

Cromwell Valley Park

Spring 2019 Newsletter & Program Calendar

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

GETTING AROUND — PAPERLESS PARK MAPS

Need a map of the park? Do you keep forgetting to bring one with you when you visit? Looking for different routes to explore? If you have a smart phone, you're in luck. There are several options that allow you to download maps and suggested hiking trails. Here are two of them that will probably help. On the other hand, if you enjoy wandering around sort of lost but enjoying the view, stop reading now.

Maplets:

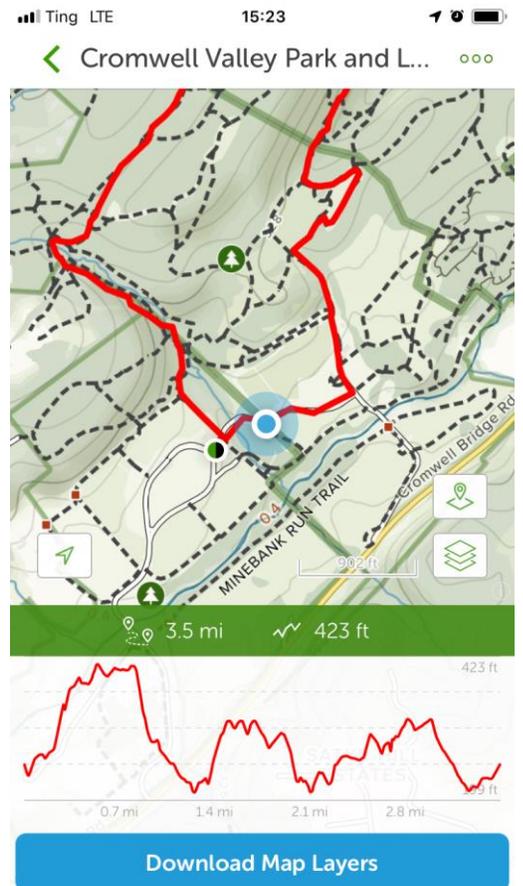
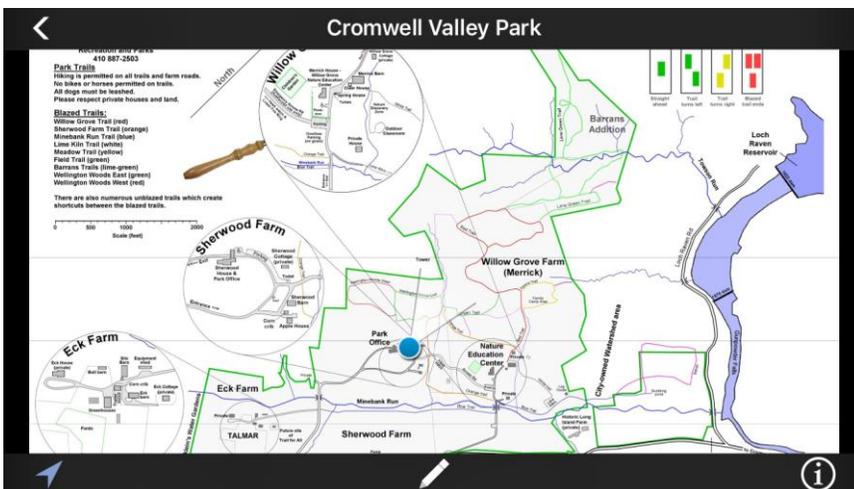
Website— mobilemaplets.com

This app lets you download maps for offline use. In fact, they have over 10,000 free maps including the most important one—the official map of Cromwell Valley Park. This map is GPS enabled so you can always see just where you are on the map, even if you are bushwhacking off marked trails. It even shows the direction you are facing, so getting back to your car is pretty easy. You can place a pin in a favorite spot so you can find it again. The maps work offline after you download them so they won't use any data from your plan. There is a small one-time fee to download the app. Then all maps are free.

All Trails:

Website— alltrails.com

Rather than downloading maps, this app features selected trails and routes that you can follow. It's a great way to find new trails, and to read descriptions of them before you go. Some services are free—others require a monthly fee.



*(Bill Curtis serves the Park as a Director
on the Cromwell Valley Park Council.)*

Message from the President, Mia Walsh

Greetings, Members!

Some people wish winter to pass quickly, but I am not one of them.

There is a special quietness and beauty during winter in our park. Hikes to find our barred and great horned owls in the late afternoon often lead to the sounds of hooooo, hooooo and an occasional pileated woodpecker hammering at one of the trees in the dense forest. The glimpse of a fox crossing the trails adds a bit of color to the view, as they are in the midst of mating season. A cross country skier, a person snow-shoeing or a rare view of a husky pulling a sled in the snow are treats, for these may only be seen for a short period of time at Cromwell Valley Park.

For all the others, however, spring will be here before we know it! The valley will transform from dried milkweed, brown grass and empty branches to colorful wildflowers, green leaves and pastures and the sound of the birds finding their way back from their migration journeys.

Pileated woodpecker
Dennis Murphy



Great horned owl
Mia Walsh

Our spring calendar is full of exciting programs for families and children alike. Registration begins on February 11th, so be sure to visit our Events link on www.cromwellvalleypark.org to see a full list of our offerings. My two favorites are as follows: CVP's annual Easter Egg Hunt, being held on April 13th. Be sure to mark your calendars!

Free guided bird walks begin March 30th each Saturday from 8-10 a.m. through May 25th. Reservations are not required, so bring your binoculars or camera and meet at the Willow Grove Nature Center parking lot.

Red Fox
Dennis Murphy



I am looking forward to seeing you in our Park soon!

Mia Walsh, President

A Daring Rescue at CVP

A daring rescue occurred in Cromwell Valley Park on January 13th with the help of several park visitors, park neighbors, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Baltimore City Environmental Police who protect the Loch Raven Watershed area.

Steve and Stephanie J. were hiking along the Minebank Run near Talmar when they noticed a buck, whose antlers were entangled in a soccer net, still attached to its metal soccer goal. The buck was stuck amongst trees as the goal posts were caught and the buck's mouth was closed shut with the netting and unable to escape. Though they were quick to realize that the antlers would be shedding in two weeks, without being able to eat or drink, the young buck would not survive. They expeditiously contacted the DNR and Environmental police to alert them and request assistance.

Patrick Wicklein



Hearing the commotion, Patrick Wicklein, a nearby Park neighbor, came to assess the situation. Patrick grew up next to Cromwell Valley Park his entire life and has participated in many of its programs throughout the years. His parents, Sandy and Eric, have been very active volunteers for the Park as well. As a sophomore at Virginia Tech studying veterinary medicine, Patrick has been caring for animals most of his life. He has an innate ability to care for his many 2- and 4-legged creatures and his heart and soul belong to the animals around him. He knew immediately that he had to ensure the survival of this buck.

Patrick was able to fetch loppers of varied sizes, as well as other tools to release the buck, knowing full-well the danger of the situation. The buck was extremely agitated, kicking and bucking, trying to release itself from the tangled netting and trees. With verbal guidance from the DNR and Environmental Police officers, Patrick made several cuts to the netting and the tubing, taking extreme caution as the buck continued to kick and move. After several cuts, the last piece of netting snapped and the buck, realizing there was no more tension against its body, ran quickly away.

The entire rescue has reached over 8,500 people on social media, and a video may be found on Cromwell Valley Park's YouTube Channel (search Cromwell Valley Park Deer Rescue) or use the URL: <https://youtu.be/j643rUofEEY>. Steve and Stephanie J., owners of the photography studio Gunpowder - Photography, were on hand to capture this amazing buck and the successful rescue attempt.

We thank our dear (or "DEER"!) park visitors and neighbors for helping with one of our park residents. It always warms our heart to be a part of the special community surrounding us!

(Mia Walsh serves the Park as President of the Cromwell Valley Park Council.)



**CROMWELL
VALLEY PARK
COUNCIL, INC.**

Check out our new look!

The Park Council has a new website—same address, but a lot is new. Come for a visit:

Cromwellvalleypark.org

Also, look for CVP's logo items on
CafePress.com.

2018 in Review

F. Kirk Dreier—Senior Naturalist and Park Director

Hello Folks and Happy New Year!

A lot has happened over the course of 2018 and now that we are in to 2019 our wheels are turning faster than ever. As I write this in January I am reminiscing about 2018 and all the changes that have come to the Park.



Laura Page

Staff Changes

First and foremost, we lost Ranger Brina to her new job in Historic St. Mary's City as their new Woodland Indian Hamlet Site Supervisor. We congratulate her on getting that fulltime position. Fortunately for us, we gained **Ranger Laura Page**, a Master Naturalist who is now our Activity Coordinator for the Willow Grove Nature Center. With her leadership and guidance the Nature Center has been expanding its programming and exhibits. Ranger Laura helped create the new animal exhibit called Nature's Clothing. Laura did the work on all the animal descriptors and illustrations. The exhibit gives visitors the opportunity to learn about an animal and touch its fur.



Nature's Clothing

Scout Projects

During the spring of 2018, we hatched 3 wild turkeys, and visitors admire and watch them every day. Tater and Gravy are the hens, and Drumstick is the Gobbler, and he is noticeably larger than his "girlfriends". The outside exhibits around the Nature Center has been spruced up by Eagle Scout Scott Ryan, Troop 130. Scott stained all of the coops, assembled the inner screens, and leveled the Raptor Cage structure. Last fall, Girl Scout Annie Wedgeworth, Troop 4407, finished her Gold Award by building a Free Library contained within a tree's trunk. It's been a great project with many books coming and going. Folks that withdraw books sign the binder inside the tree. Out in the trails of the Park, Eagle Scout Ryan Leppo, Troop 746, built two small foot bridges over two very wet spots along the Baldwin Barrens trail. These additions certainly cleaned up this section for our hiking visitors. Eagle Scout Elijah Bossiwa of Troop 16 repainted the Apple House near the Sherwood mansion.



Raptor Cage

Sherwood

Many of you who have visited the Sherwood House have seen the wonderful "facelift" the Sherwood mansion received this winter. This massive project included a new roof, repainted exterior and rebuilt shutters, which make the house look as it did in 1935 when it was first built.

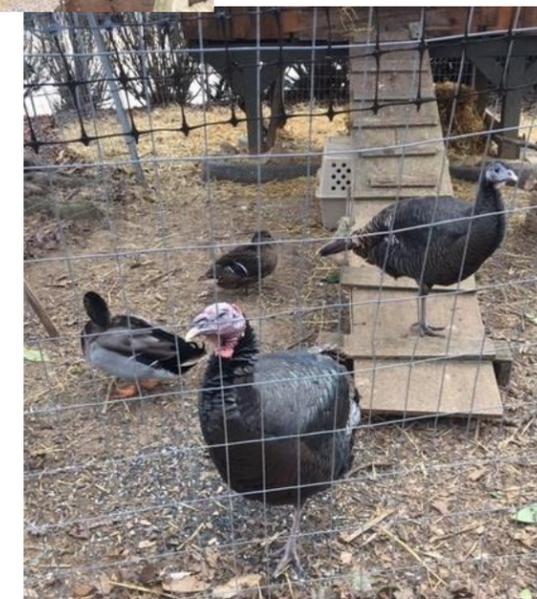


Free Library



The Children's Garden

Let's not forget the gardens! The year 2018, with the unprecedented amount of rainfall of over 6 feet, the Children's Garden took a real beating. The tomatoes the sweet potatoes all were stunted or destroyed this year. It was simply too wet! Despite this, we benefited from Ranger Anne Wedgeworth's green thumb. We had some good harvests of white potatoes, and our Adult Garden Club volunteers more than doubled from last year; from 5 in 2017 to 16 last summer helping to maintain the garden. A new picnic table/bench was added under the shady Willow Tree, and the Hampton Garden Club added a beautiful native plants section to the garden. Look around to find the new children's hopscotch game of colorfully painted rocks within the garden.



So, all in all, we have been making a lot of progress all over the Park.

I'm coming up on four years of work at Cromwell Valley and I can guarantee that you will see additional changes at the Park and the Nature Center.

Please say hello and wave when you spot me on the Park Kubota. All the best to you for the new year!

F. Kirk Dreier

CVPC presents

A NIGHT OUT WITH NATURE

Speaker Series

Sherwood House at Cromwell Valley Park, 2002 Cromwell Bridge Road.

This series is intended for adults. \$10 per person.



Loren Lustig

"Heroes of Conservation ~ The Legacy & Messages for Today"

Friday, April 5 at 7 PM to 9 PM

Deborah Bacharach

"Backyard Gardening to Save the Bay"

Friday, May 10 at 7 PM to 9 PM



Lindsay Jacks

"Lights Out Baltimore ~ Saving Birds One Building at a Time"

Friday, March 1 at 7 PM to 9 PM



Kristin's White Chicken Chili

- 2 lbs. chicken breast
- 1 Packet McCormick's White Chicken Chili Seasoning
- 1 16 oz. jar green salsa
- ½ cup chopped white onion
- 2 7 oz. cans diced green chilies
- 2 15 oz. cans white beans
- 1 15 oz. can white corn
- 1-2 cups chicken broth
- ½ cup half & half

In bottom of crockpot, lay chicken and sprinkle with chicken chili seasoning. Add green salsa, white onion, chilies, beans, corn. Cook on high for 3½ hours. Add chicken broth, 1-2 cups depending on how thick you like your chili and ½ cup of half & half. Continue to cook for 1 hour and add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with a dollop of sour cream, fresh cilantro and shredded white cheddar cheese. Enjoy!

Kristin McFaul | McFaul's IronHorse Tavern

(Kristin serves the Park as Treasurer of Cromwell Valley Park Council)

Spotting Hawks in the Waning Weeks of Winter

Despite the cold, winter is a great time to get out and see wildlife at and around Cromwell Valley Park. Mergansers, loons, ring-necked ducks and geese are all commonly seen on the nearby Loch Raven Reservoir and bald eagles may be spied soaring overhead. The bird feeders around the Willow Grove Nature Center will be full of activity as woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, finches, wrens, and other songbirds sneak or gorge, depending on species and seeds. Of course where there are song birds congregating, there may also be predators lurking in search of an easy meal.

Most folks with bird feeders have become aware of the dangers posed by Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. Though rarely seen in the summer when their activities are cloaked by the shadows and leaves of the canopy, winter brings these predators close as they stalk and hunt their prey. Despite the obvious downside of the event, there are few things as exciting as the view of a Sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk diving and darting into a feeding station on the hunt. These hawks, both members of the Accipiter family, are incredibly adept flyers, well designed for quickly maneuvering flight. They can often be seen perched motionlessly, like a cat, waiting for the right moment for an ambush. In an instant the hawk bursts into a top speed dive, dodging limbs and twigs with amazing precision. The combination of speed and grace is incredible.

Sharp-shinned hawk
Mia Walsh



Sharp-shinned hawk flying
Russ Wikimedia Commons



Copper's hawk flying
Bill Hubick Photography

Copper's hawk
Mia Walsh



Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks are very similar in appearance and habit. The Cooper's hawk is slightly larger on average, with Sharpies, as they are frequently called, being typically jay-sized and Cooper's being more the size of a crow. Females in both species are larger than the males. Both have dark gray plumage on their backs and rusty barred chests. When compared side by side, Sharpies appear slightly more stream line, with Cooper's being a bit huskier. In flight, the Cooper's hawk head and neck are more substantial than the Sharp-shinned, and the Cooper's tail is slightly longer and rounded as compared to the squared tail of the Sharpie. Also in flight, the Sharp-shinned has a quicker wing beat, though both have the typical flight pattern of an Accipiter - flap flap glide, flap flap glide. Distinguishing between Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks in the wild can be difficult. Over time an experienced bird watcher can get a pretty good feel for the subtle differences, but there are plenty of times when a 100 percent confirmation is impossible.

More important than the precise identification though is the appreciation of the power and grace of these aerial hunters. I have witnessed many incredible examples of their flying prowess. Both species are capable of generating incredible bursts of speed with just a few quick flaps of their wings. I watched a Cooper's hawk leap up from a low branch and overtake a flying cardinal in less than 10 feet. The cardinal exploded in a cascade of red and gray feathers as the hawk slammed into it. On another occasion I watched a Sharp-shinned hawk fly up into the bottom of a large flock of starlings. The flock went wild, swirling into a dizzying mass as they tried to confuse the hawk. The Sharp-shinned stuck like glue to the bottom of the flock, matching every twist and turn until one starling straggled away from the flock. The Sharpie quickly broke off from the flock and picked off the lone starling without missing a wingbeat. On another occasion I was driving along when a Sharp-shinned crossed in front of my car in a steep dive. I stopped and watched as the hawk flared its wings, stopping nearly in mid air, and dropped to the ground. The hawk then began running under the shrubs in chase of a flock of sparrows. In this case the sparrows escaped, quite panicked but unharmed.

The great thing about Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk watching is that often in winter you have to go no further than your bird feeders to catch a glimpse of their exciting hunting skills. These hawks have learned, much to the chagrin of many birders, that feeders provide an excellent concentration of prey species and have adapted to hunting lawns and gardens in search of unsuspecting sparrows, cardinals and finches. This is highlighted by the fact that Cooper's hawk populations have increased in correlation to the recent increases in bird feeding. While it certainly can be a little disheartening to see a beloved songbird in the steely grip of a predator, it is, after all, part of the circle of life.

(John Canoles serves the Park as a Director on the Cromwell Valley Park Council.)

**Park hours:
Sunrise to sunset**

The next general meeting
is scheduled for
Monday, March 11, 2019
7 pm at the Sherwood House.

Please join us!

Cromwell Valley Park Newsletter Staff

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