

Cromwell Valley Park

Spring 2020 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**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT – MIA WALSH

Greetings, Members!

At Cromwell Valley Park, our volunteers have been working diligently throughout the winter to have our programs, camps and trails ready for the “fair weather” visitors who frequent the park when the weather turns towards spring.

It’s during this time when the birders who follow the migrations come in packs to see the myriad of species passing through our park. It’s during this time when the days are longer, and parents bring their children for hikes on our trails to let off steam before doing their homework. It’s during this time when our wildlife residents find and romance their mates and, shortly thereafter, their offspring join us as the newest members of our community.

Our Park Staff and Naturalists plan age appropriate and very low-cost programs to ensure that our community experiences nature first-hand and has fun while being educated.



Bird watchers enjoying cooler weather in the Park (photo courtesy Mia Walsh)



Trail maintenance requires some heavy lifting and heavy-duty equipment (photo courtesy McCollum)

As a non-profit organization, we price our programs, mostly \$2-6 per person, to cover the cost of our staff and materials. Because our offerings are so inexpensive, they often sell out quickly. Therefore, we encourage our membership to review our calendar and register early using our on-line registration system. You may find our full calendar and registration links on our website at:

https://cromwellvalleypark.org/event_calendar/.

I am looking forward to seeing you in the park soon. Please stop me (and my three leashed dogs!) and say hello – and I would be glad to tell you more about our amazing gem of Cromwell Valley Park!

Mia Walsh, President, Cromwell Valley Park Council, Inc.



**CROMWELL
VALLEY PARK
COUNCIL, INC.**

**Come for a visit:
Cromwellvalleypark.org
Also, look for CVP’s logo items on
CafePress.com.**

Lichen – Small Organisms with a Big Role in Survival

Though early signs of a burgeoning spring season can be seen in early February, it often feels like the deepest darkest time of winter. Perhaps that is because we have been dealing with cold, wet, muddy conditions for well over a month and we're growing pretty tired of the winter season.

February is, despite the lengthening days and increasing daily temperatures, the snowiest month in our area, and this can make it seem like the wintriest month. Though late winter snows may not linger on the ground as long as a snowfall in January, these late winter snows can be particularly hard on wildlife. Their bodies are beginning to shift gears from winter survival to springtime procreation and food sources are typically running low after a whole season of foraging.

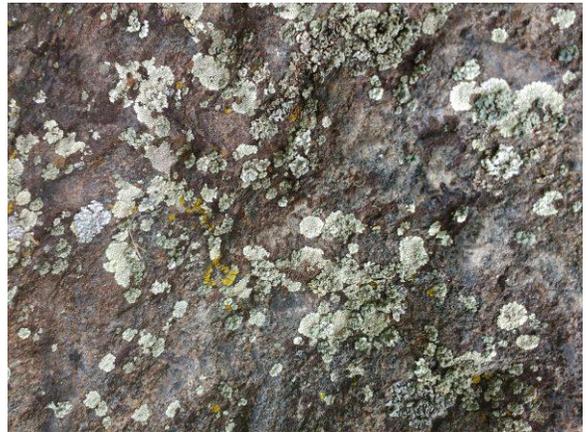
This time of year, many species of wildlife resort to survival foods to make it through until the buffet that is spring and summer arrives. One such survival food are the lichens.

Lichens are an important source of energy to many mammal species, from the tiny flying squirrel to the massive elk. You may now be wondering - what exactly is a lichen? The answer is somewhat surprising. A lichen is an organism that is actually comprised of two life forms - a fungus and an alga.



Foliose lichen camouflages a bird nest in CVP
(photo courtesy Mike McCloskey)

Lichens appear as scaly growths found on rocks, trees and, sometimes, bare soils. In our area, lichens can range from dime size to several inches in diameter. In other climates, they can grow to be quite large. They live singly or in large communities or “mats”.



Crustose lichen helps to warm this rock surface
(photo courtesy photos-public-domain.com)

The fungus and algae that create the lichen live together in a symbiotic relationship that benefits both parties. The fungi provide the algae with a place to live on an otherwise inhospitable surface such as a rock face or tree bark, and the algae provides the fungus with food. Working as a team, the lichen can inhabit many places that would not be suitable for typical plants.

Lichens exist in many combinations of fungus and algae and they thrive from sea level to high above the tree line, in desert environments and in the Arctic. In some cases, the fungus and the algae that comprise a lichen can exist separately, and in other cases they cannot. Interestingly, the idea that lichens were actually two different organisms living together was first proposed by Beatrix Potter, author of the Peter Rabbit stories.

Given a choice, no creature would prefer lichens as a food source. However, in late winter when standard food sources are scarce, many species of wildlife rely on the lichens as an emergency staple.

Lichens are typically low in protein but high in carbohydrates and can provide needed energy during stressful winter months. Caribou are one species of wildlife well known for their use of lichens as food. They dig holes into the snow in search of lichens and will protect good lichen sites from other foragers. Closer to home, white tailed deer will feed on lichens during winter when other sources of high energy foods are scarce (see our Critter Cam footage, below).

Flying squirrels are also known to feed heavily on them. In addition to using the lichens as a food source, flying squirrels also find them useful for providing drinking water during periods when other sources are frozen.

(continued)

Lichen (continued)

Many lichens are dark colored and are excellent at absorbing solar radiation. This ability to capture the sun's warmth allows them to cause snow and ice to melt, creating available water for squirrels and other small mammals to drink.

Studies have shown that many birds prefer to utilize lichens in building their nests. It is hypothesized that the lichens are used as form of camouflage for the nest. Many small, open branch nesters including ruby throated hummingbirds, wood peewees, flycatchers, warblers, vireos and thrushes use lichens as a significant part of their nesting material.

Larger species, including the red shouldered hawk and common merganser, also use lichens in their nesting. The broad mats of lichens help to line stick-built nests, softening the nest for the eggs and hatchlings. The dark color may also provide solar heating for the nest.



Fruticose lichen is a complex community of life forms (photo courtesy John Canoles)

Lichens are also an excellent example of a real world "canary in a coal mine", because they live in harsh environments and manufacture their own foods from the air and water in their environment and are therefore susceptible to pollution. Lichens were recognized as indicators of air pollution as far back as the 1860's in Britain and Europe. They are especially sensitive to sulfur dioxide pollution that results from the burning of fossil fuels.

Because lichens are slow growing and slow to reproduce, disturbances to lichen populations can last for generations; however, left undisturbed, they can live extremely long periods. Growing only about a millimeter a year, some Arctic species are believed to be nearly 9,000 years old. The relationship between a lichen and its habitat is significant, and any change in land use is likely to have an impact on lichen species.

In our area, draining and filling of wetlands and the re-development of our native forest communities has resulted in substantial changes in the lichen habitats.

Though the snow may still be flying, spring will soon blossom around us, relegating lichens to dwell in the background of lush vegetation through spring and summer.

So, before the vegetation blossoms, bundle up, pull on your boots, and head out to the woods to enjoy the cryptic colors and forms of these most perfectly matched mates.

John Canoles, Director, CVP Council

TALMAR EVENTS

PLANT SALES!

TALMAR will have two plant sales full of herbs, vegetables and flowers seedlings from the greenhouse.

Saturday, April 25 from 8 am to 12 pm
and Saturday, May 9 from 8 am to 12 pm

Visit us at talmar.org
for more information



CENSUS
2020

EVERYONE COUNTS

Cromwell Valley Park Council

General Meeting

March 9, 2020, 7 pm at Sherwood House

Slate of nominees for board positions:

Vice President **Abe Yoffe**
Term Apr., 2020 – Mar., 2022

Secretary **Kim Shapiro** *Renew*
Term Apr., 2020 – Mar., 2022

Director **Sya Buryn Kedzior** *Renew*
Term Apr., 2020 – Mar., 2022

Director **Bill Curtis** *Renew*
Term Apr., 2020 – Mar., 2022

Director **Joe Rector**, replacing Abe Yoffe
Term Apr., 2020 – Mar., 2021
(to be voted on again for term beginning Apr., 2021)

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Sharon Childs



CVP Volunteers are an integral part of park programs and operations. In this issue, we highlight one of our committed and talented volunteers, Sharon Childs. Sharon is a retired Adult Trauma/Critical Care Nurse Practitioner with a specialty in musculoskeletal and sports medicine. Her practice of 40 years is complemented by her love for hiking and nature, and the benefits they bring to the human body. Sharon is an enthusiastic and trusted member of the CVP family who has been active in the Park and a dedicated volunteer for over 23 years. Below, she shares some of her key accomplishments and reflects on her experiences at the Park. Thank you, Sharon, and all of our volunteers for your commitment to CVP.

Sya Buryn Kedzior and Kim Shapiro, Communications Committee

In the latter part of my career, I found the “jewel in the rough”, namely Cromwell Valley Park (CVP). After many walks in the Park, I found that the park lacked a Trail Club. In 1997, my husband Rick and I started the CVP Trail Club. I wrote a trail guide for my trail partners.

Over many years, the Trail Club is still active in maintaining the many trails within CVP. Activities included clearing of downed trees, removal of non-native plants, and maintaining the character of each trail throughout the Park.

After the Park became an organized Nature Park through the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, committees were established. Both Rick and I were in charge of the Trails Committee. I was also active on the Buildings and Grounds Committee. I participated as a Board member for many years. I have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer time to the Park. Other roles I had were Chairperson of Programs for outside events and programs. I coordinated Art in the Park every year as well as assisting with many CVP sponsored programs and events. These include trail races, school events, Holiday Open House, nature walks and more. As a member of the Sherwood House Committee, I helped purchase furniture and arrange for the tinting of the windows in the dining room.

I have a close working relationship our County Representatives and was able to obtain multiple handicapped toilet facilities throughout CVP. I feel that one of my biggest accomplishments was receiving a \$30,000 grant from the State Highways Administration, for the purpose of developing an accessible trail for all CVP patrons named the “Trail for All”.

My favorite things about the Park are the serene milieu and the glorious forest flora and fauna who inhabit CVP. Some of my biggest concerns about CVP are the erosion of Minebank Run and the loss of older trees by storm damage.

As John Muir said, “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.” I bid our next generation of CVP stewards to maintain this beautiful Park and protect all that it has to offer. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path, and leave a trail.”

Sharon Childs, CVP Volunteer

Are you interested in volunteering at Cromwell Valley Park? We have many opportunities to help with park programs and seasonal events, trail and garden maintenance, and more. Volunteer today by contacting volunteers@cromwellvalleypark.org or sign up online at <https://cromwellvalleypark.org/volunteer/>

PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEKEND

**Saturday, May 2 from 10 am to 4 pm
and Sunday, May 3 from 10 am to 1 pm**

*Learn about the replication of items composed of stone, bone,
wood and natural fibers.*

FREE event. Reservations not required.

Cromwell Valley Park • Willow Grove Farm

Please visit our Website for more details: www.cromwellvalleypark.org



CVP Weed Warriors

Winter is a great time to work on cutting invasive vines!

When the sun shines and there isn't much wind, colder weather feels pretty good for the Weed Warriors. In addition, we don't have to worry about ticks, poison ivy, or slashing through thick vegetation to get to the vines. The Achilles' Heels of the vines are plainly in sight at the bases of the trees and cutting them there kills them the rest of the way up.

In addition, there are still a lot of berries left to bag and get out of the park. Every Oriental Bittersweet and Multiflora Rose fruit removed from the park is one less seedling to germinate and later strangle a tree. I pull up about 30 Oriental Bittersweet seedlings a week in my garden beds at home in the spring - so thousands of them are germinating in the park every year. They've either fallen to the ground or are pooped out by birds sitting in the trees, which starts the whole mess over again. On a positive note, the native bird species wintering in the park usually reward us with some appearances or songs, notably Red Bellied Woodpeckers, Carolina Wrens and Blue Jays. In the spring, the magical notes of the Wood Thrush begin to sound, as will the Baltimore Orioles beginning to call in late April and early May.

With a lot of moisture in the soil, a lot of the Weed Warriors' aggressive feelings can be channeled into pulling up yards and yards of Japanese Honeysuckle roots and Bittersweet Roots, as well as young Multiflora Rose plants that have not developed big canes. Of course, lopping and sawing vines is also great for exercise and flexes our muscles.

Since it is unlikely that the county will have funds available in the near-term, our volunteers must do what we can to save some fraction of the trees at risk in the Park. But we work to save as many as we can, and thus also help to sustain thousands of animals and insects depending on our native trees for food and nesting sites.

The Weed Warriors schedule is available on the Cromwell Valley Park website: <https://cromwellvalleypark.org/volunteer/weedwarriors/>
Hope to see you on a Saturday this winter or in the spring!

Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, Coordinator of the CVP Weed Warriors Program



Weed Warriors working this December 2019
(photo courtesy Laurie Taylor-Mitchell)

Cromwell Valley Park & Marshy Point Nature Center Present:

Trail Guide Training 2020

Wednesday, March 25 through Friday, March 27 • 10 am to 1 pm each day

Train to be a Trail Guide at CVP and Marshy Point Nature Center!

We are looking for volunteers to help teach about nature!

Trail guides work with group programs, special events, and animal care.

Each day of training features new subjects and techniques for enjoying the great outdoors.

Day One at Marshy Point: Overview of the Trail Guide Training course and Reptiles and Amphibians.

Day Two at Cromwell Valley Park: Spring Planting and Native Americans of the Chesapeake.

Day Three Trip to Fort McHenry: Nature Discovery and Exploration.

*Bring a lunch and plenty of water to drink.

~ You must register in advance for this special training session • New guides pay a tuition fee of \$5 ~
To register: call Marshy Point at 410-887-2817 or Cromwell Valley Park at 410-887-2503

CVP Council presents
A NIGHT OUT WITH NATURE

Speaker Series

Sherwood House at Cromwell Valley Park, 2002 Cromwell Bridge Road.
This series is intended for adults. Cost: \$10 per person.



Brina Doyle

"Native People of the Chesapeake"

Friday, April 10 at 7 pm to 9 pm

Jenna Krebs

"Falconry"

Friday, March 13 from 7 pm to 9 pm



Amy Young and Charlie Conklin

"Be Part of the Solution with the GVC"

Friday, May 8 from 7 pm to 9 pm



NEWS FROM AROUND THE PARK

COMING SOON!

CVP's Annual EASTER EGG HUNT
Saturday, April 4 from 10 am to 12 pm

Fun for the entire family!

- Make a family craft to take home
 - Dye hard boiled eggs
- Visit with the 4-H Rabbit Club
 - Kids only egg hunt

Cromwell Valley Park - Sherwood House Lawn

\$5 per car donation appreciated •
Reservations NOT required

See cromwellvalleypark.org
and flyer insert for more information.



Egg Hunt Times:

Ages 3 ~ 10:30 AM

Ages 4 ~ 10:45 AM

Ages 5 & 6 ~ 11:00 AM

Ages 7 & 8 ~ 11:15 AM

Ages 9 & 10 ~ 11:30 AM



PROJECT COMPLETE!

Konner Munn of Boy Scout Troop 497 recently completed construction of a new wood storage unit for Cromwell Valley Park. Drop by Willow Grove and check out his handiwork!



(photo courtesy Kirk Drier)

Are you interested in getting involved with a project at CVP? Contact the office at 410-887-2503 for information.



Critter Cam

Project of Volunteer Maryland Master Naturalist, Bill Curtis



Cromwell Valley Park is host to a healthy whitetail deer population. Bill Curtis's Critter Cam captures images of these residents frequently.

Antlers

Antlers belong only to the males and typically grow from March to October. Antler size reflects the age and health of the animal. After fall mating season the antlers are shed.



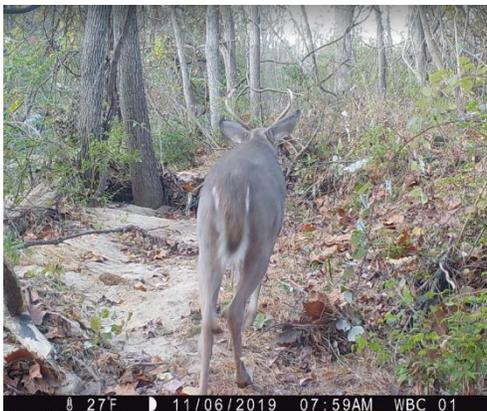
These bucks above and right are two years old or younger.



The bucks below and left are likely three years or older.



And what about that tail?



All seems well...



Uh oh!



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



DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS

Pre-Sorted Standard
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Baltimore, MD
Permit #7639

The next general
Council meeting
is scheduled for
Monday, March 9, 2020
7 pm at the Sherwood House.

Elections for board member
positions will be held at the
March meeting.
Look inside for the list of
nominees.

Please join us!

**Park hours:
Sunrise to sunset**

Cromwell Valley Park Newsletter Staff

Editors: *Kim Shapiro and Sya Buryrn Kedzior*

Contributors: *Mia Walsh, John Canoles,
Sharon Childs, Laurie Taylor-Mitchell,
Bill Curtis and Kirk Dreier*