

A quarterly newsletter for Volunteers and Friends of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge



FRIENDS OF PATUXENT

Vol. 32 • No. 2

www.friendsopatuxent.org



April-May-June 2021

Coyotes at Patuxent

by Matthew C. Perry, Friends of Patuxent Board of Directors

“Wildest of all beasts is the wolf, and wildest of all wolves is the coyote.”—Julian Hawthorne (1846–1934)

In 1979, when Mr. Bill Stickel updated the list of plants at Patuxent, he added a section on the vertebrate animals. Most of the birds and mammals on the lists were based on extensive natural history surveys and trappings done as part of research in the early years of Patuxent. One mammal not on the list was the coyote (*Canis latrans*). The coyote was not part of colonial eastern native fauna, and it was not well recognized until Lewis and Clark first described it as the plains wolf. Since the report by Mr. Stickel was published, there have been periodic reports of coyotes on the refuge mostly by hunters. Because of the occasional free-running dogs on the Patuxent lands (as reported by alumnus Nick Federoff), there was doubt for many years of the validity of the observations on our property. Patuxent alumnus, Gary Heinz, who has frequently hunted deer at Patuxent said, “I have never seen a coyote at the North Tract while hunting, but I have heard them yelping before dawn a couple of times.”



Coyote caught at night on a trail cam by Nimish Vyas, Patuxent Research Refuge, 2017.

be the same one) that were apparently attracted to trap sites baited with sardines. The coyotes present on Patuxent are eastern coyotes, which are hybrids between the western coyote and the eastern timber wolf. This has been confirmed by dentition and DNA studies. Patuxent Refuge biologist, Sandy Spencer said, “I saw my first Patuxent coyote with my own eyes on South Tract in 2012 or 2013, and on Friday Feb 12 (2021) saw numerous coyote

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In 2017, researcher Dr. Nimish Vyas captured images of coyotes on his trail cameras while conducting a study of feral cats at Patuxent. Nimish got many clear photos of coyotes (or may-

The Saga of Crane 920

by Glenn H. Olsen, Veterinary Medical Officer, PWRC

In early December, Scott Herford, Senior Wildlife Biologist in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and stationed at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge in Gautier, Mississippi, wrote an obituary for the last Mississippi Sandhill Crane (#920) that was hatched and raised at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (now the Eastern Ecological Science



Mississippi sandhill crane. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Center) and released on the Mississippi refuge. Scott, in addition to currently being a biologist on the refuge, was on the crane staff at Patuxent when 920 hatched.

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Coyotes at Patuxent

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tracks in the snow following turkeys on the North Tract.”

Coyotes are now found throughout the United States with Maryland and Delaware being the last two states to record them. Coyotes were first recorded in Maryland in 1972 in the western counties, and since have been moving east. Coyotes typically have a more pointed nose and ears than a domestic dog and can be told from red foxes by their light-colored legs.



Coyote photographed in Western Maryland by Jay Smith.

They are scavengers and have been known to feed on dog and cat food that is left outside homes at night. The primary food of coyotes is probably white-tailed deer and other animals from natural death or roadkills. Patuxent alumnus, Mike Haramis, who lives south of Bowie, has many pictures on his backyard trailcams of a coyote(s) returning to a deer carcass on successive nights. According to Haramis “Coyotes in the east are most often seen as a single animal, but I do have two together on a trailcam picture near my Mitchellville home”. Coyotes, like domestic dogs, do not typically form packs in the east, which makes it difficult for them to kill deer, as is known for western coyotes and wolves. They could kill fawns, however, and therefore act as a deterrent for deer in the east.

There are records of coyotes killing domestic dogs and cats, and there are several cases on YouTube videos of coyotes stalking small dogs on a



Coyote caught on trailcam by Patuxent alumnus, John Tautin, on his PA farm, 2011.

leash in downtown city areas in the daytime. Humans have also been attacked by coyotes in recent years, which historically did not occur with wild wolves. Although coyotes are typically nocturnal, there are many observations of them during the day, usually as they move through an area on a fast trot. Despite their notorious reputation, coyotes probably have value to ground-nesting birds by providing some control of wild mammals that are meso-predators, like the carnivorous fox and raccoons or the egg-eating omnivorous skunks and opossums. However, numerous studies have shown that the main predator on birds is the outdoor domestic cat (feral or owned).

In 1995, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources proposed legislation that classified coyotes as a fur-bearing mammal. This allowed regulations to be established for hunting and trapping in the state and on the Refuge. Hopefully, coyote populations in Maryland and other states will remain at a density that will improve the balance of nature that has been destabilized by lack of top predators like wolves and indirectly by the increasing suburbanization of humans. It would be interesting to know when coyotes were first documented on Patuxent land. If you have photos or know of persons with photos it would be good to share them with the Patuxent Refuge Biologist or me (mperry1209@verizon.net). 🦋

Friends of Patuxent is published quarterly and can be read online or mailed to our Friends upon request.

Many of the regular newsletter contributors and assistants are volunteers. However, we welcome and encourage all volunteers and Friends to submit items for the newsletter by sending or bringing them to:

Editor, Friends of Patuxent Newsletter
ATTN: Ross Feldner
 11811 Ivanhoe Street
 Wheaton, MD 20902

Or email to ross.feldner@verizon.net

All articles submitted to the Friends of Patuxent Newsletter will be reviewed by newsletter staff prior to their publication. We reserve the right to not publish submissions based on length, content or suitability.

Article submission deadlines:

Issue			Issue		
No.	Months	Deadline	No.	Months	Deadline
1	Jan-Mar	December 1	2	Apr-Jun	March 1
3	Jul-Sept	June 1	4	Oct-Dec	September 1

To become a member of the Friends of Patuxent or send a donation, please see “Membership Application” on page 11.

Wolves at the Door

by Faith Leahy-Thielke, Patuxent Volunteer

A bronze wolf family represents wolves at the door, quite literally, at Patuxent's Visitor Center. Our language and mythology are all but overloaded with wolf idioms and imagery. We can cry wolf, wolf our food, keep the wolf from the door, throw someone to the wolves and sell wolf tickets. We personify certain people as wolves – a lone wolf, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a delta wolf, not to mention title characters like the Wolf of Wall Street and The Sea Wolf. Actual wolves had often lived up to their reputation, so little wonder that by the 1930s, wolves had virtually disappeared from America's wilds – trapped, shot, poisoned. The unanticipated consequence was ecological disaster – throwing entire ecosystems “out of whack.” To the rescue – Roosevelt and Nixon! Patuxent was created in 1936, the only refuge of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service established to support wildlife research. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act provided the legal framework for protections – even of wolves. Finally in 1995, 14 wolves from Alberta, Canada were captured and released in Yellowstone – where, as in other places, their reintroduction was an ecological success story.

During this period (the 1980s to 1990s) wolf study was a main focus of Patuxent's research. The Visitor Center already featured wolves (along with cranes, sea otters and canvasback ducks) as one of its life cycle displays. David Mech, a Senior Research Scientist with Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, studied wolves in Minnesota and elsewhere. (Patuxent Wildlife Research Center was later to become part of the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey.) It was felt that the wolf bronze sculpture would reflect our continental perspective with an endangered species.

The bronze statue of a wolf family at the entrance of the Visitor Center



Timber Wolf Family, sculpture by William H. Turner at the Patuxent Research Refuge. Gifted by Dorothy R. Blair, 1997. Photo credit: Wiki Commons. Bohemian Baltimore. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Bohemian_Baltimore

has been a kid magnet since its installation in 1997. The adults linger too, drawn to the family dynamic of the timber wolves. The bronze sculpture is the work of renowned wildlife sculptor, William H. Turner of Virginia. It is one of only 3 castings of the wolf family commissioned by the American Museum of Natural History as a memorial to a former curator. The sculpture in the “planter area” outside the Visitor Center's entrance was donated by Dorothy R. Blair, an activist for conservation in Southwest Florida.

William H. Turner is an amazing wildlife artist and sculptor. He put himself through the University of Virginia by building boats. Later, he taught school and served in the Navy before enrolling in dental school at age 30. He paid his way by selling his sculptures – first ceramic and porcelain – and then, bronze. His sons continue his work – one as a dentist and one as a sculptor! Established in 1983

near Onley, Virginia, Turner Sculpture flourishes as a studio, foundry and gallery. Turner's work is exquisite – for a mere \$40,000, Patuxent could purchase one of their crane bronzes. We may have to wait for another philanthropic donor, but in the meantime, our wolf family provides delight – and maybe, a teachable moment that shows wolves in a sweet and sympathetic light that reconfigures their predatory image – at least a little! 🐾

**WE APPLAUD
AND
SALUTE OUR
VOLUNTEERS**

Beware the Wee Beasties!

By Jeannine Dorothy, Retired Entomologist & Patuxent Volunteer

Spring and summer will be upon us before we know it. When dealing with the disease-carrying wee beasties of field & forest, an ounce of prevention... well, you know the rest.

TICKS

Although ticks will feed on most animals, mammals are very attractive to them because of our warmth and odor. All stages of ticks feed almost exclusively on blood, and they can transmit a number of diseases and cause other problems.

Ticks are in the Class Arachnida. The adults and nymphs have 8 legs, but larval ticks have only 6. Their flat, oval bodies swell hugely as they feed – engorged adults can resemble grapes! Ticks are long-lived and can survive without feeding for long periods.

Ticks are very small: larvae can be the size of a pinhead, and nymphs are not much larger. Unfed adults range in size from a sesame seed to an apple seed. Their size makes them hard to find once they've found you.

Where? Ticks favor wooded areas, edge habitat and meadows with lots of tall grass, shrubs and weeds. They are also found in leaf litter. If your yard has overgrown areas or woodpiles, this could act as habitat. Ticks will climb up plant stalks along paths (beware of deer trails!) and hang onto the plant with the rear pairs of legs while reaching out with the front pairs. As an animal (yes, that's you...) brushes by the plant, the ticks grasp on with their claws.

They will find a sheltered spot on their host to attach with their mouthparts, which have backward-facing barbs to hold them in place. They also cement themselves in. While you could find them on lower extremities (especially larval ticks), they seem to travel up



Scott Bauer, Public domain, Wikimedia Commons

Adult deer tick.

until they encounter a constriction or barrier (i.e., your waistband).

You should do frequent tick checks while in the field then perform a more thorough check when you get home. Check yourself and your clothing!

Field Check: If you have walked along narrow paths with vegetation or through an overgrown field, as soon as you've cleared the area, check your pant legs, front and back, then check front and back of upper pants area and shirt as well as you can. If you're with someone, check each other's backs. Remove any crawling ticks and either flick them away from you or kill them (easier said than done... gravel on gravel works, or I carry a small vial of alcohol for them).

Home Check: Remove clothing and check inside and out for ticks – pay particular attention to seams and cuffs. Check yourself thoroughly. Places where you can't do a visual check, feel for ticks – your fingers are more sensitive to 'foreign' objects than you think! Remember to check the backs of your knees. Take a shower if possible.

To remove a tick, grasp it as close to the skin as you can (with fingers or tweezers) and pull steadily until it releases. Try not to squeeze the tick's body! The mouthparts may remain in your skin, but this is NOT a problem.

Now on to tick types and diseases they carry.

American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) is the main vector of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever in the central and eastern U.S. Adults are commonly found on dogs and can occasionally cause canine paralysis. They are fairly large ticks and are easier to spot than many other species.

Black-legged deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) is our primary vector of Lyme disease. Adult ticks are small (sesame seed size) but larvae and nymphs are tiny! They can move very quickly to find a spot to attach. Deer ticks can also transmit a number of other diseases such as: anaplasmosis, babesiosis, mayamatoxis & Powassan virus. Symptoms are often similar to Lyme symptoms. Check your Health Department's website for more information.

Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*) is a vector of ehrlichiosis, a Lyme-like infection. The Lone Star is a smallish tick, often with a white spot in the middle of its body. All stages are attracted to humans. Exposure to saliva of the Lone Star tick can trigger a severe allergic reaction to red meat in some people. It is suspected that this allergy develops in humans after multiple bites by this tick, and is caused by the protein alphagal, present in both tick saliva and in mammals. The story of how health researchers discovered this is fascinating!

PREVENTION: Before walking in tick habitat, tuck your pants into your socks, your shirt into your pants – this keeps ticks away from your skin for a longer time, enabling you to find them by searching your clothing.

Frequent Tick Checks in the field – prevents ticks from attaching to you.

Repellents: Standard repellents with proven active ingredients (i.e., DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus) can help keep ticks off of you and your clothing. Even better are the clothing treatments (usually containing permethrin) available now. You can treat clothing (I treat a few pairs of pants each season to use in the field), and allow it to dry before wearing. This treatment will repel ticks and mosquitoes even after several trips through the washer.

Keep in mind that tick-borne diseases are unpleasant at best, and life-threatening at worst. Many of them, if left untreated, can cause chronic health problems. Scientists are finding more and more infections caused by ticks each year. So, take precautions to avoid headaches (literally) down the road.

MOSQUITOES

Yes, they are pesky bloodsuckers, but mosquitoes are responsible for more human death each year (NOT counting years with a pandemic!) than almost any other cause.

In the U.S., the highly fatal mosquito-borne diseases (malaria, yellow fever) have been under control for more than a century. But, as was shown with worldwide outbreaks of Zika and chikungunya several years ago, there is always a new one lurking in the wings.

In Maryland, our most common human mosquito-borne disease is West Nile virus (WNV). It has kept a low profile for the last several years but it will remain here and will likely have a resurgence periodically, probably tied to wet years when mosquito populations surge. WNV generally causes no to mild symptoms but it can cause serious illness or death. Mortality rates are about 2%.

Our most serious mosquito-borne disease in Maryland is Eastern Equine encephalitis (EEE). It is endemic (native to this area) and, luckily, is not found often in Maryland. When found it occurs primarily in the Pocomoke



Common house mosquito
(*Aedes aegypti*).

Swamp on the Eastern Shore, but has been found at Patuxent Research Refuge (on Central Tract). EEE can cause severe illness or death in humans, and can have long-lasting neurological consequences. Mortality rates in humans are as high as 50%. In horses (unvaccinated), mortality can reach 90%, but horses that recover can have severe neurological issues.

Our most common mosquito-borne disease in Maryland is dog heartworm. This parasitic roundworm is ingested by the mosquito when it feeds on an infected dog. The parasite goes through part of its life cycle in the mosquito, which then injects it through its saliva into another dog. Humans are not affected by heartworm; cats can become infected.

Adult heartworms inhabit the heart and pulmonary artery of the infected dog, causing coughing and fatigue, progressing to weight loss, fainting and congestive heart failure. Female heartworms can grow up to 12 inches long!

Heartworm is easily prevented in dogs by monthly medication. In Maryland, this should be continued year-round since the vector species of mosquitoes can emerge on warm days in the winter. Heartworm treatment is expensive and hard on the dog – better to use the preventative.

PREVENTION OF MOSQUITO BITES: Preventing mosquito bites, and thereby disease, is two-pronged: repellents and elimination of standing water sites in your yard.

Repellents: Use a repellent with proven ingredients (i.e., DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus) and follow all label directions when applying. For situations of prolonged exposure or in areas known to have high populations, use a product with between 25 and 40% active ingredient. You will need to re-apply after several hours – read the label!

Tip or Toss: Several species of mosquitoes can breed in small amounts of water collecting in containers in your yard or workplace. Some of these container-breeding species can transmit mosquito-borne diseases. By eliminating all of these container breeding sites, you will drastically reduce the population of mosquitoes in and around your home and workplace. Mosquito larvae can develop in as little as a ½ teaspoon of water (i.e., the amount that will fit into a bottle cap), so be thorough in your search. Also, talk to neighbors and encourage them to clean up as well. The Maryland Department of Agriculture's (MDA) website has more information about container-breeding mosquitoes.

MDA's Mosquito Control program regularly traps and tests mosquitoes for mosquito-borne diseases. They have numerous trap sites on the Patuxent Refuge (North and Central tracts) due to the occasional presence of EEE virus. If EEE is found, the refuge manager is informed and alerts are sent out to anyone working in affected areas. The primary vector at the Refuge is NOT generally a day-biting mosquito so most precautions would be needed if working after dark. If you see such an alert, pay attention to it! Luckily, EEE is only detected every 8-10 years on the Refuge.

Don't let the wee beasts spoil your love of the outdoors! Enjoy yourself but take sensible precautions to keep yourself and your family safe and healthy. 🦋

(Sources of information were MD Department of Health website and Herms's Medical Entomology)

Beaver at Patuxent

by Matthew C. Perry, Friends of Patuxent Board of Directors

In 1974, biologists of the Wetland Ecology Section were shocked and excited when waterfowl biologist, Frank McGilvrey, entered the coffee room on the third floor of Merriam and loudly exclaimed, “WE HAVE BEAVER!!” Beaver did not exist at Patuxent in 1936 when the Refuge was formed and had not been seen in this area since the early 1900s. Although the beaver had been essentially extirpated from Maryland in the late 1800s, a few were found in western Maryland’s Garrett County. It is unknown if the Patuxent beaver arrived naturally from range expansion or were transplanted from areas of high populations as part of trapping operations. In any case, they were here and have not left. The first lodge appeared in Lake Redington about 30 feet from shore where the Visitor Center is now located. This lodge is still periodically active..

The population of beaver soon increased with the resultant range expansion at Patuxent. Soon there seemed to be beaver on every impoundment on the South and Central Tracts. With the population expansion came more flooding and potential problems. Beaver prefer swimming to walking, so to get to their food supply they increase the water level by damming. The flooding sometimes included roads, which raised concerns of the facility managers. At first, managers had staff remove the damming at control structures, but within days the damming and flooding would return. In some cases, beaver were trapped with deadly conibear traps, which eliminated the problem for a longer time. When Holliday Obrecht became refuge biologist in the late 1980s, he installed a PVC piping system at water control structures that resulted in a more long-range solution to the problem.

It was known that beaver respond to the sound of running water by in-



PVC piping to maintain constant water level at Knowles 2 Pond control structure. Inspected by Friend of Patuxent, Kirk Wineland, 1987.



Knowles 2 Pond control structure showing damming at overflow area and around PVC piping, but water level remaining level due to underwater drainage in pipes, 1989.

creased damming activity and there are stories on how beaver would cover audio speakers broadcasting the sound of running water. Beaver also respond to the reduction in water level with increasing damming activity. By drilling holes in the bottom of PVC pipes and exiting the water in a pool on the downstream side of the control structure, the water at the site would remain silent and water level stable. The system would work for several

years until the beaver had covered the whole length of the PVC pipes.

In 1992, Holly Obrecht was still working on a system to stabilize water levels and prevent flooding of the roads. Two University of Maryland students at the time were looking for a field project, and Holly let them explore new designs for the “beaver baffle.” One student was a biology major and one an engineering major, and by



Holly Obrecht inspecting a new beaver baffle design by University of Maryland students in drained Knowles 1 impoundment, 1992.



Entrance and exit tunnel of a beaver lodge in an island of Lake Redington inspected by HollyObrecht, 1989.

putting their expertise together came up with a unique design. The system was installed when the impoundment was drained and when the impoundment was re-flooded it was aesthetically pleasing as not being obvious to human eyes. The beaver knew it was there but were not “aware” it was working against their efforts to raise the water level. Holly could control the water level in the standpipe that was inside the water control structure. It was an “industrial strength beaver baffle” that was even featured on one of the four beaver programs Holly did

with the “Outdoors Maryland” television show.

Although the first lodge at Patuxent located at Lake Redington was constructed with sticks in open water, several lodges at Patuxent have been on land. In 1989, when the water level at Lake Redington was lowered for repairs of the large man-made impoundment dam area, biologists took the opportunity to observe a beaver lodge that had been constructed on a land island. A large entrance area that had been underwater was now obvious.



Holly Obrecht views four entrance and exit tunnels in a beaver lodge on an island in Snowden Pond, 1992.

Again in 1992, when water was drained from Snowden Pond for repairs of the control structure, the lodge on an island could be inspected. This larger and older lodge had four obvious entrance and exit passageways on one side of the island. Also obvious with drainage was the large supply of food in the form of green sticks that beaver store under water near their lodge, so they are accessible when the ponds freeze in winter.

Some attempts are made to deter beaver from girdling and dropping trees in certain areas. This is easily done by wrapping the trees to be protected with chicken wire. Gary Heinz assisted with this operation on Snowden Pond island in an attempt to save some of the trees. However, this is not practicable in large areas like Patuxent Research Refuge where beaver have control of much of the land around the impoundments.

Beaver were active in the late 1980s when plans were being developed for interpretive displays in the new National Wildlife Visitor Center. One interpretive idea that was suggested was to have an infrared camera inside the lodge near the Visitor Center so activity inside the lodge could be viewed on a monitor inside the Visitor Center. Some of the deserted lodges on the refuge were inspected to see where best to place a camera. Holly Obrecht worked out the technical details, but when a camera was placed in the active lodge at the Visitor Center it was quickly covered with mud and sticks. Well, at least it sounded like a good idea!!!!

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Beaver at Patuxent

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While the beaver population was increasing in the late 1980s, Holly and I thought it would be good to get an estimate of the number of beavers on the refuge. We knew that beavers were active at night and became more active if they detected that the water level on their pond was going down. We therefore came up with a plan to simultaneously inspect all control structures of the Patuxent impoundments at sunset with a group of volunteers.

Water levels were dropped on all ponds around noon by removing one 10-inch board from the control structure. This, in most cases, would result in a several-inch drop in water level by sunset. Volunteers were assigned to the various control structures and told to arrive an hour before sunset and remain motionless. When the beaver arrived to inspect the cause of the drop in water level, the volunteers would simultaneously get a count for the refuge, which at that time was just the Central and South Tracts.

The surveys were conducted on June 25, 1987, and repeated on July 8, 1987, on 18 impoundments. All volunteers were very cooperative, and the results indicated that 16 beaver were seen on the 25th and 13 on the 8th. On June 16, 1988, the beaver survey was repeated and a total of 16 beaver were observed by the volunteers. Most observers on the three surveys saw zero or one beaver and the most beavers (3 in 1987 and 4 in 1988) were seen on Shafer Pond by two observers. Although this survey was very crude, it did indicate that beavers were probably occupying several ponds simultaneously. If there were a pair or family on each impoundment, we would have expected to observe a much higher count.

Beaver seem to be a mysterious species that have endured extensive trapping in the early years of European occupation of North America, and a



Matt Perry exiting a deserted beaver lodge after examining the inside for possible placement of a camera, 1989.

love-hate relationship with a crowding suburban habitat in recent years. At Patuxent, the main problem is flooding of roads and the destruction of some timber along the waterways. Beaver numbers seem to be increasing at present, especially on the North Tract, and managers and volunteers seem



Gary Heinz wrapping a tree with wire to protect it from beaver chewing in 1999.

to be monitoring and using various devices to minimize the impact. However, the advantages the beaver bring to the refuge with increased wetlands for other wildlife cannot be ignored, and so we take the bad with the good, and hope the beaver will continue to survive in our crowded world. 🐾

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Name is Changing

Rich Dolesh, Chair, Friends of Patuxent

Over the past two years the US Geological Survey has been working on an administrative reorganization of science centers and research programs in the Eastern United States. The Patuxent Wildlife Research Center has been included in this reorganization which involves the consolidation of three major centers and six remote offices across 10 states. The combined science center will now be called the Eastern Ecological Science Center (EESC) and have three major programs, the Patuxent Research Refuge, MD; the Leetown Science Facility, WV; and the Silvio O. Conte Research Facility, MA.

While the full historic name of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will not be retained in the administrative re-naming, the new name returns focus to the original alliance of the science and research mission of Patuxent to its historic affiliation with the only research refuge of the National Wildlife Refuge system.

No matter what the administrative name becomes, the Friends of Patuxent continue to support the research, education, and conservation missions of the refuge and the center, and our dedication to those missions is undiminished. The Friends of Patuxent look forward to working with the staff and pledge our support to make the future successful.

Around the Refuge

Photos by Jerry Herman, Patuxent Volunteer



Bumble bee



Eastern bluebirds



Ruby-throated hummingbird



Ospreys



Monarch



Immature Cooper's hawk

Around the Refuge

Photos by Matt Beziat, Patuxent Volunteer



Little Patuxent River (North Tract)



Little Patuxent River (North Tract)



Rieve's Pond Frozen



American Holly (North Tract)



Virginia Pine (North Tract)

The Saga of Crane 920

Continued from page 1

Crane 920 was hatched at Patuxent in the spring of 1989 and moved to the Mississippi Sandhill Crane Refuge on November 14, 1989. After several weeks getting accustomed to her new surroundings safely in a release pen, she was set free on December 11, 1989. She set up a territory on the refuge and found a mate. They nested together in 1999 and again in 2000, but this first mate disappeared. She found a second mate and nested again multiple years between 2001 and 2009. The last time she is recorded nesting (with a third mate), was in 2014, at the old age (for a crane) of 25. This last nest was near the local Coca Cola plant, and the cranes received the nickname of ‘Coke plant crane pair.’

In addition to her active reproductive life, crane 920 was often a research subject for Patuxent scientists during her 31 years. Initially she was part of a large study led by Dr. David Ellis comparing the survival of costume-reared and parent-reared cranes after

release (slightly better survival with costume-reared cranes). In 1998, nine years after release, she was captured for a liver biopsy as part of a research project looking at low-level contaminants in the habitat. In 2002 her chick was captured and implanted with a small button radio transmitter as part of a chick survival study.

The endangered Mississippi Sandhill Crane breeding and reintroduction program was successfully developed at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in the 1980’s. After completing several research projects and developing the techniques still used today, the program was gradually shifted to two non-governmental facilities in the Southeast. Unlike the recent disastrous transfer of the Whooping Cranes where reproduction and releases have ceased, the Mississippi Sandhill Crane program transfer was done gradually and carefully under the auspices of the biologists who worked with the cranes. Breeding and releases of the Mississippi Sandhill Cranes continued uninterrupted and the successful program continues to this day. 🦢

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FRIEND OF PATUXENT BOARD MEETINGS

Friends Board meetings are currently held by Zoom at 4 pm. Dates for Board meetings for 2021 are: January 19, March 16, May 18, July 20, September 21, and October 19 (both Board and annual members meeting). Dates, locations, and times are subject to change.

JOIN TODAY!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

(E-mail address will not be sold or shared. It will be used for Friends and Refuge announcements only.)

Phone: (opt.) _____ New Renewal

- Individual (\$25/yr), gift: FOP bookmark (or other) Family (\$35/yr), gift: FOP decal (or other)
- Contributor (\$75/yr), gift: History of Patuxent DVD (or other) Sponsor (\$250/yr), gift: FOP hat (or other)
- Life (\$500), gift: FOP shirt (or other) Please ✓ size: S M L XL XXL XXXL
- Life-65+ (\$300), gift: FOP shirt (or other) Please ✓ size: S M L XL XXL XXXL
- Corporate \$1,000 Gift: 1/4 page ad in the Friends newsletter for one year. (4 Issues).

Donation \$ _____ *Make check to “Friends of Patuxent” and mail to address on reverse side of this page.*

- Check here if you prefer not to have a gift, and instead have your entire dues support Friends of Patuxent.
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Friends of Patuxent

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Friends of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge, Inc. is a designated Section 501(c)(3) public charity. It is a membership organization whose mission is to financially support the research of the PWRC and the environmental education, outreach and recreational missions at the PRR. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our Maryland Charitable Organization Registration-2348.

Your membership/contribution helps support the mission and programs at Patuxent. You also receive the following benefits:

- Quarterly newsletter (mailed on request or go to www.friendsofpatuxent.org)
- 10% discount in our Wildlife Images Bookstore and Nature Shop and other area refuge bookstores
- Attendance at member functions
- Participation in on-site educational programs
- Sense of accomplishment in providing many opportunities for wildlife-related recreation, education and research

(Application on reverse side)