

A quarterly newsletter for Volunteers and Friends
of the Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge, Inc.



FRIENDS OF PATUXENT

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Jan-Feb-Mar 2022

Look for the Friends of Patuxent 2021 Annual
Accomplishments in the Spring 2022 Newsletter!

Giving Back...to Nature

Jennifer Greiner, Refuge Manager

vol-un-tee (noun) - a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task

Watching ring-necked ducks on Lake Redington on a chilly December morning, I thought about the many moving parts that keep Patuxent Research Refuge afloat throughout the year. During this season of giving, I want to share a bit about Patuxent's remarkable volunteers, now 110 strong and counting!

When I ask volunteers what motivates them, the common theme among their answers is *passion*... for wildlife, for nature, and for sharing that with other people. This passion was on display when Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) first allowed volunteers to come back to work on the refuge under COVID-safe protocols, and there was a line outside the door the next morning! Equally impressive is the number of creative volunteers who found a way to continue volunteering via socially-distanced locations through things like brochure preparation, program planning, and kids' craft assembly.

Like a holiday to-do list, the list of things these volunteers do is long. They perform a variety of tasks across the refuge. Both behind the scenes and on the front lines:



- provide information to visitors at both North and South Tract
- maintain grounds and gardens and prepare landscaped areas for winter
- mulch, monitor, and maintain trails and trees
- remove invasive species
- collect, raise, tag and release monarch butterflies

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What??? Live Wolves at Patuxent???

by Matthew C. Perry, Emeritus Scientist, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (now Eastern Ecological Science Center)



Wolf pups in penned area of Snowden Hall.

When the National Wildlife Visitor Center was being planned at Patuxent in the late 1980s, there were several serious discussions about having live animals on the grounds not far from the Visitor Center. The species of most interest were the whooping crane, bald eagle, and timber wolf. It was hoped that all three species could be kept in large cages or fenced

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Giving Back... to Nature

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- conduct environmental education programs and outreach
- photograph wildlife and habitats
- provide recreation assistance (fishing and hunting programs)
- help with citizen science (nestbox surveys)
- help with technology (website, exhibits)
- plan and staff a variety of special events (Bird and Pollinator Festivals, Urban Wildlife Conservation Day, youth fishing days).
- Friends of Patuxent (FOP) volunteers help in the Wildlife Images bookstore, serve on the FOP Board, and raise funds to help support the missions of both the refuge and US Geological Service (USGS) science center.

Patuxent’s volunteers are busier than a bunch of North Pole elves! I’ve been here just 18 months, a blink of an eye compared to the years of service that most of these volunteers have devoted to this refuge. Since October 1, 52 volunteers have already logged 1,342 hours. For comparison, volunteers reported a whopping 9,990 hours during 2021. Most of these hours were spent providing wildlife-dependent recreation assistance with wildlife and habitats second and maintenance third.

Despite not being able to hold group orientations due to pandemic safety guidelines, Volunteer Coordinator and Ranger Diana Ogilvie did orient many volunteers individually and welcomed over 41 new volunteers to the refuge volunteer family. Since the pandemic began, despite the initial cessation of volunteer work on refuges, several volunteers have reached new service milestones:

- 59 volunteers reached 25 hours
- 46 volunteers reached 50 hours
- 24 volunteers reached 100 hours



Ross Feldner

Mockingbird at Cash Lake.

- 18 volunteers reached 250 hours
- 15 volunteers reached 300 hours

*NOTE: tracking these volunteer hours is key to helping document the amount of volunteer assistance needed to accomplish our mission!

I am beyond grateful for our Patuxent volunteers who give so freely of their time and talents throughout the year. Here’s to accomplishing great things together in 2022! 🦌

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 15.

Urban Wildlife Conservation Day at Patuxent Research Refuge

by Genny Davis, Chesapeake Conservation Corps member at Patuxent Research Refuge

On Saturday, October 2nd, Patuxent Research Refuge celebrated Urban Wildlife Conservation Day. The refuge hosted fun, educational activities for its urban community of the Washington D.C. and Baltimore corridor. The National Wildlife Visitor Center provided chalk art, live monarch butterfly releases, hiking activities, crafts, and a live birds of prey presentation by Rodney's Raptors. The North Tract Visitor Information Station along with the Meade Natural Heritage Association provided beginner's pellet gun, fishing, and archery programming as well as interpretive hikes. Special kayak access on Cash Lake was allowed for beginner paddling lessons provided by Ultimate Watersports. An estimated total of over 450 participants enjoyed the event while connecting with their environment and their community. 🦌



Visitors on kayaks enjoying a paddling lesson on Cash Lake.

USFWS Jennifer Greiner

Outreach at the Laurel Boys and Girls Club

by Genny Davis

On October 7th, the visitors team taught a hands-on lesson about animal skulls to 16 after-school childcare children, 2nd grade and up, at the Laurel Boys and Girls Club. While the children observed real animal skulls, they learned how to tell things such as size, walk, eyesight, and diet of an animal. In small groups, the children were given unidentified skulls to investigate and work together to discover the animals the skulls once belonged to.

On December 15th, the Patuxent Research Refuge Visitor Services team returned to the Laurel Boys and Girls Club to conduct a fishing and archery program for around 20 children. The children, ages ranging from 4 to 11,

These two outreach programs are the most recent of several successful programs done for the Laurel Boys and Girls Club led by education ranger Tim Parker.

received a short lesson about why bow-hunting takes place on the refuge and how it fits into the refuge's conservation mission. They got to practice their archery skills with real bows and foam arrows. The children also received a lesson on fishing conservation practices on the refuge, fish-

ing ethics, and how to cast with a rod. Then, they played a game where they cast real rods for plastic fish. Between these two activities, children crafted fish hand-puppets to take home. Through the hands-on fun and educational activities, the children went home with knowledge about Patuxent Research Refuge's efforts toward fish and wildlife conservation as well as an introduction to outdoor recreation.

These two outreach programs are the most recent of several successful programs done for the Laurel Boys and Girls Club led by education ranger Tim Parker. In the new year, Patuxent hopes to keep building on this relationship to be a valuable resource and asset to the local community. 🦌

Lennie Jones - A Man of Many Talents

by Matthew C. Perry, Emeritus Scientist, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (now Eastern Ecological Science Center)

Few alumni of Patuxent have risen to such high positions in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) from such humble beginnings as Lennie Jones. Lennie came to Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (PWRC) in 1971 and was first employed as an animal caretaker in the Endangered Species Program, where he was mainly involved with the care and propagation of whooping cranes. He worked in this program for six years and then switched to be part of the maintenance staff as a tractor operator.

Lennie recalls fishing and wildlife activities during his formative years with his father, who was a drummer and taught him to cherish jazz and blues music. Lennie taught himself how to play a guitar and fiddle. There also were bad times, as Lennie's parents, who were both talented artists, had disagreements and went their separate ways. Lennie started drinking alcohol when he was 13, played a guitar in nightclubs at 15, was homeless at 17, and turned 18 years old in a Baltimore County jail.

Although Lennie never drank alcohol at work, his productivity at Patuxent was sometimes compromised by weekend drinking, and other activities around his avid interest in music, and performances in several bands. His colleagues in maintenance, Bill Lomax and Henry Mouzon, knew of his history of fighting, and having been shot at and stabbed, while playing at roadhouse honky-tonks on weekends. They would meet after work on Friday afternoons and pray together that Lennie would be back to work on Monday. Fortunately, Lennie was never seriously wounded from many assaults, but he left Patuxent in September 1976 to become a full-time musician.

Lennie worked as a professional musician in both Maryland and Virginia



Lennie Jones as a young wildlife admirer, 1955.

playing blues, bluegrass, and country music with guitar, fiddle, and harmonica. He joined Maryland's well-known bluegrass group, the "Grim Pickers" in the mid-1970s, but then formed "Cottonmouth," a Southern rock and blues band, and "String Fever," a bluegrass band, both in Maryland. In 1979, he joined the country-music band, "Stone Creek," in southwest Virginia.

He loved playing in public nightclubs, but once admitted to me that there often were temptations with drinking and women that he seemed to be unable to handle. His lifestyle as the so-called "Mountain Man" led to a divorce and then the prospect of one to three years in a Virginia penitentiary after a DUI car accident. The judge asked Lennie what he was going to do about his problem, and Lennie responded he would stop drinking. The audience in the courtroom laughed, but the judge believed him, and Lennie received no jail time. Lennie has been a sober man from that day, March 16, 1981, to the present. Lennie then



Lennie Jones as a "mountain man" in Virginia, 1981.

used his wildlife skills of hunting and trapping and survived living off the land for one year in the wilds of the mountains of Virginia, with his conscience as his only companion.

In 1982, he ended his work as a professional musician, which he had done for 17 years. He cut his long hair and beard and returned to Maryland, where he was rehired in the maintenance section at Patuxent in various capacities of work. Lennie fervently wanted to become a law enforcement officer, but applications to the FWS and local county law enforcement agencies brought rejections, due to his past record with drugs and alcohol.

In 1989, when Patuxent was celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of its existence, we were concurrently conducting planning for the new National Wildlife Visitor Center. We were working closely with the nationally famous zoologist and naturalist, Jim Fowler, who was advising us on the creation of a live wolf display in a large section



Lennie Jones and Jim Fowler on wildlife walk with kids, October 1989.



Jim Fowler showing "harmless" snake Lennie Jones handed him.

of our woods. Lennie got involved immediately with Jim when he came to our anniversary and planned several events with him. During the day, they organized a reptile "scavenger" hunt for young kids with Lennie's captive snakes and lizards that had been carefully hidden in natural habitat waiting for the surprised kids to discover.

At night, while Jim was being introduced as our guest speaker for our banquet, Lennie became a major part of the introduction. Jim had asked Lennie to bring an attractive "herp" (reptile

or amphibian) as a prop for discussion. Lennie stated later, "being Marlin Perkins' critter-catchin' guy all over the globe, I assumed Jim was really familiar with snake species." With no prior prep, Lennie removed a gentle Sinaloan milk snake from a bag and placed it in Jim's hand. It immediately headed up the inside of his sport coat sleeve and Jim seemed very uncomfortable. Jim hid his fear from the crowd, but bent down and whispered in Lennie's ear, "Lennie, are you kidding!?!? A tame coral snake??!!" Lennie quickly and quietly identified the beautiful crit-

ter as the very similar but harmless milk snake, and they resumed the discussion with the excited audience.

Lennie's interest in law enforcement became a more dominant aspect of his life and eventually he was admitted to the unique professional group of Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement officers. His past talents with wildlife and with those folks that abuse the law became an asset, and he worked for several years as an undercover agent dealing with illegal trade in wildlife products. He was promoted several times and then became an instructor at the FWS Law Enforcement Academy in Georgia. He also volunteered for several assignments after there were 23 bomb threats after the September 11, 2001, attack. Lennie had a security detail for Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior (1993-2001); for Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior (2001-2006); with former President, Jimmy Carter, in 2005; and many other dignitaries.

In 2006, Lennie retired from the FWS and assumed a new life near the Everglades in south Florida surrounded by Spanish moss and palmetto palm. He became a full-time folk artist and lives by himself with his dogs in a rural area, where he receives visits occasionally from his son, Jake, and daughter, Amber, who both live in Florida and have

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Bruce Williams, Henry Mouzon, and Lennie Jones – Old friends at Patuxent with eastern king snake, 1990.

The Great Blue Heron, Patient Hunter

by Ross Feldner, Newsletter editor and volunteer, Photos by Ross Feldner

I don't remember when I first encountered this magnificent bird, but it left a lasting impression. So much so, that I made it part of my company's logo.

Standing 38-43 inches high and boasting a wingspan of six feet, it's hard to miss. The blue part of its name is a bit confusing much like a Purple Finch that looks red, or a Red-bellied Woodpecker whose belly is a very faint rusty color. The Great Blue Heron's coloration is mostly slate-gray with some black and brown accents. This is the largest and most widespread heron in North America, so it's a good chance you may have seen it. In flight they look quite different, holding their head close to their body with a bent neck, but still an awesome sight to behold.

You commonly find great blues near marshes, mud flats, lakes, and other shallow water areas, spending their time in a frozen stance, waiting for prey to happen along. They nest colonially in trees near water and then disperse to feeding areas. Nesting colonies are typically found in mature forests, on islands, or near mudflats. Great Blue Herons do best when they are free of



Great Blue Heron at Lake Reddington, Patuxent Research Refuge.

human disturbance (duh) and have easy access to foraging areas near by.

Great Blue Herons typically breed in colonies of anywhere from a few to several hundred pairs. Nest building begins when a male chooses a nesting territory and actively displays to attract a female. The large nest is usually built high up in a tree out of harm's way. The parents work together to build the nest. The male gathers sticks and the female constructs a platform nest lined with small twigs, bark strips, and pine needles. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs for about 4 weeks. Then, after hatching, the parents bring food to their young for two months until they can fly. But they still continue feeding the birds for a few weeks after fledging (leaving) the nest.

The Great Blue Heron is not a picky eater and will feed on fish, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, small mammals such as voles, *and even other birds*. They stalk their prey slowly and deliberately. When foraging, they stand silently and unmoving along




the shore, waiting for prey to come by. Then, in the blink of an eye, they stab their meal with a quick lunge of the bill.

To the human eye, the actual capture appears instantaneous. But in truth, the heron waits very long and in stillness before the catch. Here he teaches us the value of patience, of observing with a keen eye, and not wasting time when the opportunity arises.

Several Native American tribes look at the heron as a symbol of patience and good luck. On the Northwest coast, people believe that if Native American fishermen spot a heron, it means good luck is with them, and they will have a successful fishing trip.

I believe that's true. Nature, in the form of a Great Blue Heron, is my guide.

Ross Feldner is the editor of the Friends of Patuxent newsletter and is a board member of the Rachel Carson Council where he also co-authors the [Bird Watch and Wonder](#) program with RCC President Bob Musil. 

What??? Live Wolves at Patuxent??

Continued from page 1

areas that were not too obtrusive to observers of the animals. The concept was part of a nationwide movement to get caged animals in natural settings and put the human observers in “cages” (cars, busses, trams).

It was desired to use the planned battery-operated tram to drive through the cages. The first area for live animals was the Mabbot Pond field area, which seemed perfect for non-flying whooping cranes. The fences could be easily hidden in the woods and the entrance gate could be remotely opened when the tram approached the fenced area, and the exit gate remotely opened on departure. Similar fencing could be done for wolves in the woods halfway between Mabbot Pond and Harding Spring Pond. An artificial cave for the wolves could be constructed for shelter for the wolves. The last fence area would be for bald eagles at the small Harding Spring Pond. Of course, animals in all three separate areas would need to be given food by caretakers at times and in areas not noticeable for visitors.

Although it seemed like a very ambitious plan, there was good funding for the Visitor Center and it seemed doable. All planning for live animals came to an abrupt halt when the Director of all Fish and Wildlife Service research in Washington, DC, decreed “NO LIVE ANIMALS.” Apparently, his opposition was concern he had that it might be construed that Patuxent was competing with the National Zoo.

All plans for live captive animals at the visitor center were then shelved and forgotten until 1992, when a new biological technician, Nick Federoff, arrived at Patuxent to work in the Endangered Species Program. He thought it would be great to have wolves at the Visitor Center and eventually Nick received permission from his supervisor, who consulted with Dr. David Mech. Dr. Mech was on the Patuxent staff stationed in Minnesota and was



Nick Federoff with wolf pup in Snowden Hall.



Volunteer caregiver Brenda Cruz helping with wolf socialization.



Biologist Mary Maxey helping to socialize wolf pups.

the internationally-acclaimed expert on wolves.

Nick drove to a USDA kennel in Indiana in early 1995 and got a male and female pup from staff he knew. The kennel donated the wolves as they realized it was for a federal project for education purposes. Nick brought the pups back and kept them in a room on the second floor of Snowden Hall during the day. At night, Nick took the two pups to his home so they could become more imprinted on humans. The pups were bottle fed by a team of volunteers, who also socialized them. Nick named the male, Noah (for Noatak, AK), and the female, Sitka, because the pups had northern Alaska wolf ancestry.

Although the pups were popular with a small group of caregivers, the project did not receive a lot of attention from most staff. However, one researcher heard of the project and complained to administrators in Washington that he did not want to see the Visitor Center become a “zoo.” The project was quickly ended, and Nick had to return the pups to the kennel where he had received them. Shortly after, Nick left Patuxent to work for the Environmental Protection Agency. This ended the possibility of live animals at the Visitor Center and the issue has not been seriously considered since. One good aspect of the story is that the pup named Noah that was so well socialized by Nick was sold to the Walt Disney Company and was used in some of its movies. 🦊

Around the Refuge

Photos by Matt Beziat, Patuxent Volunteer



Wood Duck Pond (North Tract). Featured by the Sierra Club
<https://www.sierraclub.org/daily-ray-hope/2021/08/wood-duck-pond-patuxent-research-refuge-fort-meade-maryland>



Cash Lake Sunset (South Tract)



Mabott Pond (South Tract)

Around the Refuge

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Cattail Pond (North Tract)



Groundsel Tree (South Tract)



Rieve's Pond (North Tract)

Volunteer Art Exhibit in January

by Mary Ann Hartnett, Volunteer and Gallery Coordinator



Plan to join and visit the Volunteer art exhibit during January at the Hollingsworth Gallery.

1. Select 2 pieces of your ready to hang wildlife/habitat artwork.
2. Bring them to the Visitor Center by early January. In December, leave artwork at the art drop off site - Jen Hill's former cubicle. In January, use one of the hooks and hang it in any open area in the gallery. Extra hooks are at the far end of the gallery. Snag a hook in the carpet to secure it.
3. Add a card with your name if a piece is not signed. Add a title if appropriate. Extra cards are at the drop off site.
4. Complete a contract to exhibit and leave it at the drop off site. Extra copies are at the drop off site or email me.

Questions/contracts:

Mary Ann Hartnett
2ufrommah@gmail.com

Findings From September 2021 Mussel Surveys in the Patuxent River

by Sandy Spencer, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, Patuxent Research Refuge

On September 13, 14 and 20, the first known physical search in the Refuge portion of the Patuxent River for Yellow Lance and other mussels was conducted by Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologist Matt Ashton, Sandy Spencer, USFWS Patuxent, and other biologists from DNR and the USFWS Chesapeake Bay Field Office (CBFO). This was a follow-up survey from the eDNA water sampling conducted in August (see Fall 2021 issue Vol. 32, No. 4 of the Friends of Patuxent Newsletter). Using viewing buckets and snorkel gear, we found three different species in moderate abundances, Eastern elliptio (*Elliptio complanata*), Atlantic Spike/Northern Lance (*Elliptio producta/feriana*), and Creeper (*Strophitus undulatus*), but unfortunately, no Yellow Lance (*Elliptio lanceolata*) (yet). There will be more portions of Patuxent River to cover next year.

The total finds for each were:

Eastern elliptio: 536

Atlantic Spike/Northern Lance: 277

Creeper: 44

The per day/per reach count was as follows:

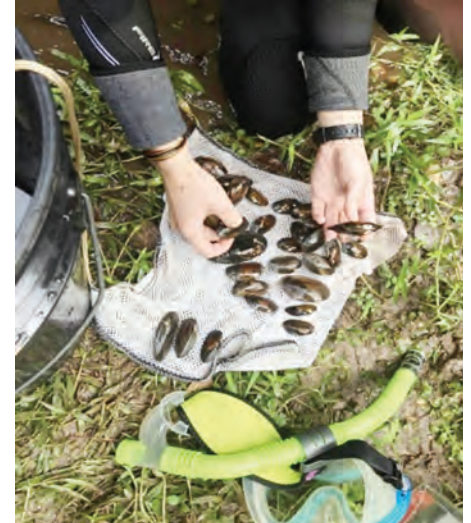
9/20/2021; approximately 200 to 900 meters downstream of MD 295, 98 meters surveyed; 136 Eastern elliptio, 122 Atlantic Spike/Northern Lance, and 22 Creeper. 39.06143, -76.82404 to 39.06784, -76.83041.

9/14/2021; beginning at River Road near floodplain terrace off Beech Forest Road, 166 meters surveyed; 345 Eastern elliptio, 117 Atlantic Spike/Northern Lance, and 22 Creeper. 39.06143, -76.81229 to 39.06345, -76.82279.

9/13/2021; beginning upstream of
Continued on page 14



MD DNR intern Selina holding mussels.



Winter Flora: Common Milkweed

by Steve Noyes, Patuxent Volunteer

Evidence of winter plants on the Refuge can take various forms. A very common plant found here is the common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Seed pods will eventually open to release silk parachutes carrying seeds which scatter in the wind.

Many of us associate common milkweed with the Monarch butterfly in Spring and Summer months. The plant produces a toxic, milky sap that protects the adult butterflies and caterpillars from predators (mainly birds).

Other names: silkweed, wild cotton.

Lore


Milkweed floss used in life preservers (Mae Wests) during WWII.

Pioneers used the floss to stuff mattresses and pillows.

Milkweed-root tea was used by pioneers as a diuretic, laxative and the latex was used as a salve for warts and wounds.

In the spring, look for the colorful flowers attracting bees and butterflies.

There are so many fascinating plants and animals on the refuge if we'd only stop and observe.

Source: *The Book of Field and Roadside* by James Eastman (2003) 



Friends of Patuxent is Now on Instagram!

Please follow us [@friendsofpatuxent](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofpatuxent) to see great photos from Patuxent.

If you'd like us to share your pictures, please message us on Instagram or email us at friendspr@friendsofpatuxent.org

**Lennie Jones -
A Man of Many Talents**

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Lennie Jones with his two rescue dogs, Lil Doney and Boo, 2019.

successful professions. Lennie is very proud of his children, who, like him, had a rough childhood. Lennie has had a life of great accomplishments intermixed with some major setbacks. He is totally accepting of his past and is at peace with his conscience. Lennie's life is a good model representing contrition, compassion, and humility that is very commendable.

In recent years he has suffered two heart attacks that have limited some activities with guitar and painting. Despite the impact of the years he stated, "In every aspect. PWRC was my initial path to a very Blessed and satisfying incredible career. I owe PWRC virtually everything, no exaggeration: the beautiful habitat, my mixed responsibilities, both the captive and native wildlife, the true science, and especially the wonderful dedicated small staff, supportive on every level. His current lifestyle is self-explained in the video on his website that includes a good biography of how he got where he is. His website also includes his extensive artwork and the accolades he has received over the years for his numerous accomplishments in art and music. 🦌

<https://www.lenniejonesgallery.com/>



Lennie Jones above as a bodyguard in 2004 for Interior Secretary, Gale Norton.



Lennie Jones posing with Secretary Bruce Babbitt, 2001.



Lennie Jones conducting security detail in 2005 for former President, Jimmy Carter.



Lennie Jones on a security detail in 2001 at Shasta Dam, northern California, following the 9/11 attack.

Winter 2022 in the Hollingsworth Gallery

by Faith Leahy-Thielke, Patuxent Volunteer

Ah, 2022. The last two years have been tough – but hopefully, and funding permitting, the new year will bring at least a semblance of “normality” to the Refuge and the Hollingsworth Gallery. In January, we’ll be treated to the artwork and photography of Patuxent volunteers, including Karen Atwood, Rod Burley, Dennis Hartnett, Brenda Stone, and Trevor Tate. Subsequently, two fine artists, Penny Mause, in February, and Jennifer Lynn Becker, in March, will grace the walls with their work.

Penny Mause grew up in Washington, D.C. close not only to monuments, but “countless nature trails and places to explore.” She took her first painting class at Yellow Barn Studio in Glen Echo when she was 15. After more classes and a workshop, she had a solo show featuring her nature paintings. Although her college degree from the University of Massachusetts was in English Literature, art is now her full-time profession. She came to this – her “forever passion” during the relative confinement created by the pandemic’s restrictions. This period was an opportunity to veer from other career trajectories, and gave her the time to “hone” her craft.

Penny writes, that when she started painting again, she borrowed a professional camera. The images of birds and animals it produced enabled her to view these faunae in a new way and “compelled” her to paint them. Her media include gouache, watercolor, graphite and ink although she prefers oil. She is currently pursuing landscape from plein air. Her Website portfolio categories include landscapes, portraits, pet portraits and wildlife. Her focus for February’s exhibit here is

close-ups of common backyard birds of the Northeast and endangered birds of North America, including the whooping crane. What a treat for us.

Jennifer Lynn Becker of Lewisberry, Pennsylvania, is an artist and environmentalist who will be displaying original botanical watercolor paintings and prints of native birds, insects and plants. These artworks are dedicated to “bringing awareness of their interdependency in healthy biodiverse ecosystems.” Jennifer ascribes her appreciation of nature to her grandmother – who also fostered her environmental awareness and concern. She writes that she’s been an artist since childhood and is completely self-taught. Although she works in several different media, her primary one is soft pastels.

Jennifer graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in 2003 with a BS in physics and mathematics—talk about veering career trajectories! Since then she’s worked as a freelance artist in her home studio, creating illustrations with mixed and digital media. She lists website creation and social media marketing as well. For the last six years she’s been with Kings Isle Entertainment—developing prototypes for mobile games and creating 2D and 3D environments, props and textures for them. Additionally, she has worked in every aspect of game design.

In March, her exhibit will feature threatened and endangered species which rely on each other for their existence. She hoped to “highlight” the importance of using techniques like native gardening and habitat restoration.

The winter exhibits sound wonderful. May we stay wide open! 🦌

Basic Camping Skills at Patuxent Research Refuge with REI for Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors

by Genny Davis

In partnership with REI, Patuxent Research Refuge, located in Laurel, MD, held camping basics programs for community partners Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors on October 9th. REI taught two three-hour sessions to a total of 35 participants. The sessions included a camp kitchen and hygiene workshop and a tent and sleep system workshop, as well as a Q&A. Participants left the sessions with a great introduction to their new hobby as well as connections with other community members to create camping groups. Once finished, REI donated the camping gear to Patuxent Research Refuge which will open doors for future camping workshops as well as a community gear lending program. 🦌



Findings From September 2021 Mussel Surveys in the Patuxent River

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Turtle Trail Road intersection with River Road, 106 meters surveyed; 55 Eastern elliptio and 38 Atlantic Spike/Northern Lance. 39.0635, -76.79312 to 39.05039, -76.9362.

Different species of mussels have their preferred substrates, which vary from bank to bank. One of the most productive parts was immediately against a steep clay bank where softer silt formed a “talus” at the base. Here handfuls of Atlantic Spike of various sizes were found together. The Eastern elliptio, however, prefers the more gravelly, less fine silt substrates away from the bank. The Creeper seemed to be found more or less between these two substrates, which occur on the refuge as well. The Yellow Lance prefers very sandy, fine gravel substrates on the



The endangered yellow lance mussel.

refuge. Physical search is a slow process where usually mussels are evident only by a tiny little opening in the sand or silt as they are filtering.

On September 15, we also visited the Hawlings River in Montgomery County where a Yellow Lance population exists over about 4.6 kilometers of the river (pers comm. Matt Ashton). This area is upstream from the Rocky Gorge Dam and part of the Patuxent River watershed. We located previously marked Yellow Lance and obtained tissue for the genetics lab to compare

with eDNA samples taken from the Patuxent River in August.

It is unknown why the Yellow Lance has virtually disappeared from its historic region of occurrence in Maryland. The other species found are stable and secure, and have multiple host species to help distribute their glochidia (larvae) upstream. The host species for Yellow Lance in this area is unknown but investigations are pending.

Other species of conservation concern found include small schools of stripeback darter (MD Endangered S1, *Percina notogramma*) and glassy darter (MD Threatened S1/S2, *Etheostoma vitreum*), and spiny-cheeked crayfish (MD Demonstrably Secure S5, *Faxonius limosus*).

Special thanks to: DNR State Biologist James McCann, lead mussel biologist Matt Ashton, Selina Cheng, Ally Bartell, Kyle Hodgson, FWS CBFO Julie Slacum and Dimitri Rucker, and FWS intern Brett Page. 🦌

Bowie State University (BSU) Field Trip with Patuxent Refuge Biologist

By Sandy Spencer, Patuxent Research Refuge

On Friday, Oct 15, a BSU biology class joined Sandy Spencer to see the fall colors at the remote Schaefer Farm Ponds area nearly adjacent to BSU. It was chosen because some fearful-of-nature students had told their professor Anne Wiley they thought BSU was out in the boonies. “I’ll show you boonies,” Spencer challenged. The view and discoveries were well worth dodging the “modified leaves” (thorns) and climbing the fence. A marbled salamander guarding her eggs was tops.

We had a blast, and hopefully those fearful of nature gained confidence in exploring the local outdoors!



Sandy Spencer with BSU students on Patuxent field trip.

Photo by Sandy Spencer

Bowie State University at North Tract

by Ela Carpenter, Patuxent Research Refuge Biologist

During the fall semester, the Field Biology class from nearby Bowie State University had the opportunity to learn biology field techniques from Patuxent Research Refuge biologists Sandy Spencer and Ela Carpenter. During a recent field trip to North Tract, Ela showed students how to set up trail cameras on Merganser Pond Trail and near Bailey Marsh. Students documented wildlife such as deer and even a mink!



Dr. Anne Wiley's field biology class at Bowie State University

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Mink caught on trail camera near Bailey Bridge on North Tract.

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Friends Board meetings are currently held by Zoom at 4 pm. Dates for Board meetings for 2022 are: January 18, March 15, May 17, July 19, September 20, October 18. (both Board and annual members meeting). Dates, locations, and times are subject to change.

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