

Cromwell Valley Park

Fall 2013 & Winter 2014
Newsletter

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

Science is *Wild!*

Introducing a new column: *Science is Wild!* We humans could learn a thing or two or three from plants and animals. From the pain-relieving benefits of the bark of the willow tree (aspirin) to the “hitch-hiking” burrs that inspired Velcro to the proven health benefits of petting a dog or a cat, there is so much to discover and to learn. By studying wildlife, scientists are discovering new ways for humans to heal and to live. Animals and plants are also giving us ideas for new medicines and new medical treatments. Each newsletter, we will spotlight a plant or an animal and share what scientists are learning.



Fighting Ferocious Infections with Frogs

Sometimes the most innovative medical treatments come from the grossest stuff! Scientists have discovered that the skin of the Russian brown frog secretes sticky antimicrobial goo. Because these -- and most other frogs -- live in dark wet habitats that are crawling with germs, scientists theorized that the frogs' skin must perform like armor to protect the frog from germs. Researchers from Moscow State University removed the goo from the skin of living frogs and tested it to understand its antimicrobial

properties. The Russian scientists discovered 76 new chemicals with antifungal and antibacterial properties. Some of these chemicals are as effective as many of our most commonly prescribed antibiotics. Researchers are working with pharmaceutical companies to develop ways to synthetically produce “antimicrobial goo.” Many species of frogs and toads are native to Cromwell Valley Park. I wonder what new medical treatments might be hidden in the skins of our own green frogs, American toads, gray tree frogs, spring peepers, wood frogs, bullfrogs, leopard frogs, and Pickerel frogs? MML

Nature Quest

Baltimore County Department of Health is taking an active role in promoting its Park system as a means to achieve public health goals, particularly to help combat obesity. The effort is part of an overall health plan developed by the Baltimore County Health Coalition (<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/health/resources/lhc.html>) that targets reducing occurrences of low birth weight, child and adult obesity, and tobacco use by adults and teens. Among the actions to address obesity, the coalition proposes encouraging increased physical activity. In looking for “no cost” opportunities for outdoor activity for families, Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks is the perfect place to focus.

Through partnership with Wegmans, the Nature Quest program was funded and launched. One of the naturalists that you may have seen around Cromwell Valley Park over the last few years, Shannon Davis, has been involved in the program launch and promotion. Shannon explains the program:

“This summer and fall, residents can enjoy exercising their body and mind by participating in the Baltimore County Nature Quest. The Nature Quest provides a great opportunity to experience the outdoors and be active with friends and family while discovering some of the best parks and trails in Baltimore County. From June through November you can bike, hike, or canoe on designated trails to complete the Nature Quest and earn fun prizes.

Start by picking up a Nature Quest booklet from your local Wegmans store or at participating parks (Robert E. Lee Park, Oregon Ridge Nature Center, Cromwell Valley Park, Marshy Point Nature Center, or Benjamin Banneker Historical Park). Select a trail to begin your adventure and record your progress by making a rubbing, with a pencil or crayon, of the trail marker located on each of the nine trails in the booklet. Prizes are awarded after accumulating rubbings from at least five of the nine trails. In addition to the prizes, questers that complete five trails or more also receive free admission to the Nature Quest Fest on November 2, 2013. This action packed event will include various activities such as canoeing, fishing, live animals and more!”

It is not too late to get involved! Pick up a Nature Quest booklet and go explore the Parks with the whole family!



Meet our Park Volunteers

LAURY MILLER

As others before her, Laury learned of volunteer opportunities in the Park through the Baltimore County web site. The Children’s Education Program looked very interesting, so she signed up and went to the training two days later.

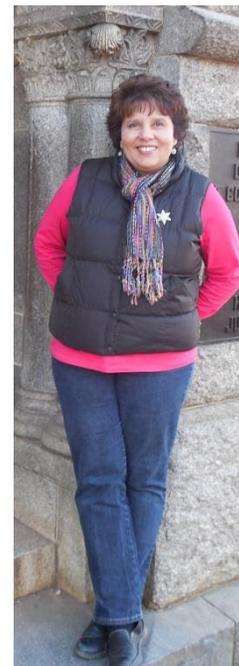
That was the fall of 2012. As many new volunteers Laury was concerned that she didn’t have enough knowledge to lead a field trip for young children. And, as she describes herself, she wasn’t “particularly outdoorsy.” The training and support of the other volunteers and the Park Naturalist Maureen Larkin assured her that she would do well, and she did.

In her words, “The kids learned and I did too. I was brave when a five-foot snake slithered between two groups of kids; I stopped worrying about the bees and wasps; I was privy to the ritual of American Toads mating and I could start to identify some trees!”

When the field trips resume in the fall, Laury will be among the volunteers ready to guide the children through the process of making apple cider or grinding corn.

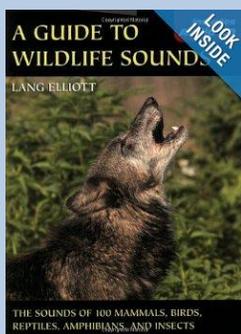
She has also been seen volunteering at other Park events, such as Oriole Day.

Laury considers herself very lucky to have found a place to learn and share and is now an outdoorsy person. Laury lives in Perry Hall. Her sons are Ben, 26, a Navy Corpsman in NY State, and Jake, an Army reservist, who lives in Parkville. She worked retail for many years and her interests are travel, baking, dogs, animals and enjoying the empty nest with husband Neil.



Nature Book Nook

A Guide to Wildlife Sounds: The Sounds of 100 Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians, and Insects.
Lang Elliott. 2005.



Was that a toad or a frog calling in your backyard? Do dogs, wolves, and coyotes sound the same when they bark and howl? How do you know if what you just heard was a red-bellied woodpecker, a red-headed woodpecker, or a downy woodpecker? Get this guidebook for 100 of the most common animals in eastern North America and you will learn the answers to these questions and many more. For each of the species, the author provides full-color photographs and useful information on the animal’s habitat, appearance, and behavior. The accompanying 60-minute audio CD gives you snippets of the animals’ most common calls, songs, and other sounds. So, find a comfortable place, open this guidebook, pop the CD into your player, relax, and listen to the animal sounds. As you learn the sounds of animals, your outdoor adventures will become more meaningful and rewarding.

MML

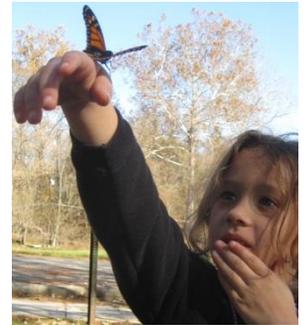
Happy for Her, Sad for Us ...



In June, we bid farewell to Park Naturalist, Justine Schaeffer, and congratulated her on her new position: Director, Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum in western Baltimore County.

Justine worked for Howard County Recreation and Parks, Piney Run Nature Center, and Oregon Ridge Nature Center before she brought her talents, her enthusiasm, and her smile to Cromwell Valley Park in January 2009. While she was here she developed many new programs, coordinated conservation projects, and initiated special educational events that have put our Willow Grove Nature Education Center and our Children's Garden on the map!

Children and adults enjoyed her programs on monarch butterflies (Marvelous Migrating Monarchs), Moth Night, geology (Cromwell Rocks, and the People Who Used Them), beaver, gardening with native plants, local history (Willow Grove Speaks), and orienteering – just to name a few. Justine also planned and conducted special multi-session programs: *Nature, Mom, and Me*, *Fox Club*, *Home School Garden Club*, and *Drop-in Gardening*. Through special educational events and programs, like Oriole Day and Bluebird Monitoring, visitors learned about our native bird species and how to protect them.



Justine understands the value of a strong volunteer force so she coordinated with Oregon Ridge Nature Center to jointly host the Maryland Master Naturalists course. Several graduates of the course are now actively volunteering in our school programs, on our habitat restoration team, in our Willow Grove Nature Center, and in our Children's Garden. One of our Master Naturalists, Anne Wedgeworth, volunteered for a major project: to apply for our Willow Grove Nature Education Center to become a Maryland Certified Green Center. Justine worked with Anne to complete the application and, in early May, we learned that we are now a Maryland Certified Green Center. This prestigious award recognizes the excellence of our environmental programs, the support we offer to local schools, and our commitment to environmental literacy and to conservation awareness.

We miss Justine but know that she is doing wonderful things at Banneker. We wish her success in her new adventure as she shares the wonders of nature and the value of cultural history with Banneker's visitors.

KS & MML



Justine is not be far away from us in her new role at Banneker. In fact, we should all go and check out her new digs. Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum is on the western end of Baltimore County in Oella (close to Ellicott City). Get information from the website: <http://benjaminbanneker.wordpress.com/>. Here is a bit about the Park taken from the home page of the Park's website:

The museum and park honor America's first great African American man of mathematics and science on the site of his birthplace and farmstead. We offer a diverse array of educational exhibits, performance and environmental programs as well as trails, a demonstration orchard, and a community garden. Join us for a wholesome adventure in historical learning!

Park hours Sunrise to sunset

Cromwell Valley Park Newsletter Staff

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Greetings from the President

As the seasons change in the Park, so we are experiencing some staff changes. On June 21, we bid farewell and best wishes for success to Justine Schaeffer, Park Naturalist, as she moves on to Benjamin Banneker Historic Park and Museum near Ellicott City. We shall miss her kind smile and large vision. On the other hand, we welcome our newest addition to the staff, Park Naturalist Kathy Kadow. We are looking forward to working with her.

Our current important project is the stabilization and preservation of the Lime Kilns and Log Cabin. With grants from France-Merrick, BG&E, Maryland Historic Trust, State Highway Administration as well as Bond bills from the Maryland Senate and House of Representative, we are proceeding with the various steps toward that goal. We are especially gratified by the individual contributions to our campaign.

Finally, here are some upcoming events at the Park. The Dam Jam takes place September 14 from 10-4 at the Willow Grove Farm. A 3K/5K race for Maryland's Day to Serve sponsored by the Church of Latter Day Saints takes place September 21 from 9-1, and the Blue Steel 10K run sponsored by C.O.P.S. follows on October 6. Most importantly, our annual Fall Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 12 and Sunday October 13 from 12-4, promises to be fun for all with family-centered activities, craft demonstrations and delicious food from Charcoal Deli and ice cream treats from Prigel's Creamery. So come and join us for a lovely day in the Park.

Pat Novak