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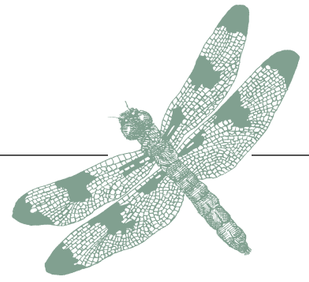

Giving at the Office Makes Supporting CWH Easy

Entering into its 12th year, the Environmental Fund for Maryland has a mission to support Maryland's leading environmental organizations through workplace giving and is dedicated to the preservation and protection of Maryland's natural heritage. Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage is proud to be a founding member of this alliance of nineteen non-profit organizations based in Maryland. Member organizations specialize in environmental issues such as habitat restoration, land preservation, environmental education, advocacy or environmental justice.

As an Environmental Fund for Maryland supporter, you make an important personal statement about yourself and your role in protecting Maryland's resources. The goal of EFM is to provide you with an easy way to get involved in preserving our natural heritage. Supporting a charity through payroll deduction is one of the most efficient ways to support the organizations you care about – for you and for the charities.

Payroll deduction allows you to choose how much you can afford to give and lets you do so in small increments throughout the year. You can make a tax-deductible contribution to all of our members with one general gift to the Environmental Fund for Maryland, or you may designate your gift to one or more member organizations of your choice. (We highly recommend CWH.)

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage would like to welcome the new Director of Environmental Fund for Maryland, Shannon Baker. Her background in marketing and supporting nonprofit organizations will be a great asset to EFM and its mission to promote one of the easiest ways to support your favorite environmental organization in Maryland! For more information visit www.efm.org, or call Susanna at 410-822-5100.

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Visit our website at: www.cheswildlife.org

CHESAPEAKE WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Habitat works

The newsletter about building habitat for wildlife
Fall 2004

At CWH's Wetland and Wine Event held in May, Ned Gerber shares with community members one of the newly restored wetlands at Canterbury Farm in Bailey's Neck.

Is Maryland Doing Everything it Can to Restore the Bay?

Ned Gerber

You often see articles in CWH's *Habitat Works* newsletter about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) being the only significant land restoration tool being used throughout Maryland to restore both uplands and wetlands. We forget to remind our readers that the program is entirely voluntary for the landowner who is paid to retire cropland for a 10 or 15 year period. CREP has been under attack by tenant farmers and the Farm Bureau because it supposedly takes "too much" land out of production. Some have this view, despite the fact that after 5 years, only 70,000 acres of the original 100,000 acre goal has been enrolled (more than 50,000 acres of this is buffer). 100,000 acres is not even 5% of Maryland's total tillable acres of land, which is not too large an amount to set aside profitably under CREP to help save the Bay and its wildlife. The MD Department of Agriculture vowed to "fix the program"—instead they made Maryland's efforts to control farm runoff and restore wildlife habitat insufficient.

Under the old CREP rules, buffers along ditches could be up to 300 feet wide. In 2004, MDA made a change so buffers along ditches could only be a maximum of 35 feet wide. To us, this is a very sad commentary on MDA and this administration's seriousness about cleaning up agricultural pollution. New CREP rules state that ditch buffers now can only be grass, whereas previously they could contain grass and/or trees. Common sense and science show that not only do trees often absorb more nutrients than grass, but narrow buffers simply don't work as well for ground nesting wildlife or water quality. Studies indicate that approximately 70% of the nutrient pollution in the Chester and Choptank rivers is from agriculture. The new "flush tax" is great but it doesn't hold the key to cleaning up Eastern Shore watersheds—agriculture does.

While there is a lot of talk about nutrient management plans and cover crops, CREP is cost-effective and gets solutions on the ground quickly. Once the CREP buffers and wetlands are established, they need little human intervention to work, unlike cover crops which need to be planted in a timely fashion each and every year (preferably before Oct 1). The CREP habitats created also provide recreational and hunting opportunities that can greatly increase cash flow on the farm. Such enterprises fit nicely with the national effort to diversify farm income so that farmers are not so dependent on typically low grain prices.

(continues on page 2)

Habitat Works is published by Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to creating, restoring and protecting wildlife habitat and establishing a more sustainable agriculture, through direct action, education and research, in partnership with public and private landowners. We welcome your comments and contributions.

(continued from page 1)

An article by Tom Horton in the Baltimore Sun recently described a plane tour given by Congressman Gilchrest to Jim Mosely, US Department of Agriculture Secretary. Mr. Mosley asked Gilchrest, if all of the farming so close to the water was causing problems with water pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus. Congressman Gilchrest responded that the farming was indeed causing problems but that "we're working on it." How exactly does cutting voluntary CREP buffers from 300 to 35 feet "work on it?" It is unfortunate that MDA took an important tool away for the establishment of the "conservation corridor," especially as Gilchrest has been a champion of agriculture. We obviously have lots of "work" to do as the July 18 Washington Post article describes. Nutrient levels (phosphorus and nitrogen) have not actually declined in the bay since 1987!

Another Baltimore Sun article noted that about 19,000 acres were converted to non-farm uses in MD last year alone. Horton's article also states that 200,000 acres of Delmarva's farms have been developed in the last 20 years. We can all see that pace is quickening now. One need not be a great visionary to see that both wildlife and tenant farmers are headed towards being squeezed out of the area by development if present trends continue. The farm community's wrath should not be directed at CREP water quality and wildlife acreage as it is only taking a small portion of most farms. I'd like to see the farm community call for slower and smarter growth of residential development for a change.

I am not aware of any large areas (the size of Delmarva) that have been conserved by regular zoning combined with voluntary or purchased easements. Market forces are simply too great to overcome especially with the ever increasing human population. Some wet inland farmland in Talbot County just went for about $20,000 per acre. It is unrealistic to think that some "magic crop" is going to compete with those real estate values to keep most of the Delmarva's present farmland in agriculture (the preservation through profitability hypothesis). The Chesapeake Bay is an undisputed national treasure and the Delmarva Peninsula contains the largest block of farmland between North Carolina and Maine. It's time to bite the bullet and declare the entire peninsula The Chesapeake National Working Lands Park with a great deal of multi-state and federal oversight into any proposed land use that changes the rural nature of the landscape. Farming, forestry, and wildlife management/restoration would all be allowed, but significant state and federal hoops would need to be jumped through to take land out of its rural state. New York State did something similar many years ago with the Adirondack Park and all agree that it is a beautiful natural area and working landscape. The Chesapeake Bay deserves better than to let market forces and consistent county zoning failures rip its rural landscape to shreds with development.

Cited Articles:

Whoriskey, Peter. Bay Pollution Progress Overstated. Washington Post, July 18, 2004.

Horton, Tom. Flight over Delmarva's life, promise, loss. Baltimore Sun, July 2, 2004.

Horton, Tom. New law a baby step. Baltimore Sun, April 16, 2004.

Wheeler, Timothy B. Orchards and farms yield to malls and homes. Baltimore Sun, June 27, 2004.

Call for Volunteers!

Have extra time on your hands? Birding skills? A love for fuzzy baby birds?

If so, CWH has a volunteer opportunity for you!

We are in need of volunteers for:

- Folding, stuffing, sticking for the Annual Appeal mailing in October
- Monitoring Bluebird and/or Purple Martin boxes in Queen Anne's County
- Maintaining demonstration garden at Barnstable Hill Farm in Chester
- Odd jobs around the Historic House at Barnstable Hill Farm.

Donations of Stock Can Support CWH

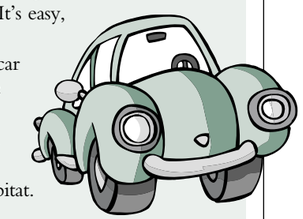
Donating appreciated stock is an excellent way to support CWH, the Bay and our wildlife. This type of donation is very simple and allows you to take advantage of tax laws to increase your gift to CWH and reduce your taxes.

For example, Mrs. Jones purchased stock for $5,000 several years ago. Today, this stock is worth $10,000. She decides to donate the stock to Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage and receives a charitable deduction for the full fair-market value of the stock ($10,000). In the 30% tax bracket, the deduction saves her $3,000 in income tax. Additionally, by donating the appreciated stock, she avoids paying capital gains tax of $1,000 (20% of the $5,000 gain). The actual cost of her gift is reduced to $6,000 ($10,000 less the $3,000 tax deduction and less the $1,000 capital gains avoidance).

Please call our office and talk with Chris Pupke to learn more about this easy method to support CWH!

Cars for Habitat
Tell your friends!

Do you have a vehicle that you no longer want or need? Would you like to dispose of that vehicle, gain a tax deduction, and benefit Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage at the same time? Donate it! It's easy, and your unwanted car can help us create, restore and protect wildlife habitat. For more information, please visit the "Donate a Car" link on CWH's website, www.cheswildlife.org or call Susanna at 410-822-5100. When you're ready to proceed, just fill out our online donation form, or email Susanna, and a representative of a firm acting on behalf of the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage will contact you.



Wildlife Profile:
Hooded Merganser *(Lophodytes cucullatus)*

Andi Pupke

Last spring, CWH's Wood Duck Box crew found a Hooded Merganser nesting in one of the many boxes CWH has installed. While it has been well documented that Hooded Mergansers have been using Wood Duck boxes, it is uncommon to find them nesting in Maryland. This was also the first time that CWH staff has caught it on film. Like our Bluebird houses, the Wood Duck box can provide nesting cavities for many native birds. We have found Prothonotary Warblers and Screech Owls among many other species.

The Hooded Merganser is well known for the male's bold black and white fan-like hood and its amazing flying abilities. It is among the fastest-flying ducks but it can also maneuver through fairly dense woods. They are wary and retiring ducks that are normally found as singles, pairs or in small flocks of 5 to 10 individuals.

It is a small diving duck about the size of a Wood Duck, which breeds in wooded ponds and rivers in cavities just like the Wood Duck. Although the habitat requirements for Hooded Mergansers and Wood Ducks are similar, one major difference lies in water quality. The Hooded Merganser cannot find adequate food (primarily fish) in highly turbid waters. Wood Ducks are less limited by water quality as they are much more likely to feed on plants, seeds, and invertebrates.

The Hooded Merganser is the only merganser that is indigenous solely to North America however a few strays have appeared in Central America and Great Britain. The Hooded Merganser breeds from Manitoba and Nova Scotia south to Arkansas, and Southern Alaska south to Oregon and Montana. They winter from New England south to Florida and Texas and British Columbia south to California.

During the breeding season they normally lay 8-12 eggs in a natural tree cavity or in a fallen hollow log. Most adult birds return to breeding grounds as mated pairs but the males promptly disappear from the nest areas when their mates start to incubate. As adults, Hooded Mergansers return to the same area to nest as they

A Hooded Merganser hen finds a safe place to lay her eggs in a CWH Wood Duck box in Worton, MD.

were hatched. Mergansers that were marked as ducklings have not been found nesting as yearlings but have been found nesting as two year olds.

All mergansers are late migrants, but the Hooded Merganser is the earliest of the three. They reach the Great Lakes areas from points farther north in early November leaving for points south by the end of December. They begin to leave their wintering grounds in early February, and a gradual exodus continues through March.

Mergansers are rarely hunted in the Mid-Atlantic due to the fact that they eat mainly small fish which they pursue in long, rapid underwater dives. They will also eat small frogs, newts, tadpoles, and aquatic insects. In northern fishery areas, they are hunted frequently because they are thought to eat large numbers of commercially important fish fry (baby fish).

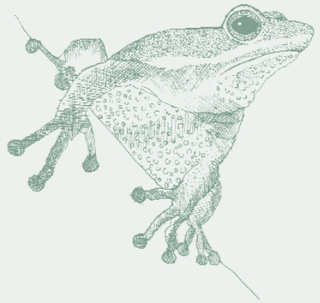
Like many other wildlife populations the Hooded Merganser has suffered due to habitat loss. The past drainage of swamps and river bottom lands and increases in turbid waters reduces their feeding ability. Timbering practices that prevent the development of old hollow trees and other human activities have also contributed to their loss of habitat.

You may want to keep a closer eye on what is using your nesting boxes next season-you may find a great surprise! Always remember to maintain your boxes by keeping them clean and repaired and by not allowing invasive non-native birds such as House Sparrows and Starlings to use them.

Mark your calendars for ***Waterfowl Festival weekend, November 12-14, 2004****. Please stop by our booth to learn more about CWH's most recent successes. Volunteers are still needed to sit at the CWH booth. Please call Susanna at 410-822-5100 if you are interested in helping us out!*

Ask Andi *by Andi Pupke*

Questions & Answers about wildlife



Q: I have recently seen Toad houses for sale at every garden shop I go to. Do they really work and why would I want to attract toads to my garden?

R: Toads are a wonderful addition to any garden as they consume large quantities of insects, slugs, and other creatures that can seriously damage vegetables and other desirable plants. Their long, sticky tongue attached in the front of their mouth enable them to flick their tongue forward with lightning rapidity to snare their prey.

When set on loose soil, toad houses work to provide the damp shade that toads need in the heat of a summer day. Instead of purchasing a toad house, a cracked terra-cotta pot placed upside down may work just as well. Without a toad house, the toads naturally burrow into the soil, forest litter, or beneath other shelter like a large rock during the hottest part of the day. When it is cool and damp, toads can be active both day and night.

Toads have gotten a bad rap. Some people blame toads for causing warts. Even Shakespeare associated toads with witch's brew in Macbeth.

Of course toads do not cause warts in humans—warts are caused by a virus. Though the glands behind toads' eyes look somewhat like warts, they are actually used for protection against predators. The glands give off a slightly poisonous substance making the toad unpalatable to anything trying to eat it.

Another long time myth about toads is that toads urinate on you when you pick them up. When toads are frightened, they often release a liquid that is generally thought to be urine. The liquid released is actually water stored away by the toad against a time when drought might threaten them.

If you want to learn more about toads some books and other references worth looking into are:
A Natural History of Amphibians, by Stebbins and Cohen
Peterson Field Guides Reptiles and Amphibians by Conant & Collins
Amphibians and Reptiles of Delmarva by White & White

Did You Know?

Hummingbirds—the tiniest of birds that appear far too fragile to fly south from North America each autumn and return the following year. But they do it, migrating from as far north as New England and southern Canada down to Central America for every winter season.

If one of nature's greatest mysteries is how and why birds migrate, then surely the seasonal travels of hummingbirds is among the most incredible occurrences in the natural world.

As the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that graced our flowers and feeders this summer begin their fall migration, here are a few facts to consider:

- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have one of the longest migration paths of any hummingbird.
- Hummingbirds weigh just under an ounce; about the weight of a penny.
- They use spider webs as glue to attach the nest to a tree branch as well as a binding agent for the building materials.
- Hummingbirds eat about every 10 minutes.
- Hummingbirds can fly up to 60 miles per hour usually flying 30 to 45 miles per hour.
- Their wings beat 20 to 80 times per second.
- The iridescence in their feathers has led them to be called the "jewels of the garden." This is a reflection of light and not so much a pigment of the feathers.
- Hummingbirds are the only birds able to fly backwards!
- Hummingbirds often eat their own weight in food each day.
- Hummingbirds get the protein they need in their diet by eating the small insects and spiders they find in flowers.

- Hummingbirds can drop their body temperature and become dormant during times of low food or cold weather. This process is called torpor where their heart rate goes from 1200 beats per minute to 50 beats per minute.

Source: Operation RubyThroat: The Hummingbird Project at http://www.rubythroat.org

Community Groups Lead by Example to Clean Up the Bay

The Kent Island Heritage Society announced that they have partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Maryland Agricultural Cost Share Program, and Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage (CWH) to become better stewards of their Kirwin Farm which borders both Kirwan and Crab Alley Creeks. Dan Hopkins, of the Kent Island Heritage Society (KIHS) said "The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program enabled us to increase our farm's profitability as well as improve water quality and wildlife habitat in our watershed. We are excited about seeing wildlife colonize our newly established meadows and forests." He continues, "Kent Island has lost so much wildlife habitat to development and we are grateful that this government funded program helps us to put some of it back!"

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage has been talking to members of KIHS for a number of years about the benefits of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for the Kirwan Farm, wildlife, and the bay. "We have worked with landowners like the folks at KIHS to restore several thousand acres of habitat using CREP," said CWH's habitat ecologist Ned Gerber. "The KIHS farm practically borders our Barnstable Hill Farm, adding greatly to the wildlife benefits of the CREP habitat we have done on our own 540 acre property. We are glad that there will be additional wildlife habitat left on Kent Island thanks to caring neighbors at the Kent Island Heritage Society's — Kirwan Farm."

CWH used high school students from Wye Upper School, as well as area boy scouts to install tubes on the trees that were planted at the farm. The tubes will protect the young trees from browsing deer. By doing this, the young people involved will learn a little about the techniques involved in restoring habitat.

The Kirwan KIHS project consists of thirty acres of wooded buffers, making it the largest woodland restoration on Kent Island in recent years. Forty-eight acres of meadow will also be restored, creating habitat for a variety of grassland birds, rabbits, hawks, butterflies, etc. 170 acres of tillable land will be left on the farm, demonstrating a healthy balance between intensive agriculture and wildlife habitat.

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A Plant for Monarchs

Susanna Scallion

"During World War II a call went out from the government for milkweed pods. Boy and girl scouts, civic groups, farmers and collectors all over North America scoured the countryside for milkweeds, collected and dried the pods, and shipped them to central collecting stations… Milkweed floss is 5 or 6 times as buoyant as cork, and it was soon discovered that a life jacket containing a few pounds of this floss could hold up a 150-pound man in the sea. It is warmer than wool and 6 times lighter. Flying suits lined with milkweed floss are warm and light-weight, and, if an aviator falls into the ocean, the suit will act as a life preserver."

—Harold Moldenke, in American Wild Flowers, 1949

Every so often, a plant is discovered to have so many uses that we wonder why it has never been commercially exploited. You immediately think of plants found in the rainforest, don't you?

The genus *Asclepias* (named after the Greek god of medicine, Asklepios) includes hundreds of species of milkweed found in our own North America. One of which is *Asclepias syriaca* or Common Milkweed. Virtually all parts of these plants are edible when cooked. Young shoots can be used as an asparagus substitute, the younger parts of old shoots can be cooked like spinach, the flower buds have a pea-flavor and the flower itself can be used as a flavoring and thickener in soups. That said, don't eat too much as high quantities can cause a stomach ache!

These edible qualities don't even come close to what other uses the milkweed has. Their stem fibers can be used to make cloth and twine, the fluffy floss from the mature seed heads can be used as a stuffing for pillows, toys or even life preservers. The leaves of the plant contain a kind of latex that has been used in chewing gum, and the seeds produce an oil that can be used in making soap.

Of course, CWH doesn't have time to spin milkweed floss to make candle wicks, we like milkweed for the uses it has when it is left alone completely.

This plant of three to five feet, adorned with beautiful dome-like purplish flowers from June to August and then large strange looking seed pods in the fall is the life blood for a well known orange beauty, the Monarch Butterfly. A species of Milkweed can be found in roadside ditches and/or in gardens from Southern Canada south to Florida and all the way west to California.

Milkweeds are perennial, which means an individual plant lives for more than one year, growing each spring from rootstock and seeds rather than seeds alone. In the Midwest, milkweeds were historically common and widespread on prairies, but habitat destruction has reduced their range and numbers. Though most members of the genus *Asclepias* are tropical, there are approximately 110 species in North America known for their milky sap or latex contained in the leaves.

Monarch caterpillars appear to feed exclusively on milkweeds in the genus *Asclepias* and several other genera of viny milkweeds in North America. Most species are toxic to vertebrate herbivores if ingested due to the cardenolide alkaloids contained in the leaves and stems. When Monarch caterpillars ingest milkweed, they also ingest the plants' toxins. They sequester these compounds in their wings and exoskeletons, making the larvae and adults toxic to many potential predators. Vertebrate predators may avoid Monarchs because they learn that the larvae and adults taste bad and/or make them vomit. There is considerable variation in the amount of toxins in different species of plants. Some northern species of milkweed contain almost no toxins while others seem to contain so much of the toxins that they are lethal even to monarch caterpillars.

A Monarch Butterfly nectars on a Milkweed flower

When the late summer and early fall Monarchs emerge from their pupae, they are biologically and behaviorally different from those emerging in the summer. The shorter days and cooler air of late summer trigger changes. Even though these butterflies look like summer adults, they won't mate or lay eggs until the following spring. Instead, their small bodies prepare for a strenuous flight. Otherwise solitary animals, they often cluster at night while moving ever southward. If they linger too long, they won't be able to make the journey; as they are unable to fly in cold weather.

Fat, stored in the abdomen, is a critical element of their survival for the winter. This fat not only fuels their flight of one to three thousand miles, but must last until the next spring when they begin the flight back north. As they migrate southwards, Monarchs stop to nectar, actually gaining weight during the trip.

A mystery still unsolved, Monarchs somehow find the same overwintering site each year, even though the butterflies returning to Mexico or California each fall are the great-great-grandchildren of the butterflies that left the previous spring. No one knows exactly how their homing system works; it is another of the many unanswered questions in the butterfly world.

As winter ends and the days grow longer, the Monarchs become more active, beginning to mate and often moving to locations lower on the mountainsides. They leave their Mexican roosts during the second week of March, flying north and east looking for milkweed plants on which to lay their eggs. These Monarchs have already survived a long southward flight in the fall and winter cold; they have escaped predatory birds and other hazards along the way, and are the only Monarchs left that can produce a new generation. If they return too early, before the milkweed is up in the spring, they will not be able to lay their eggs and continue the cycle.

The migrating females lay eggs on the milkweed plants they find as they fly, recolonizing the southern United States before they die. Soon the first spring caterpillars hatch and metamorphose into adults. It is these newly emerged Monarchs, the offspring of the butterflies that made the fall journey, that recolonize their parents' original homes. Summer Monarchs live a much briefer life than the overwintering generation; their adult lifespan is only three to five weeks compared with eight or nine months for the overwintering adults. Over the summer there are three or four generations of Monarch butterflies, depending on the length of the growing season. Since each female lays hundreds of eggs, the total number of Monarch butterflies increases throughout the summer. Before the summer ends, there are once again millions of Monarchs all over the U.S. and southern Canada.

Near the end of the summer, the Monarchs visit the all too important milkweed plants to lay the eggs of the Monarchs that will migrate south and begin the process all over again.

What is the moral of this story?

Every species has a specialized habitat. Without it the species that depend on it struggle to exist. The presence of sufficient habitat, like Milkweed for Monarchs, is critical for thousands of species of birds, plants, animals and insects. CWH works everyday to ensure hundreds of plant and animal species adequate habitat on Maryland's Eastern Shore and throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. To learn how you can provide wildlife habitat on your property call us or visit www.cheswildlife.org .

Milkweed pod

Parts of this article were used with permission from MonarchWatch of the University of Kansas Entomology Program. For more information visit www.monarchwatch.org.

☐ *Yes! I would like to join with Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage to help build and preserve wildlife habitat.*

I am enclosing $ _____ as my tax deductible contribution.

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Please make your check payable to Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, or charge to:

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Signature _____ Amount $ _____ Expiration Date _____

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CWH is a private nonprofit organization designated 501(c)(3) by the IRS. A financial statement is available upon request.

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