

# Cromwell Valley Park

## Fall 2017 Newsletter & Program Calendar

www.cromwellvalleypark.org

410-887-2503

info@cromwellvalleypark.org

2002 Cromwell Bridge Road, Parkville, MD 21234



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

## “Old Fields” - What Makes Them Special

As the heat and humidity of summer begins to take its toll, we are looking forward to the end of the summer season and the cool crisp days of fall. One of the great privileges of living in our area is the changing of the seasons and the ever-changing face of the landscape. At Cromwell Valley Park the turn from summer to fall is marked by great activity and beauty that are fairly unique to the park. At the Hawk Watch the dedicated counters will soon be monitoring the southward migrations of raptors, songbirds and insects as they sweep over and through the valley. Few locations in our area can boast the high number hawks that are counted each fall from the Hawk Watch.

In addition, the late summer-early fall period is highlighted at Cromwell Valley Park by the glorious explosion of flowers and activity that occurs in these open fields. What looks like a tangled mess of weeds and brush much of the year comes to life.



New York ironweed



goldenrod & honeybee

Cromwell Valley Park offers a great opportunity to get up close and personal with these old field habitats by hiking through the many trails that circle and bisect the many fields maintained on the property. The late season wildflower show that is provided in old fields cannot be matched. Asters, goldenrods, Queen Anne’s lace, joe-pye weeds, New York ironweed, and vervains have all been storing up the summer sun’s energy and release this back to the world in a spectacular floral display. Added to this show are plumes of cool season grasses and multitudes of bees, wasps, butterflies, spiders and other insects.

Nothing is more exciting than an old field in late summer and early fall, and wading into the world of the old field habitat is as easy as hike through the trails that encircle and bisect the many fields at the park. These old field

habitats are always at a

premium because most

people view an old field as a useless field. "Overgrown" fields that host the best wildflowers are not good for pasturing animals and are often appear unkept throughout the early summer months so the property owners feel obliged to neaten them with a mowing or two. Left to their own devices, these old field habitats will quickly develop into young forests, losing their spectacular floral component. As such, the staff and volunteers at Cromwell Valley have been working hard to establish maintenance plans to keep the old fields at their best.

Timing is the key to successful maintenance of an old field habitat. Because old fields provide valuable habitat throughout the year, selecting the proper mowing time is critical to maintaining functions. During the spring and summer the old fields are rapidly growing and developing their structural diversity, at this time the old fields are host to many bird nests and developing insects. Summer mowing is very detrimental to the nursery function of the old fields.



monarch butterfly  
on butterfly weed

## “Old Fields” - What Makes Them Special (continued)

old field at Willow Grove

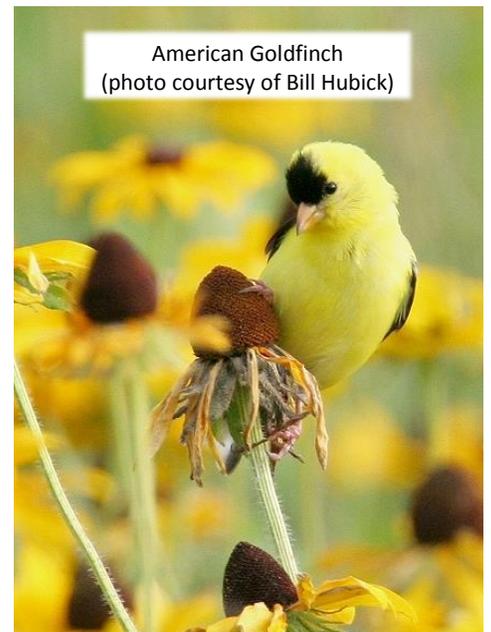


In the fall the old field is at its best, a living bouquet of flowers and the butterflies, bees, wasps, spiders and other insects that have developed throughout summer. I have never noticed people mowing old fields in the fall as this is their season of glory. But once the fall season has passed and the flowers have faded, out come the mowers and down go most old field vegetation. This is very detrimental to the resident wildlife. The dense tangles of vegetation provide cover and shelter for birds, rabbits, foxes, mice, moles and voles. A maze of hidden tunnels and resting places and dens exist beneath the sea of brown drying stems, a valuable cover that a mowed field cannot. Old field vegetation also provides a banquet of seeds that many species require to survive the winter. Finches and sparrows can often be seen dangling from old seed heads and scratching through the undergrowth of an old field, foraging on the plentiful seeds. Fall mowings deprive these birds of much of this winter staple.

The best time to mow the old field is early

spring, once the winter weather has broken and the survival stress has passed. Ideally the mowing would be timed to be sure that spring nesting has not yet begun but not mow too early so that the field is left bare for too long a period. The early growth of spring can quickly provide new cover if timed correctly. The best plan, which Kirk Dreier and the County have worked out, is to use rotation mowing on your old field habitat. By mowing only a portion the field each year, you provide the resident wildlife with sufficient cover to survive until the new growth is established. An every other year mowing pattern is sufficient to keep down the multiflora rose and woody succession. Spot mowing/cutting in the growing season is sometimes needed to control thistle and other invasive plants as they develop.

From late August through October the old fields at Cromwell Valley will bustle with activity. Grasshoppers and crickets, butterflies, bees, colorful flies and spiders galore all thrive in the old field habitat. These old fields are great for exploration and discovery as most of the wildlife requires nothing more than a careful eye to discover and study. The old field habitat will engulf you as you hike along the well groomed access trails. A magnifying glass may be useful in revealing some the smaller secrets of the old field, like crab spiders that lie in wait in flowerheads



American Goldfinch  
(photo courtesy of Bill Hubick)



goldenrod crab spider

for unsuspecting prey.

Cromwell Valley Park is at full glory each fall so be sure to get to the park and experience the best of the best. From the hawk watchers viewing raptors high overhead to the old field explorers wading through the maze of flowers, there is something for everyone. JC

### Project Feeder Watch

Embrace the winter. Count feeder birds for science!  
Calling all birders.

*PROJECT FEEDER WATCH is a citizen science program in which participants count the number and species of birds visiting feeders from December—April.*

*Pull up a comfy chair, grab a hot beverage, and join us in the Willow Grove Nature Center as we count birds for science. Participants are asked to sign-up for one hour each week on Tuesdays or Thursdays.*

*Free training to take place on Thursday, November 9th. 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM Willow Grove Nature Center.*

*For more information, contact Ranger Brina: 410.887.3014 [bdoyle@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:bdoyle@baltimorecountymd.gov)*

The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology  
Exploring and Conserving Nature

## Weed Warriors

Battling invasive plants on a summer day in Maryland is not exactly pleasant. It's hot and humid. If dressed properly for the occasion, i.e. in long sleeves, gloves, and long pants for protection from poison ivy and ticks, after a couple of hours we all look as though we've taken a shower. The quick view of strangling vines at their origins near the ground (the Achilles heel of nearly all vines), has been replaced by a green jungle.

"I think there's a tree still alive under there." This realization or these words from a fellow Weed Warrior never fail to inspire the passion to go on. Liberating a tree from strangling vines and cutting them away is a very rewarding experience. After peeling and cutting away the layers, suddenly there it is, often half dead and misshapen, but still hanging on. These days we are often work on what I call the "drowning trees," often young walnuts so smothered by vines that they are only leafing at the top, like a drowning person frantically trying to keep his head above the water. There is nothing quite like the satisfaction of cutting away the mummification of the vines to reveal the slender trunk and branches of a small tree, with some younger branches still alive, and the uppermost head of leaves liberated from what would have probably killed it that year or the next.



Pine tree blighted by vines along road to Talmar. Only the lower part of the tree survives, visible in the lower section, including a large branch bent to the ground.

## The Rewards of Sweat Equity

By Laurie Taylor-Mitchell

Also in the cold weather, one can't experience the botanical miracle of finding a native plant that has somehow hung on beneath smothering masses of Oriental bittersweet, Japanese Honeysuckle, or Garlic Mustard, to name a few. Often the invasives have achieved a complete victory in a given patch – they have exterminated all native plants. But just enough to keep one going, I always find some natives that have beat the terrible odds – a Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Goldenrod or even an Aster, a tiny maple or oak tree, a fragile Spotted Jewelweed. On some days I skip the vines on the trees and strike a blow for this most threatened area, even more than the trees, the so-called "herbaceous" layer, including the understory. As one colleague put it, this layer is completely screwed – in contrast, some trees can make it as they grow beyond the initial smothering.

Trees are often permanently misshapen and blighted by the weight of the vines on their branches. But with removing vines, and with protecting the trunks from deer rubbing their antlers on them (the main cause of young tree mortality in the park is deer eating them or killing them in the fall) – they will survive and form part of the understory until they grow taller and are replaced by their progeny.



Branches permanently bent by the weight of invasive vines now visible. Part of this young tree is still alive and will survive.

**Laurie Taylor-Mitchell is the Coordinator of Weed Warriors/Habitat Restoration at Cromwell Valley Park.**

**Volunteers are welcome to attend Weed Warrior sessions, which are run year-round except in extreme weather conditions. For the current schedule and directions, please see the link on the Park website: <http://cromwellvalleypark.org/HRT.html>.**

**Volunteers attending three sessions receive a "Weed Warriors" hat; for five sessions, a book on landscaping with native plants.**

## Meet Cromwell Valley Park Naturalist/Artist Mimi Knuth



*Mimi Knuth is everywhere at Cromwell Valley Park, from leading programs to working on improvements in our buildings and trails to caring for the critters at Willow Grove. If there's something crafty that needs to be done, Mimi is probably the one to do it, and she can teach you how to do it, too.*

Mimi has been teaching art for a long time now, starting with her BS in Art Education from Towson in 1978 and her MS in Education from Hopkins a few years later. Throughout the '80s and early '90s she taught art at the pre-school, elementary, and middle school levels, including special needs, at a number of private schools in the Baltimore area. In October 1984, she married Jim Knuth, and together they started a family (daughter Caroline and son Gregor). In 1994 they moved their family to a home in Parkville where Mimi and Jim still live with their yard full of native plant gardens that Mimi keeps enlarging. (Jim appreciates that there's less grass to mow as the years go on!)

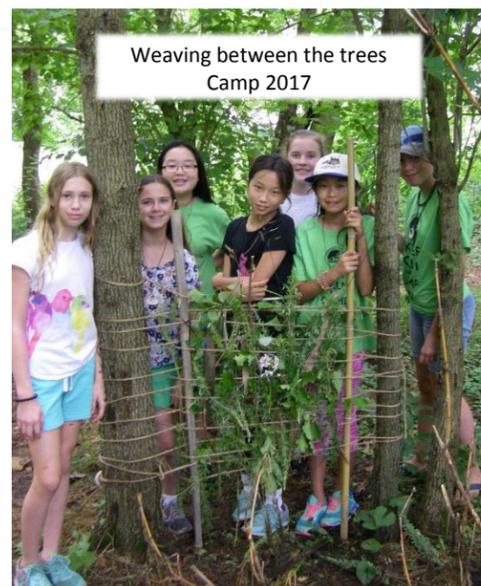
In 1997, Mimi started teaching Kindergarten Art at Dulaney Day School, where she would stay on teaching art, pre-school, summer art and science camp and offering afterschool art classes. Those skills have served Baltimore County well, as she began working at Holt Center for the Arts in 2004. You can find her there once a week leading nature-based art programs, and once a month teaching hand-building techniques with clay.

Cromwell Valley Park has been nearly a second home for the Knuth family since they moved to the neighborhood and began walking the trails there. As a family of nature-lovers (all call hiking, canoeing, and camping among their favorite activities), a park near home was invaluable. While the CSA was running on the Sherwood farm, Mimi was there on the council and in the fields, bringing her children along for educational tomato-picking. When the Fall Harvest Festival needed a volunteer to lead crafts, Mimi stepped up. When she spotted invasive plants on the trail, she pulled them out. After a few years of volunteering, Mimi came on part-time as a staff member, leading crafts for special events, and then doing summer outreach programs.



Mural for woodpecker calls exhibit

Any of Mimi's students will tell you that she makes learning fun and hands-on, whether she's teaching science or branch weaving. She's put her talents to use here at the park by teaching our summer Art Camp program (started in 2016) for 11-13 year olds. The kids had a blast this year, and you might have spotted some of their efforts in environmental art with vines (invasives that were pulled out, of course) woven between trees in the Nature Discovery Zone.



Weaving between the trees  
Camp 2017

You can see Mimi's own handiwork throughout the park; check out the animals in the Willow Grove Nature Center, and you'll see that she has helped make them feel at home by painting backgrounds for their tanks that match their habitats in the wild. You can learn to identify our local woodpeckers with her beautiful wall mural just inside the main entrance. Mimi has also put a lot of work into many of the directional and trail signs throughout the park. She routs them all free-hand hand with her distinctive "Mimi Font", then carefully paints in the lettering. So be sure to say "thanks" next time you come across a sign letting you know which turn to take on the trail!

CK



"Mimi Font"



Recycling at  
Art Camp

## New Staff Member Lindsay Caplan

Lindsay Caplan, a part-time naturalist at Oregon Ridge Nature Center, has also recently joined our staff. A Baltimore native, Lindsay grew up visiting nature centers throughout the state, which instilled a passion for nature from a young age. Her educational background is in fisheries and wildlife science, and she is looking forward to sharing her knowledge and passion with park visitors

LC



## Trail Guide Training 2017

September 13, 14 & 15

(Wed., Thurs. & Fri.)

We are looking for volunteers to help teach about nature!

Trail guides work with school groups, public programs, special events, and animal care. Training will familiarize you with our most popular programs, the ecology of Cromwell Valley & Marshy Point Parks, and techniques to "share more" and "teach less".

Each day features new subjects and techniques for enjoying the great outdoors. The final day of training includes a visit to Fort Garrison.

**Breakfast, snacks and coffee provided.**

New guides pay a tuition fee of \$5

**Call to Register:**

**Marshy Point ~ 410-887-2817  
Cromwell Valley ~ 410-887-2503**

# President's Column

We are proud to share our recent award from Baltimore Magazine with our community of staff, volunteers, neighbors, donors, visitors and other constituents.

Voted "Best Rural Park" 2017, Cromwell Valley Park's 460 acres has something for everyone. Whether you enjoy hiking, bird-watching, escaping to forested trails, splashing in the Minebank Run stream, exploring the critters at Willow Grove Nature Center, community gardening, or jumping back in time to our historic lime kilns and Merrick Log House, Cromwell Valley Park is a treasure in Baltimore County—and Baltimore Magazine noticed!

In addition to the flora, fauna and historic buildings, Cromwell Valley Park offers a monthly adult speaker series, summer camps, weekend programs and other activities throughout the year.

We already knew we were special! We're honored that Baltimore Magazine helped spread the word about #cromwellvalleypark to its print subscribers and on-line readers.

THANKS, BALTIMORE MAGAZINE!



Greetings from new CVP Council President,

**Mia Potthast Walsh**

It is with great pleasure to greet you in this fall newsletter as the new President of Cromwell Valley Park Council. As someone who has enjoyed hiking at the park since the early 90's, I am always surprised at the pleasure I get from seeing new things each time I walk along the trails. As a passionate photographer, hopefully you have seen some of my pictures on our new Instagram page (@cromwell\_valley\_park), Twitter (@CromwellValleyP), as well as our established Facebook site. We have some exciting things coming to the park thanks to a lot of hard work from our dedicated volunteers and staff members.



Mia Walsh with one of our resident snakes at Willow Grove Nature Center.

Come enjoy fall at Cromwell Valley Park!



Cromwell Valley Park is one of the selected parks in the Nature Quest program. By completing at least five trails in the NQ Passport, you will be given free admission to the Nature Quest Fest this fall. 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. See our website for more details.

## hiking #1

The Barrans-Baldwin Trail of Cromwell Valley Park received the lead mention in the "Top Places to Hike" article in Baltimore Magazine's May OUTDOORS issue. Noting our local and natural history, farming, wildlife and songbirds, it encouraged readers to breathe the fresh air and hop in our trail system! Come for a hike today!

## birding@cvp=199

Yes, you read it correctly. Cromwell Valley Park has 199 species of birds according to spotters at ebird.org. A favorite of members of MD Birding and Baltimore Bird Club, you will often find our "birders" with their binoculars spotting this week's prized avian creatures.

## amazon smile

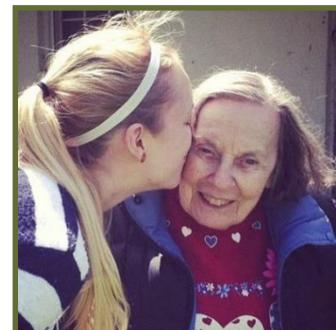
You're already receiving those 1-day, 2-day and same-day boxes from Amazon, right? Well, why not allow your shopping to benefit Cromwell Valley Park? By shopping at smile. Amazon.com, you will continue receiving the same great price and the incredible service, but Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase directly to our organization. To find out more, visit our website or go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/56-2590091>.

How much does Amazon actually donate to our non-profit organization? It may sound like a meager .5% of your purchase, but multiply that by the Amazon shopping of many, many people, and the donation renders itself significant to our cause. Thanks in advance for joining this program.

## In memoriam

Lillian D. Jenifer 1929-2017

Founding member of the Campaign to Save Cromwell Valley, Lillian Jenifer, passed away on May 19th, 2017. Integral in preserving the land which is now Cromwell Valley Park, Lillian was a grassroots supporter and activist in the preservation of the valley's land, architecture and history. Rest in peace, dear friend.



**Thank you!**

**Baltimore County Recs and Parks,  
in collaboration with Cromwell Coventry  
Community funds**

After years of planning and “working through the process”, Baltimore County Recs and Parks has agreed to provide a significant grant to Cromwell Valley Park for the construction of wheelchair accessible paths and features surrounding the Willow Grove Nature Center. A small group of energetic volunteers is leading the way to create pathways to our Children’s Garden, Barnatorium classroom, Nature Discovery Zone and other “nature immersion” areas. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting project. Thank you, BCRP & CCA!

**Preservation Alliance of Baltimore County grant  
for Sherwood House Entrance**

The “old lady” needed a facelift. With a \$2,500 grant from the Preservation Alliance of Baltimore County and Preservation Maryland, the Sherwood House main entrance received a fresh coat of paint, repair of some deteriorating woodwork and entrance walkway repairs. Now, the house may be considered again a “grand dame”! The Preservation Alliance also recently donated \$1,000 for the restoration of family films of the Sherwood family, which include significant historical footage from the 1920’s, including footage in Cuba, West Indies and Europe. Thank you, PABC!

**Individual Donations**

We often receive monetary and in-kind donations from individuals throughout the year and we are grateful for all of the support we receive from our friends. Significant individual donations were recently received from the **Haramundanis Family**, to be used for the Lime Kilns Stabilization project; **Dr. Ken McQuage** directed to our Park’s general activities, as well as donations to other County parks; and multiple donors to the **Lillian D. Jenifer Memorial Fund**.

**THE CROMWELL VALLEY PARK COUNCIL  
presents  
A NIGHT OUT WITH NATURE**

Join us on Friday evenings in the Park  
for our speaker series.

7 PM to 9 PM

Sherwood House at Cromwell Valley Park  
2002 Cromwell Bridge Road, Parkville, MD 21234

**September 8** - “Homesteading on an Acre” with Gianina Dotterweich, owner of Hippie Homestead & Naturalist at Nixon Park.

**October 6** - “A Pictorial Tour of Maryland’s Natural Areas” with Robert Crook, Photographer.

**November 3** - “Living with Squirrels - Friends of Foes?” with Loren Lustig, Naturalist & Educator with Carroll County Recreation & Parks.



**This program is designed for adults.**

To make your reservations,  
please call 410-887-2503, or  
Email: [info@cromwellvalleypark.org](mailto:info@cromwellvalleypark.org)  
\$10 per person/\$15 per couple  
Dessert will be provided and  
is included in your admission.

**Cromwell Valley Park  
2002 Cromwell Bridge Rd.  
Baltimore, MD 21234**



DEPARTMENT OF  
RECREATION AND PARKS

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You are invited!

The next general meeting  
of the Cromwell Valley Park Council  
is scheduled for 7 pm  
Monday, September 11, 2017  
at the Sherwood House.

**Come Join Us Saturday • October 14**  
(Rain date Sunday 10/15)  
**10 AM to 4 PM**

**Fall Harvest Festival**  
**Fun for the entire Family!**  
**\$5 per car donation appreciated.**  
**Reservations NOT required.**

**Park hours:  
Sunrise to sunset**



Cromwell Valley Park Newsletter Staff

Editor/Design/Layout: *Kim Shapiro*  
Editors: *Kim Shapiro, Carole Ziegler*  
Contributors: *John Canoles, Lindsay Caplan,  
Caroline Knuth, Mimi Knuth,  
Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, Mia Walsh*