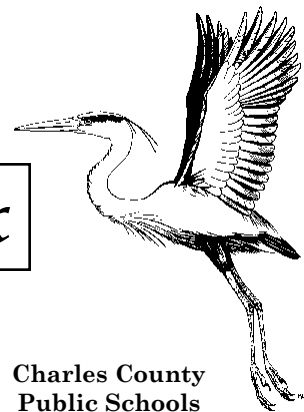


Winter 2019

Notes From Nanjemoy Creek

Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center



Charles County
Public Schools

Greetings from Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center!

We are midway through our school year and have some programming updates that we would like to share. This newsletter will highlight those updates and explain how you can help support our mission of providing environmental education for Charles County students in order to fulfill Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Environmental Literacy Plan. Currently, we provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) for 5th grade, middle, and high school students as well as outreach programs on environmental topics and summer camps for middle school students. Since September, our 5th grade MWEE has had 47 field trips with approximately 1,000 5th graders and 250 adults (chaperones and teachers) visit our center. We have 40 additional trips scheduled through the end of the school year!

We had two major changes in staffing at the Creek this past year. The first was the addition of Jen Young to our staff. Jen was hired in December 2017 to assist with our NOAA BWET grant. Her primary role is to teach outreach programs to middle and high school students. The second change was the loss of Josh Boyd from our staff. He will be missed, and we wish him all the best as he starts a new chapter of his life in sunny Florida. Replacing Josh is Mr. John Sullens. In the few months that he has been with us, John has been a natural fit to our program, and we are excited about what he brings to our environmental education program.



Hello, I'm John Sullens. As a child, I spent many weekends in the woods on the family property near the Pennsylvania border. Fishing for brook trout, searching for salamanders (I found hellbenders), capturing snakes, and exploring all that the woods had to offer solidified in me a strong bond with nature at an early age. More recently, I taught science enrichment from 2006-2012 and environmental education since 2012. From 2015-2018, I worked at the Alice Ferguson Foundation primarily with their 5th grade overnight programs and with the Bridging the Watershed National Park field studies with high school students.



Hello, I'm Jen Young. I grew up in Minnesota, exploring the lakes and rivers. I studied reclamation and environmental conservation in Wisconsin. During my time serving with AmeriCorps as a Student Conservation Association intern, I found my love of conservation. Before coming to Charles County, I worked in Indiana and Virginia at various Fish and Wildlife Service refuges and at a New York State Park site. I love spending time outdoors adventuring, fishing, and kayaking.

Raptor Mews News



Our NCEEC Raptor Care volunteers are an important part of our program, and we could not get by without them. They help with weekend feeding and cage cleaning, and some even help us with our public outreach programs. It has been such a treat over the past year to have middle and high school students and their families caring for the raptors. Please contact us if you are interested in becoming part of our raptor care team.

The volunteers work as family teams or individuals and are dedicated to caring for the birds. Our sincerest thanks go out to the following: Ariel and Iris Acosta; Michael Benedict; Angela Cerkevich; Loretta d'Eustachio; Mary, Tim, and Tori Groves; Rebecca Kercher-Maddox; Jeremy and Jim King; Carrie Buswell; Brian, Erin, and Grady Klaas; Frank and Renee Nelson; Rick Posey; Mary Mosher; Brian, Eric and Carole Schnitzler; Malory and Nicole Silbermann; and Karen Whitehair.

In the fall, Carole Schnitzler and middle school student, Jeremy King, helped with a live raptor presentation at the Youth Outdoor Day and the Art and Wine Festival at Caledon State Park. It was nice to see Jeremy handle and teach about raptors in front of other students. The owls celebrated Happy Owlween in October at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Lexington Park. In December, two new volunteers, Angela Cerkevich and Rebecca Kercher-Maddox, joined us. For her first job helping us, Rebecca helped cut and pack fresh fish donated by the Groves Family into single eagle-sized servings.

Our 1st grade Bird Clues Program has been busy in January visiting schools. Carole has helped with several of those programs, as well as a raptor visit to the Life Skills Class at McDonough High School. Angela and Rebecca will assist at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Fredericksburg, VA in February. Brian and Carole Schnitzler plan to help with the presentation and display at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Annual Eagle Festival on March 16, as they have for the past few years. Liz Sanders of JES Avanti Foundation Inc. is donating a nest camera for our barn owl box.

If our visiting wild Barn Owls have a successful nest this year, we plan to hold a Barn Owls and Burgers event. This fundraiser helps us fund materials needed to properly care for our raptors. This year, we used the funds raised to buy casting jackets which helps us handle the birds with less stress. Some of the funds will be used to buy mesh to repair cages that were damaged from a tree fall. Plans are in the works to replace the entire mews, which is showing signs of age.

Wood Duck Monitoring Program

During the 2012-2013 school year, NCEEC staff began monitoring four Wood Duck boxes located along the banks of Nanjemoy Creek on the center's property, and six boxes along the Indian Head Rail Trail. In 2017, the program expanded to also include five boxes along the Mattawoman Creek within Smallwood State Park, bringing the total number of boxes to 15. The 2018 season produced 16 hatchlings, which is down 37.5% from 2017. Monitors are often pleasantly surprised by nesting or feeding Eastern Screech Owls.

In the winter months, boxes are cleaned, repaired, and the bedding refreshed. Wood ducks are active from March to April, so monitors are busy checking boxes every two weeks beginning in mid-February. The data is recorded and reported to the MD Wood Duck Initiative (MWDI). More

information can be found on line at https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/MWDI/about_us.aspxhttps://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/MWDI/about_us.aspxhttps://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/MWDI/about_us.aspx.





NOAA BWET Grant Update

In the spring of 2017, CCPS was awarded a \$311,000 three-year grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) to create a systemic watershed outreach program for middle and high school students in the county. Because of this grant, Nanjemoy Creek is able to supply a dedicated staff member who travels to the schools and helps students conduct field studies. This provides students with the opportunity to learn about the local watersheds. Through a partnership with the Alice Ferguson Foundation, students also have the opportunity to participate in field studies at state and national parks.

Year One wrapped up in June 2018, with a total of 3,610 students participating (2,488 middle school students and 1,122 high school students) in the watershed outreach program. The outreach program also encourages students to participate in action projects at their schools. Students planted a total of 47 shrubs at two middle schools and removed 700 pounds of trash from around the Potomac River Watershed.

Year Two has started off with a bang! The fall field season wrapped up on December 21 with a total of 3,538 students participating (2,653 middle school and 885 high school students). Currently, students have cleaned up 220 pounds of litter collected at various schools throughout Charles County. The spring field season will start in late February and is looking to be just as busy as the fall. This spring, we will be working with more high school students as well as completing more action projects. Some of those projects include planting more native species at schools.

In February, Tim Emhoff and Jen Young will present at the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education Conference to share their experiences working with the grant. Looking ahead to Year Three, we anticipate student participation to be at or above year two levels. In the spring of 2020, Tim, Jen, and staff from CCPS will be presenting their grant experiences at the NSTA National Conference in Boston, MA. We are also working with CCPS to find a way to keep this program funded after the terms of the grant are completed.



Summer Is Just Around the Corner

Nanjemoy Creek will be hosting two summer camps this year:

Naturally Creative—This camp will feature nature exploration and crafts, including activities like include making nature journals, mud painting, canoeing, pottery, tree identification and more.

Nature Inventor's Workshop—This STEAM camp will include activities like building solar ovens (and cooking s'mores), canoeing, catching fish, building kites, making mini-worm composting bins, solving mysteries and more.

Naturally Creative will run from June 24-28, 2019, and the Nature Inventor's Workshop will run from August 19-23, 2019. The price for each camp is \$195. The camps are for students entering 6th grade to students entering 8th grade in the 2019-2020 school year. Camp runs Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Bus transportation is provided from the Gwynn Center, 5998 Radio Station Rd., La Plata, MD. If using the bus, drop off time is at 8:15 a.m. and pick up is 3:45 p.m. Students will need to bring a lunch and beverage each day and dress for outdoor activities.

For more information and to register, visit the Charles County Public Schools Summer Camps page or check out our website at <http://www.ccboe.com/schools/Nanjemoycreek/> for early registration.



Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center

5300 Turkey Tayac Place
Nanjemoy, Maryland 20662

Phone: 301-743-3526
Fax: 301-246-9623
Email: nceec@ccboc.com

We're on the Web

<http://www.ccboc.com/schools/nanjemoycreek>

The mission of Charles County Public Schools is to provide an opportunity for all school-aged children to receive an academically challenging, quality education that builds character, equips for leadership, and prepares for life in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

Printed on Recycled Paper.
Please recycle or pass it on
to a friend when
you're done.



The Charles County public school system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices. For inquiries, please contact Kathy Kiessling, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (students) or Nikial M. Majors, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 coordinator (employees/ adults), at Charles County Public Schools, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646; 301-932-6610/301-870-3814. For special accommodations call 301-934-7230 or TDD 1-800-735-2258 two weeks prior to the event.

Creature Feature

American Eel - *Anguilla rostrata*



The American Eel is a fish that is native to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. They are smooth, snake-like, and can range from yellow to black in color with a pale belly. They are 2-5 feet in length. Most of their life is spent in fresh and brackish tributaries such as streams, creeks, rivers, lakes, and ponds. They are active at night and spend their days buried in the bottom sediments or under rocks. They feed on worms, small fish, mollusks, and crustaceans. Eels are the only catadromous fish in the Bay which means that they live in freshwater rivers and spawn in the ocean. In October, mature eels swim out of the Bay to the Sargasso Sea to mate. In January, the eels spawn there and then die. Tiny eel larvae drift in the ocean for 9 to 12 months before swimming up the Bay's tributaries to fresh water. On average, they live about 5 years.

Nanjemoy Creek Fan Club

Would you like to help support the programs and projects that take place throughout the year at Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center? Become a member of Nanjemoy Creek's Fan Club by completing the attached form and including a small, tax deductible donation to our center. Your donation helps us keep our program up to date with the latest advances in environmental education and supports care for our raptors and bees. In return for your support, you will receive our newsletter to keep you informed about what's happening at the center.

I have included a donation of

___ \$25, ___ \$50, ___ \$100, ___ other

to support NCEEC's environmental education programs for
Charles County Public School students.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Newsletter: (circle one) email notification paper copy

email: _____

Make checks payable to "Charles County Public Schools"

Mail to: Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center
5300 Turkey Tayac Place, Nanjemoy, MD 20662