

# Cromwell Valley Park

## Summer 2012 Newsletter & Program Calendar

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2002 Cromwell Bridge Road, Parkville, MD 21234



**Educational Programs – Seasonal Programs – Community Service Projects – Bird Watching – Habitat Restoration  
Hiking Trails – Summer Day Camp**



### Tinkerbelle in the Children's Garden

The pond in the Children's Garden is an ever-changing window to the wonders of aquatic life. There's always something interesting to see. At this time of year it's the dragonflies.

The large dragonflies in our pond are common green darners. They are among the largest of the dragonflies of our area, having a wingspan up to 4.5 inches. Their large and complex eyes give them the good vision they need to hunt on the wing, capturing other flying insects like wasps, mosquitoes and other dragonflies. They live in the water several years as nymphs (immature forms) where they hunt tadpoles and other aquatic insects. When mature, the large nymphs (about 2" long) crawl up onto the stems of water plants, and emerge as adults leaving behind their final nymphal exoskeleton. The nymphs over-winter in the bottom of ponds, while the adults migrate, using the same migratory routes as song birds and raptors. In fact, they often become a food item for migrating American kestrels and merlins.

If you're careful, and a little lucky, you may actually see the exoskeletons on the pond's iris and other emergent plants. Last year we watched an adult emerge, ready its four wings and suddenly fly off, with the sun creating sparkling jewels on its new wings—just like Tinkerbelle. J.S.

### Children's Garden Club: Early Birds in 2012

Thanks to the unseasonably warm weather, the Children's Garden Club is off to an early start this year. By mid-April, 44 young gardeners had conquered a formidable list of garden tasks and succeeded in planting a dizzying array of spring veggies.

Formidable, indeed. During our first two meetings, gardeners rotated among different stations. Some learned the ABCs of square-foot gardening and mapped out their plots, deciding which veggies to try this year. Others designed their garden markers, colorful painted rocks to mark their 3 x 3 foot plots. Still others rolled up their sleeves, grabbed spades and hoes and turned over the soil. They then added peat moss, vermiculite and last season's composted garden debris to amend the soil.

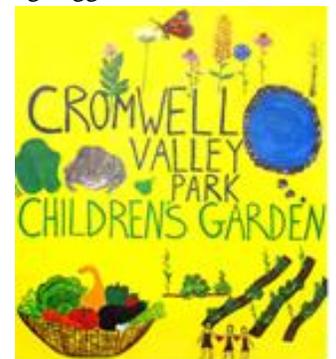
Finally, the reward! We planted our first round of spring veggies: beets, turnips, red and green lettuce, spinach, onions, potatoes, kale and radishes. Two weeks later came carrots, swiss chard, broccoli, cabbage and fava beans. Being wise gardeners, the kids have saved a few square feet of space for later plantings of bush beans, eggplant and peppers.

Where are the tomatoes you may ask? Never fear. We have two entire rows for the larger, climbing and trailing plants that would otherwise take over our square-foot plots, and every gardener can share in the harvest. We have two rows called Tomato Alley, two rows called Squash Heaven, a Pole Bean Tunnel, sugar snaps growing up our "Tee Peas" and a whole plot to be named "We Dig Sweet Potatoes!"

Trevor Suznick, our indispensable Master Gardener volunteer, answers every gardening question thrown his way and surprises us each year with something interesting. Last year, he whipped up a batch of Fried Squash Blossoms for us to munch on. This year, he's going to show us how to grow peanuts.

We're looking forward to seeing our gourds climb up our new Gourd House, made of bamboo and willow branches, and planting the "slices" of our Pizza Garden with tomatoes, onions, basil, oregano, peppers and garlic.

It's a good thing we were early birds this year – there's a lot going on! THANK YOU to all the volunteers who worked very hard – beginning way back in balmy February -- to prepare the Children's Garden for our young gardeners. Now the early birds can relax for a little while, enjoy some homemade Rhubarb Crisp, and watch their veggies grow. A.W.



**See our pull-out section of Park Programs.**

## Meet our Returning Seasonal Staff

Spring and summer are busy here at Cromwell Valley Park. Our many programs during these seasons require additional talents and energy to make sure everyone who joins in the Children's Garden programs and Summer Camps has the best experience possible. Here are two of our seasonal staff who've enjoyed their job so much, they keep coming back for more. K.S.

Everyone needs to experience the simple joys that come with gardening. That's the motto of **Anne Wedgeworth**, who is happy to be running the Children's Garden Club for the third year.



A lifelong gardener, whose first memories of gardening include watching her grandmother standing motionless at her screen door, broom in hand, just daring another chipmunk to eat her marigolds and scamper away, Anne can't remember a time when she didn't enjoy getting her hands dirty and toiling over a garden.

While completing her undergraduate and master's degrees in Ohio, she planted plots in community gardens where she learned all about square-foot gardening and enjoyed listening to the stories of elderly gardeners, particularly one named Stormy Weather. Anne recalls that Mr. Weather had an old kitchen chair in his garden, so he could "sit a spell and watch the beans grow." That's the kind of simple joy that Anne wants to impart to the members of the Children's Garden Club. The joy of watching a lingering bug or butterfly. Munching on a sugar snap pea picked right off the vine. Digging up a huge sweet potato with your bare hands. Sitting in the shade while making a craft with natural materials found in the park. Tasting homemade Rhubarb Crisp for the first time.

Anne and her husband, Ray, live in Towson with their 3 elementary-school aged children. She is a Master Naturalist at Cromwell Valley Park and often leads the fall field trips. Wearing her Master Naturalist hat at the same time as her Brownie leader and room mother hats, she is on a mission to help her kids' school and her daughter's Brownie troop be more environmentally conscious.

When asked what she likes most about the Children's Garden Club, Anne said, "C'mon, what's there not to like?" It's as simple as that.

**Laura Schulze** is a part-time naturalist at Cromwell Valley Park. She graduated from Towson University in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science. She chose Environmental Science because she enjoys working outside. She started working at Cromwell Valley as a summer camp counselor in 2010.

Since that first summer at the Park, Laura has presented weekend nature programs and the after-school Hawk Club. She has also helped out with community events such as the Fall Harvest Festival and the Holiday Open-House. She enjoys seeing the kids that come back each year for camps and programs, because then she knows that they are enjoying the park just as much as she is.



In this past year, Laura has taken early childhood development workshops focused on teaching natural sciences to children including Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, and Growing Up Wild. These workshops help her plan fun and educational programs for all ages. Currently, she is involved with Master Naturalist Training. She likes how the training focuses on our local flora and fauna right here in Maryland.

She enjoys exploring our natural environment with children. Whether going on a stream hike, checking out the amphibian pond, or looking under a log for salamanders, she knows that she will see something cool. Cromwell Valley Park has a variety of plants, animals, and habitats.

Laura says, "My job is a lot of fun and I am always learning something new."

## Nature Book Nook

**Urban and Suburban Meadows** by Catherine Zimmerman. 2010.

Want your yard to provide an aesthetically appealing and attractive habitat for pollinators, birds and butterflies? Looking for an environmentally-friendly alternative to a manicured lawn? Or maybe you're just tired of mowing? Catherine Zimmerman has done a great job presenting the concept of a native meadow and why it's an important alternative for your lawn or small garden. And, then she shows you exactly how to create it, with plant lists and local resources. This book was a must read while planning the creation of the new native meadow in the Children's Garden. J.S.

**Nature a Day at a Time: An Uncommon Look at Common Wildlife** by Cathie Katz. 2000. Some of us want to learn more about nature, but even the idea of reading a nature book puts us to sleep. This book has the answer: one page each day. This book is a quick and painless way to increase your knowledge and understanding about the world around you. Surely, you can find time in everyday to read one page and learn something about what's going on in nature right now. A great gift idea. J.S. and M.L.

## Easter Egg Hunt

The annual Easter Egg Hunt this year was a huge success. The weather was glorious and more than 600 children and adults participated in the variety of activities.



The success of the hunt can be measured by the expressions on the faces of the children. Some were sporting bunny ears, but all were thrilled to find the hidden plastic eggs. That there was candy inside was an extra treat. Those who were experienced in the hunt

brought their own baskets, knowing that a hand could only hold two or three eggs, but a basket as many as they could find.

The nine year old group had a certain look on their faces. As they waited their turn, they moved around, they seemed to be sizing up the others in their group trying to determine how they would fare in the race for eggs filled with candy.

Inside the Sherwood House, girls, boys and grown-ups created wonderful bonnets from a huge variety of stickers, lace, flowers and ribbons. It wasn't just the ladies who enjoyed this activity, there were many men who were actively helping their children and giving great suggestions on just where to place a sticker or paint a band of color.

Goats and chickens also attended the event, thanks to the Wicklein Family. These animals received lots of attention and the children watched as the animals scoured the ground for something to munch.

Everyone looks forward to the return of the Rabbit Club. First-time visitors are surprised by the sizes, shapes and colors. And we don't know for sure but we think the rabbits enjoy all of the petting. The Easter Bunny was as popular as ever, giving out candy and providing many photo opportunities. C.Z.

## What's New at the Willow Grove Nature Education Center?

"The tadpoles have legs!" Every spring, it's the same old story...frogs call, mate, lay eggs, tadpoles swim, tadpoles change, little frogs. Ho-hum. Been there. Seen that. Until a child shouts, "The tadpoles have legs!" At that point, the magic returns and we remember how miraculous is the annual change we sometimes take for granted. Every year the tadpoles change into frogs, caterpillars become butterflies, and meal worms become beetles. We are fortunate indeed to be able to watch all those changes at the nature center.

Come visit our wood frog and green frog tadpoles, quickly, before they make the complete change, and see the caterpillars and other seasonal delights we're exhibiting!



Did you know that groundhogs climb trees? Did you know that some Native Americans taught their children to fight like groundhogs—run away if you can, but fight bravely and fiercely if you can't? These and more tidbits of information are contained in the little **Did You Know...** books that we recently completed and are now on display at the nature center. We wrote a book for each of a dozen or so birds and mammals, and matched the book to an artifact from that animal, like its fur or antlers or nest.

Another easy and tactile learning tool. (Thanks to Caitlin Graff and Laura Lechtzin for creating the books for us!) J.S.

## Thanks for the Taxidermy

We asked in the last newsletter, and Stanley Knopp responded. The Willow Grove Nature Education Center is now the new home for several of Stanley's attractive taxidermy mounts to use with our educational and interpretive programs. In donating the cute critters, Stanley liked the idea that they would be used to teach hundreds of children about the out-of-doors that was such an important part of his childhood growing up in the wilds of Eastern Baltimore County. And his grandchildren (members of the Children's Garden Club) can visit them anytime at the nature center. Our favorite? The raccoon peeking out of the tree hole.

There's still room for more on the new shelves at the nature center. Any native bird or mammal in good condition is a candidate for this important and lofty position. J.S.



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RECREATION AND PARKS

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### Trails Partners at Cromwell Valley Park

The eight miles of trails that wind through the 426 acres making up Cromwell Valley Park don't take care of themselves. These meandering paths are tended by a devoted group of people who call themselves "Trail Partners." From flat turf or bumpy terrain to rolling meadows, variety abounds, and so, too, the challenges that come with caring for them. Removing debris from those miles of trails is no easy task, but thanks to a grant from SHA to purchase and our generous membership donations to maintain, the Council was able to purchase a Gator. That work horse has made some tasks much easier and lends itself to other jobs around the Park, as well.

Trail Partners are volunteers who work as a team on "trail days," and they may also work on selected trails in the Park on their own time. Trail maintenance days are held three times per year, with special trail days as needed for urgent trail maintenance, like downed trees and branches, or erosion issues. Adults and motivated adolescents ages 14 and above, with parental permission, may participate in Trails Days. High school students who need community service hours and love the outdoors are welcomed to join us.



Maintaining the trails at CVP consists of removing debris and trash along the perimeter of trails and into the woodland area, as well as pruning downed branches and limbs, particularly those obstructing passage on the trail. Invasive species of plants (e.g. multiflora rose, mustard grass and kudzu) are also removed by pruning or digging up root systems. Trail maintenance also controls overgrowth, erosion and boot-leg (unintended) trail development. Tread-ways along the trail paths are kept safe and passable. Trails are constructed and maintained so as to have minimal impact on the Park's natural bounty.

"It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue or to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look." Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*.

Please join us at CVP as a Trail Partner and participate in our Trail Day outings or adopt a trail. Contact Sharon & Rick Childs and let them know of your interest. Watch our calendar for scheduled Trail Days or call the Park office at 410-887-2503. S.C.

**Park hours  
Sunrise to sunset**

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