or visit www.pickeringcreek.org/ecocamp.

Please support our conservation work by including a bequest in your will, or by naming Pickering Creek Audubon Center as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets.

