

Cromwell Valley Park

Fall 2021 Newsletter & Program Calendar

www.cromwellvalleypark.org

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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**

INTRODUCING THE NEW CVP COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Hello, fellow nature enthusiasts!

Thank you for taking the time to read about all the activities happening at the park this season. I am honored to present them to you as the newly elected President of the Cromwell Valley Park Council (CVPC). I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the community that I live in and to be a steward for such a valuable natural resource.

I grew up in Baltimore County and had an appreciation for our county parks since my involvement in scouting as a child. I now live in a neighborhood just minutes from the park with my wife, five-year-old daughter, dog, two cats, four chickens, and a newly welcomed Beta fish. The humans (and canine) in our home love visiting the park to hike, picnic, and participate in the many educational programs offered by the CVP Staff. Our favorites are the summer and winter solstice celebrations, and the ever-popular Polliwog Preschool Nature Program. My daughter attended CVP's Nature Summer Camp for the first time this summer and is excitedly waiting for her mealworm to turn into a beetle – her first life cycle activity. You can often find us in the Children's Garden watching bullfrogs, admiring the hard work of the Garden Club, or splashing around in Minebank Run.

As this is my first newsletter message as President, I'd like to extend a great deal of thanks to my predecessor, Mia Walsh, CVPC's most recent President and current Secretary and Communications Chair. Mia's vision for the park can be seen in many of our recent projects and upgrades, and her improvements to our marketing efforts increased both park attendance and donations. You can often find Mia on the trails walking her pups and taking wildlife photos.

While Cromwell Valley Park is an extraordinary place with great hiking, top-notch bird watching, plentiful flora and fauna, and great resources for learning about the natural world, I've come to appreciate that what really makes CVP special is our hard-working team of staff, volunteers, and council members. Each contributes their individual expertise to the park operations and makes it a special place for all who visit. If you'd like to be part of this impactful team, please visit <https://cromwellvalleypark.org/volunteer/>.



The Yoffe family enjoying Cromwell Valley Park

So, what's next for the Park? We have been in conversations with Baltimore County about improvements to our driveway and parking. This process may take some time, but we will continue to advocate for the best solutions and keep you, our members, informed of developments.

Finally, we have decided to curtail our annual Fall Harvest Festival, but think you'll be very excited about a new event, The Migration Celebration taking place on September 18th. Our Park is an ideal place to observe hawks as they migrate south in the fall. This event will be an opportunity to learn more about hawks and other birds of prey, sharpen your binocular skills, and take guided nature walks. There will also be games and crafts for kids, as well as great food and live music. We hope to see you there!

And speaking of fun, we hope you'll continue to share your park adventures via social media by tagging CVP using #cromwellvalleypark. We love seeing the different ways our visitors are enjoying the park.

Thank you again for your support. I'll see you out there!
Abe Yoffe, Cromwell Valley Park Council President

A TALE OF TWO WRENS AND THE MIRACLE OF MIGRATION

Each spring and summer, yards and gardens are treated to the rambling serenade of the house wren — a cryptically colored songster that darts through the underbrush, more often heard than seen. Unlike its larger and more outgoing cousin, the Caroline wren who boldly calls “tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle” from its many perches, the house wren’s song is not easy to describe. The call is a loudly sung, jumbled string of whistles and squeaks that may be repeated up to a dozen times per minute. The song is much bigger than the songster.

Once of our smallest wrens, the house wren weighs in around 0.3 ounces, about the weight of two quarters, and has a wingspan of just six inches. Their small size and well camouflaged plumage make them easy to overlook. Luckily, their loud and constant singing combined with a feisty personality make them an obvious member of the spring and summer bird scene.

House wrens are aggressive and will scold any potential predators that enter their territory. They defend their nests with a vengeance and even fight off larger birds for suitable nesting sites, sometimes evicting other species from nests that they already occupy. House wrens have been reported to be a primary cause of nesting failure for tree swallows, bluebirds and chickadees. Their vigorous behavior around nesting may be attributed to the fact that they have a narrower range of suitable nest sites than some other species. Their eggs cannot tolerate excessive heat or cool temperatures as well as other species, thus making prime nesting sites more critical for the wrens. In any case, these native species are sometimes viewed with ire by bird lovers who see them as bullies.

Despite their aggressive ways, house wrens tend to be shy and reclusive when left to their own devices. They are happy to forage in the underbrush, keeping a low profile when not defending their nests and nesting territory. Once the nesting season ends, their presence often quietly fades into the shadows.



A house wren brings a spider meal back to the nest
(photo by Jim Hudgins, courtesy Wikimedia Commons)



A winter wren shares its song
(photo by Fyn Kynd, courtesy Wikimedia Commons)

An inexperienced birder may think that house wrens retreat to the forest for the winter because you can find these small birds dashing discreetly along wooded stream valleys and through underbrush in the winter months. But here is where the miracle of migration enters the equation. The house wrens that fill our gardens with song each spring and summer leave us in the fall and migrate south to warmer, insect-rich habitats of the southeast and even into Central America.

In fall, a hardier wren moves into our area to fill the niche of underbrush predator left vacant by the migrating house wren. This aptly named winter wren appears in our region when the house wren migrates south. With an appearance very near to the house wren, the winter wren is secretive in its forested habitats and is often only revealed by a quick movement seen darting into a shadow. That is unfortunate because the beauty and subtle color of the winter wren cannot be appreciated with a passing glance. Their plumage displays shades of brown with subtle barring and a slight eye line that distinguishes them from the less patterned house wren.

In their breeding territory, which is generally further north than the house wren, the winter wren is a bold and gregarious singer who shares many behavioral characteristics of the house wren. As winter visitors to Cromwell Valley Park, they are quiet and subtle members of the community. They forage through the underbrush in search of insects but will feed on berries that help them tolerate the colder winters.

As summer turns to fall, much of the wild world will be on the move in search of better winter habitats. The winters in our area are too harsh for the house wren, but well suit the winter wren. The process of migration allows these two species to find suitable habitats throughout the year without forcing them to compete for critical food and nesting resources. Each species has its own life requisites that, when combined, create the diverse and rich web of life.

John Canoles, Director, CVP Council

A SELECTION OF PROGRAMS FROM OUR FALL CALENDAR

FIND THE FULL CVP EVENTS CALENDAR AT: https://cromwellvalleypark.org/event_calendar/

Register online via Camp Brain at: <https://cromwellvalleypark.campbrainregistration.com>

Friday, September 17 at 7:30 PM to 9 PM

How Birds Navigate the Night Sky– Ages 10+. Do they use the stars, an internal GPS or recognize landmarks? All of that and more! We'll hike, listen and watch to learn about how birds find their way in the night sky. **\$2 members /\$4 non-members.**

Sunday, September 26 at 10 AM to 11:30 AM

Monarch Madness – All Ages. Join a Naturalist to learn about and tag this tropical butterfly that migrates! **\$3 members /\$5 non-members.**

Sunday, October 3 at 1 PM to 3 PM

How 'bout Them Apples! - Ages 8+. Join a Naturalist as we look at the Appalachian art form of making apple heads, corn husk dolls, and learning how important apples were to the Sherwood Farm! Bring your own paring knife with you. **\$3 members /\$5 non-members.**

Saturday, October 16 at 1 PM to 3 PM

Primitive Cooking Ages 14+. No grill? No problem. Learn how to make a primitive greenwood grill and how to cook in clay pots. **\$4 members /\$6 non-members. Primitive Technology Lab.**

Friday, October 22 at 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Spooky Stories around the Campfire - Ages 8+. Swap spine-tingling tales around the campfire ring. Bring a flashlight with you and a (not too) scary story to share! **\$2 members /\$4 non-members.**

Saturday, November 6 at 1 PM to 2:30 PM

Friction Fire-Ages 13+. Humans are the only animals on the planet that make fire & cook. Learn how to make a friction fire using natural materials. **\$2 members /\$3 non-members. Primitive Technology Lab.**

Saturday, November 20 at 10 AM to 11:30 AM

Let's Talk Turkey - All Ages. Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national symbol. Meet our turkeys and learn what makes them special. **\$2 members /\$4 non-members**

TO ACCESS THE FULL PARK CALENDAR OF EVENTS:



Migration Celebration!

*Hawks are migrating over
Cromwell Valley Park!*

**Join us on Saturday,
September 18th
from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Willow Grove entrance**



Presented by Cromwell Valley Park &
Baltimore County Dept. of Recreation
& Parks For More Information call:
410.887.3014.



- ◆ **Live bird of prey demonstrations by Phoenix Wildlife Center**
- ◆ **Nature walks and insect programs**
- ◆ **Scheduled talks on counting and identifying migrating birds**
- ◆ **Exhibits and displays**
- ◆ **Children's games & crafts**
- ◆ **Meet the Nature Center animals and learn how they spend the winter**

Please bring your own binoculars if you have a pair. If you don't, the park has binocs you may use.

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



DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS

Pre-Sorted Standard
US Postage Paid
Baltimore, MD
Permit #7639

Registration for Fall
programs begins Tuesday,
August 17th at 9am.

Please join us!



Park hours:
Sunrise to sunset

Cromwell Valley Park Newsletter Staff

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