

Friends Connecting to Friends

Issue 4, June 26, 2020

Adopting a Pond by Stephanie Everett and Dave Tate

We moved into a new house on March 2, so for us, staying at home has meant an opportunity to get to know our new neighborhood. There is a lovely path close to our house that circles a pond, and this has become one of our favorite places to walk. Unfortunately, the pond is actually a not-so-lovely stormwater management pond, choked with algae. In spite of this, there are lots of frogs and turtles, birds and dragonflies. Having had a backyard pond for the past 20 years we know this area has the potential to be great wildlife habitat, though it would take a fair amount of work. (Not to mention coordinating with the county, the builders and the homeowners association!) To bring our vision to reality we would need help!



The pond at Watershed Village, Two Rivers, Odenton

So we sent an email out to the neighborhood asking if anyone else would like to join us and help transform the pond and its surroundings into wildlife habitat. To our surprise and delight twenty people signed up right away! The Watershed Pond Club was born!

A few days later we received two sycamore seedlings from an avid native-plant gardener in one of the other neighborhoods, and got permission from the HOA to plant them near the pond. Planting the seedlings was our first official club event, and it went very well.

Our next project will probably be creating bog gardens in a couple of locations where seeps make the ground too wet for mowing. Ultimately our goal is to get the pond area designated as certified wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Association. Wish us luck!



Watershed Pond Club members planted two Sycamore seedlings on June 7

Backyard Wildlife by Lowell Adams

I was formally trained as a wildlife biologist in the 1960s and 1970s and spent my career focused on wildlife and nature conservation in metropolitan areas. So, by practice, I am an urban wildlife biologist. Beginning in the mid-1970s, there were not many of us. A major goal of urban biologists at the time was to work with urban planners and landscape architects to better integrate ecological principles in urban and urbanizing areas. Conferences were held that included the three professional disciplines. A landscape architect friend of mine was convinced that landscape architecture principles could be integrated with ecological principles. He pointed out that landscape architects were trained to create visual aesthetics but should also focus on audio aesthetics. His research showed that people like some sounds and dislike others. Sounds people don't like included gunfire and dentist's drills. Liable sounds included ocean waves and bird song. So, my friend's point was that landscape architects should design spaces that attract songbirds (audio aesthetics), a practice that also would integrate ecological principles (songbird habitat). Likewise, urban planners can include public open spaces for people than reduce negative impact on wildlife. There seems to be increased attention given to urban wildlife these days (50 years later) and the Patuxent Research Refuge is part of that effort.

For the past 3 months, I've enjoyed seeing various urban critters on my daily neighborhood walk in Columbia, Maryland, as others have reported in these "Friends Connecting to Friends" notes. In addition, I am always on the lookout for animals in the backyard. Our half-acre lot was completely mowed when we moved in (1981). It is now mostly wooded from tree and shrub plantings over the years. In addition to a variety of songbirds, I enjoy seeing red foxes, woodchucks, raccoons, white-tailed deer, gray squirrels, chipmunks (probably my favorite), and various bees and butterflies. For me, life would be much duller without the sights and sounds of nature around the home and neighborhood.



This red fox routinely has a certain spot to catch the sun for a mid-morning nap. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to keep up with pulling the garlic mustard in bloom there.



Mama deer in Adam's family backyard



... and baby deer. I think this same mom has come to our backyard for 3 years in a row to give birth

Patuxent North Tract Nature Photos by Jim Wilkinson



Fresh Great-spangled Fritillary on Wild Turkey Way



ClouDED Skipper at Daisy along Wild Turkey Way



Northern Fence Lizard



Red Admiral Butterfly near Rieve's Pond



Water Lilies at Rieve's Pond



Transverse Flower Fly at Visitor Center



Yellow-sided Skimmer, South Road



Northern Cricket Frog along Wildlife Loop

Nature's Gifts by Jeanne Latham

This spring, and more specifically during this stay-at-home time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have spent more and more time out of doors. And at the same time, I've taken time to really smell the roses – that is, observe and appreciate the gifts that nature has provided. This, in turn, has prompted me to do some research and learn new facts. It has been a wonderful journey that I'd like to share with you.

One day, while sitting on the deck just off our kitchen door, I spotted a small butterfly. In the past I probably overlooked this sort of dull critter. After I took a photo and increased the magnification, I realized this butterfly had some cool markings. So I did some digging online and found out that it was a Red-banded hairstreak. In addition to my photo, I have included another photo to show the details.



Photo by Jeanne Latham



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<https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/viewThumbnails.php?species=520&showALL=1>

On our wooded property, many wild mountain laurels don their lush green leaves year round. Then when the spring comes around, their blossoms slowly open, revealing a beautiful sight. I'm grateful for this wonderful gift. Maybe you've seen mountain laurels while on a hike at Patuxent.



Having seen blue Eastern bluebird eggs in our nest boxes before, I was stumped when I saw a few white eggs in this nest. Several days later, I decided to take a photo, which you see here capturing five white eggs. After doing some internet searching, I discovered that white bluebird eggs are a rare occurrence. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology describes nesting facts of Eastern bluebirds at:



[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern Bluebird/lifehistory](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern_Bluebird/lifehistory)