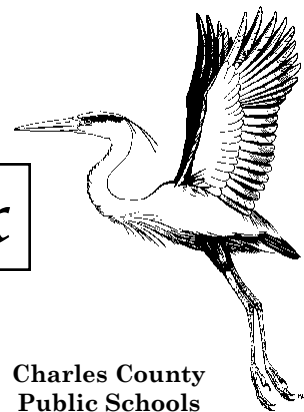


Fall 2022

Notes From Nanjemoy Creek

Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center



Greetings from Nanjemoy Creek!

It was a busy summer as we wrapped up the middle school trips for students that missed the 5th grade Nanjemoy experience due to COVID cancellations. Over 300 students attended these extended day experiences that involved visiting the resident raptors, fishing in the creek, making s'mores at the campfire and more! As we transition to the fall, we look forward to 5th graders visiting the Nanjemoy Creek campus for the Watershed Stewards Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) and the staff visiting middle and high school campuses for those respective MWEEs. For the school year 22-23, it is our goal to deliver environmental education programs to 10,000 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students at various levels with the aforementioned MWEEs and the many other Nanjemoy Creek outreach programs.



As we strive towards our goal, we are pleased to announce that Gina McCullough's position is now a permanent part of our staffing. Her position, middle and high school MWEE educator, was primarily funded by the NOAA BWET grant, which has now ended. Without this position, the middle and high school MWEEs would not be fully supported and/or implemented. Over the past 5 years of the grant, we have reached an average of 5,000 students annually and Gina's position was instrumental in its success. In addition to her role as a MWEE educator, Gina serves as the point of contact for the middle and high Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) Green School Program. Tim Emhoff is the point of contact for the elementary schools. Currently, CCPS has 15 MAEOE certified Green Schools and 1 Green Center. To learn more about the MAEOE Green School Program, please visit - <https://maeoe.org/green-schools-and-green-centers/green-schools-program>.

The need for environmental education is greater than it has ever been. It is becoming vitally important to understand their connection to the world outside and the impact that their actions have. It starts with individuals making everyday choices that are good for the environment and benefit their local communities. In this newsletter, we'll be highlighting community resources, actions you can take to make a difference, and educational experiences beyond the classroom.



NCEEC Professional Development Audubon Educators Hog Island Camp 2022 John Sullens

The Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center (NCEEC) encourages staff to pursue professional development (PD) in work related areas. The field of environmental education involves a broad knowledge base; it is complex and is forever changing. This makes the career challenging at times. Professional

development can increase a professionals' expertise, confidence, productivity and effectiveness. It can make you better prepared to contribute in the workplace and give you the opportunity to network with other professionals in your field. I recently attended a professional development camp for educators. It was an amazing experience and relevant to my work as an environmental educator.

In 2020, I was the recipient of a Southern Maryland Audubon Society Hog Island Audubon Camp Scholarship. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the camp was cancelled, and I ended up attending the 2022 Educators Camp.

The camp is in Bremen, Maine on Hog Island, a stone's throw from the mainland located in the Muscongus Bay. In total, the island is 330 acres. The Audubon Camp resides on the northern 30 acres of the island. Miles of walking trails cut through the woodland and follow the perimeter. The island provides natural beauty with clear sunrises and sunset views. Not much has changed on the island since the National Audubon Society held its first camp there in 1936. Several distinct habitats including North Atlantic tidal pools, which was a first for me to explore. Tidal pools are home to many species of algae, the European Green Crab, the native Jonah Crab, Tunicates, which I learned, are vertebrates, native and exotic Periwinkle, Dog Whelk, Rock Gunnel Eel and so much more life.

I arrived early the first day and it gave me time to explore. I befriended two educators and using a map of the island, we hiked a few miles through the woods to a cove and back. We marveled at the bearded moss hanging from the trees, the beautiful views of the Bay, and the seals swimming among the endless rows of lobster trap floats. We birded using the Merlin bird app on our phones as our guide.

The orientation program was an introduction to the history of the island, the Audubon Camp and in addition, we met the educators assigned to us. It was at this time, I realized I was in a special place, hallowed ground. The mission of the camp, from its conception, is to bring educators from all parts of the country to Hog Island, immerse them in nature emphasizing how everything is connected and interdependent. Then, it encourages those teachers to share what they learned with their communities, creating a multiplying effect of knowledge. Being a part of the educator's camp is an honor, and I will take what I learned back to my community. Each day began with an optional 5:45 A.M. bird watching and coffee time. I did not miss one and every day I added a new bird to my list. Just seeing the seals swim about was entertaining enough.

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Maryland Master Naturalists at NCEEC

Are you interested in becoming a Maryland Master Naturalist (MMN)? Perhaps, you have never heard of them before! It is a program of the University of Maryland Extension and is similar to their Master Gardener program, but unlike with that program, Maryland Master Naturalists work with a Host Site rather than county wide.

The mission of the MMN Program is to engage individuals as stewards of Maryland's natural ecosystems and resources through science-based education and volunteer service in their communities. We are part of this program at NCEEC and have had two cohorts go through the training. For the Fall Semester of 2023, we plan to start a new cohort and would love to have you join us. The training sessions consist of approximately 15 sessions and the field trips.

During the first season while taking classes, you will be a MMN Candidate. Following the classes for the next year, you volunteer 40 hours with NCEEC working on research or service projects and public outreach as a MMN Intern. Upon completion of your internship, you become a full-fledged Maryland Master Naturalist! Projects NCEEC MMN's have worked on include: Wildlife Camera Wildlife Study, Food Forest Gardens, Nanjemoy Creek Water Quality Data Analysis, Compost System Bin Construction, Deer Resistant Gardens, Vernal Pond Study, NCEEC Native Plant Nursery, Butterfly Survey, Native Plant Landscaping Garden, and Local Owl Mural. Educational outreach has included the Maxwell Hall Colonial Faire & Fall Festival, 2021 Cicada Night at the Blue Crabs Stadium, Monarchs & Milkweed at Merkle Festival, and Cobb Island's Monarch Mania Festival.

To learn more about the MMN Program, visit the University of Maryland Extension Office's website at <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/master-naturalist-program>. If you are interested in becoming a NCEEC- MMN in the Fall 2023 session, contact Mike Callahan or Tim Emhoff at (301) 743-3536 or mcallahan@ccboe.com and temhoff@ccboe.com.

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On a foggy choppy seas morning, we set out on a lobster boat to reach Eastern Egg Rock Island. Focusing on the horizon and swallowing candied ginger to prevent seasickness, we finally made it to Egg Rock Island, one of Audubon's research sites near the Maine Coast. As we neared the island, the captain idled the engine to give us the best view of the nesting birds. I found it difficult at first to identify the Atlantic Puffin among all the other sea birds. First, it was a flash of orange from the bill. Then I focused on the short black wings and bright white underbelly. There were thousands of birds on the rocks and hundreds of Atlantic Puffins. In time, puffins were flying over our boat. The bird's flight does not look efficient as if it is struggling to gain flight. It has an odd shaped bill and short wings better suited for underwater flippers than for flying. All About Birds website calls the Atlantic Puffin, "the clown of the sea." To see Atlantic Puffins is awesome but to see this many in one place was a once in a lifetime experience for me.

Audubon Educators Camp was an amazing professional development experience from start to finish. I learned so much that I could share with my students and colleagues. I recorded several new birds to me including Roseate Tern, Atlantic Puffin, Common Eider, Black Guillemot, and Ruddy Turnstone. I plan to continue to research more about Hog Island; its native peoples, natural habitats and history. I plan to return to that special place soon. For more information about the camp I attended, visit their website at <https://hogisland.audubon.org/programs/sharing-nature-educator's-week>.



Have a Natural(ly) Good Time in Charles County

During the pandemic, when many people were rediscovering nature and the great outdoors, people discovered where NCEEC is located! Students visiting on their 5th grade field trip often ask if they can bring their family to visit. Because NCEEC is a CCPS facility, we are not open to the public. However, Charles County has many places you can visit for a naturally good time! Our county has city parks, county parks, state parks, wildlife management areas, National Historic Sites and privately owned sites, where you can enjoy the great outdoors is close to your own backyard. Below is a list of many of the places you can visit to discover the natural wonders of Charles County.

State Parks and Properties

- **Cedarville State Forest (CSF)** - 10201 Bee Oak Rd, Brandywine
- **Chapel Point State Park** - Chapel Point Rd, Port Tobacco
- **Chapman State Park** - 3452 Ferry Place, Indian Head
- **Mattawoman State Natural Environmental Area** - 3278 Chicamuxen Rd, Indian Head
- **Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area** - Myrtle Grove Rd, La Plata
- **Smallwood State Park** - 2750 Sweden Point Rd, Marbury
- **Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area** - 9761 Blossom Point Rd, Welcome
- **Purse Area of Nanjemoy WMA** - 10200 Riverside Rd, Nanjemoy

Charles County Parks

- **Bensville Park** - 6980 Bensville Road, White Plains
- **Gilbert Run Park** - 13140 Charles Street, Charlotte Hall
- **Indian Head Rail Trail**, trail head is located at 10390 Theodore Green Rd, White Plains
- **Friendship Farm Park** - 4715 Friendship Landing Rd, Nanjemoy
- **Laurel Springs Regional Park** - 5940 Radio Station Rd, La Plata
- **Mallows Bay Park** - 1440 Wilson Landing Rd, Nanjemoy
- **Maxwell Hall Park** - 17388 Teagues Point Road, Hughesville
- **Oak Ridge Park** - 13675 Oaks Road, Hughesville
- **Port Tobacco River Park** - 7685 Chapel Point Rd, Port Tobacco
- **Turkey Hill Park** - 9430 Turkey Hill Rd, La Plata

Town/Municipal Parks

- **Town of La Plata Parks : Tilghman Lake Park** - 10598 Box Elder Road, La Plata
- **Town of Indian Head: Indian Head Riverwatch Upland and Riverwalk** - 165 Riverwatch Drive, Indian Head

US National Park Service Sites

- **Thomas Stone National Historic Site** - 6655 Rose Hill Rd, Port Tobacco
- **Marshall Hall Park** - Marshall Hall Rd, Bryans Road
- **St Ignatius Church Catholic Church** - 8855 Chapel Point Rd, Port Tobacco

To learn about other fun things to do in Charles County, check out the website for the Charles County Office of Tourism at <https://www.explorecharlescounty.com>. Don't get left inside during the 2022-23 School Year. Get outside to see what the parks in Charles County have to offer.



Monarch Migration

Monarch butterflies are a favorite amongst butterfly enthusiasts. Not only are these black and orange butterflies strikingly beautiful, but they also have a fascinating life story. Monarch Butterflies begin their lives in Mexico. In late February, they begin mating and flying north. Most of the first generation make it to Texas where they begin laying eggs on milkweed plants. The next several generations then continue migrating north until about May or June. The final generation then migrates back to Mexico. Fall is the time for the migration back to Mexico. Starting in August, North American Monarchs travel from their summer breeding grounds to locations where they can overwinter safely. Monarchs located east of the Rocky Mountains can travel up to 3,000 miles to central Mexico. Monarchs west of the Rockies have a shorter migration to the California coast. As day length and temperatures decrease and fewer nectar sources become available, a change is triggered in the Monarch butterfly that tells them that it is time to migrate. Adults that are part of this migratory generation can live for up to nine months (the summer generation live for two to six weeks as adults). From across the Eastern U.S. and Southern Canada, monarchs funnel toward Mexico. Along the way, they find refuge in stopover sites with abundant nectar sources and shelter from harsh weather. Upon reaching their destination in central Mexico beginning in early November, monarchs aggregate in Oyamel Fir Trees on south-southwest facing mountain slopes. These locations provide cool temperatures, water, and adequate shelter to protect them from predators and allow them to conserve enough energy to survive the winter. To learn more about the fascinating journey of the Monarch Butterfly, visit <https://monarchjointventure.org/monarch-biology/monarch-migration>.

ABC's of Environmental Stewardship - What Can You Do to Help?

Ever wonder what you could do to help the environment? One thing would be to conserve water. Sea water makes up 97% of water on our planet, with the remaining 3% being fresh water. Of that fresh water, less than half can be used for human consumption. We use water for drinking, cooking, sanitation, and washing. It is also used in the production of goods, such as food products as well as manufacturing. With the world's increasing population, we are putting a strain on our fresh water resources. This affects not only humans, but it also puts a strain on ecosystems that rely on water like wetland habitats. Conserving water also saves energy. Energy is needed to filter, heat, and pump water to your home so reducing the amount of water you use also reduces your carbon footprint (the total amount of greenhouse gases released by your actions).



Here are some simple things you can do:

- ♦ Run full loads. When you run the dishwasher or washing machine, try to only run full loads instead of a couple of partial loads.
- ♦ Fix leaky faucets and running toilets.
- ♦ Turn off the water when you are not using it. One example would be to turn off the water while you brush your teeth, wash your hands, or shampoo your hair.
- ♦ Take shorter showers and replace your shower head with one that is water efficient.
- ♦ Install water efficient toilets in your home. Newer toilets often have a reduced water flush option.
- ♦ Water gardens before 9AM or after 4PM to reduce evaporation (its also better for the plants).
- ♦ When washing your car, use a bucket instead of a running hose.

If everyone helps in small ways, it can add up to make a large difference!



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To learn more, check us out on the web at <http://nanjemoycreek.ccboe.com>

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.

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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. CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).



Leave the Leaves

If you want to make a difference for a wide variety of wildlife, leave your leaves in your yard/garden. Not only does leaf litter create a natural mulch that helps suppress weeds and fertilizes the soil as it breaks down, but it also benefits many species of wildlife. Even dead standing plant material can provide a place for critters to overwinter. When you rake, mow, and blow; you are removing food, shelter, and nesting material that is essential to the survival of many species of turtles, toads, birds, moths, butterflies, invertebrates, and more. So, take a break from all that fall clean-up and feel good about helping your local ecosystem!

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.

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5300 Turkey Tayac Place, Nanjemoy, MD 20662