

Bird Call

Pickering Creek Audubon Center
Volunteer e-news, November 2011 Edition



Volunteer Highlights

The Hoedown: The Sun was A-Shining to Welcome the Day—for Pickering Creek’s 20th (well, almost 20th) Hoedown! That song of old continues, “With a Heigh Ho, Come to the Fair” ... and many, many did. There were 322 paid cars, compared to 277 of the year before. Hayrides busily carried folks from the music, food, and activities near the Welcome Tent back to the boat ride, boatman’s shanty, and reptile room. Face painting, a scavenger hunt, and dancing to the music of Sunnyland Band, delighted the children. The day was glorious, thanks to the tremendous effort of a horde of volunteers, 62 in all, manning every post.



Bob and Marilyn Mason at boat ticket sales

The Chesapeake Bay Herb Society greeted guests and stamped the scavenger hunt tickets of children seeking a licorice-scented herb. Even the sundial was neatly displayed so children could tell the time of day by their shadows. And next year we can celebrate the 20th Hoedown again—having learned we were off by a year through extended research!



Kelsey Frey face painting a young Hoedown visitor

Volunteer Celebration: On a fall evening in mid-October, Pickering Creek hosted its annual thank-you gathering for volunteers. Amid conversation, hors d'oeuvres, and wine, Samantha expressed appreciation to all. In particular, she highlighted the efforts of Jo Story and Bill Reybold for Volunteer Leadership: for assuming major tasks, then leading by doing. Jo, for example, worked tirelessly on behalf of the Tour, Taste, and Toast event. Bill, most recently, created and installed new signposts along the trails; his accomplishments over the years at Pickering are found 'round every bend. Samantha also mentioned five others as Volunteers of Distinction (John Bayliss, Bill Barnes, Mary Ann Ray, Ron Webber, and Cemmy Peterson), as exemplars of the dedication of *all* of Pickering's volunteers who step in whenever something needs to be done, from power-spraying the Main Office to leading nature walks. Pickering Creek, Samantha points out, is dependent upon the willing spirit and hard work of its volunteers. The friendliness in the air at the evening's gathering attested to the pleasure that volunteers and staff find in their work together, and to their mutual dedication to the Center.



Jo Storey receiving a Volunteer Leadership Award

Boy Scout Volunteers: Thirty-one

Boy Scouts and adults from Troop 8 in Bethesda, Md. arrived at Pickering Creek on the morning of October 15th for an overnight stay. Greeted by Samantha, they grabbed shovels and learned to dig healthy holes for over 250 small plants, and headed to the meadow alongside Byron House. There they planted New York Iron Weed, New England Asters, Oxeye Sunflowers, Butterfly Milkweed, and Joe-Pye Weed, all of which will add to the vibrancy of the meadow next fall. The Scouts enjoyed paddling in the Creek and cooking over the campfire, before settling in their tents for the night and heading home in the morning.

Fresh Air Walks: An exciting addition to Pickering's programs, the Thursday Morning Fresh Air Walks (open to all at no cost, and a great time to introduce new friends to the Center) begin at the Welcome Center at 10:00am. Volunteer Naturalists Mary Ann Ray and Joe Jelich take weekly turns leading the walks along the trails. An article about the program in the *Star Democrat* has attracted hikers each week. We hope you will join them on any Thursday between now and mid-December, with the exception of Thanksgiving—and bring friends and neighbors!

Pickering Creek Profile: Erney Maher

Water and woods: Erney and Margaret Maher knew they wanted both when they searched for a new home 25 years ago. Catonsville, Maryland had been their residence, and Erney had a thriving pediatric practice in Baltimore. Thus, a daily trek to Baltimore became routine for Erney for more than a decade after he and Margaret found a place to their liking on Sportsman Road in Queenstown.

About five years after their move, they read a little newspaper article about canoe trips on Tuesday evenings at Pickering Creek. Erney recalls that a small group gathered—maybe six to eight people. Rick Leader was the Director of the Center at the time and, after canoeing on the Creek, they roasted marshmallows over the campfire. Pleasant outings, indeed!

Another newspaper article alerted the Mahers to a Pickering Creek Bird Walk with Les Roslund who was in charge of the Bluebird nesting program—“an extraordinary teacher,” comments Erney. Soon he and Margaret were actively involved, developing friendships with staff members and volunteers.

“Sometimes I find things to do, sometimes Mark finds things for me to do,” Ernie explains. Among those responsibilities, two stand out: taking charge of the Wood Duck nesting box program, and obtaining (until this year) vendors for Harvest Hoedown. The monitoring includes weekly tracking of the Wood Duck boxes, and keeping uninvited guests away (such as squirrels and starlings). It’s a task shared by five.



To find Hoedown vendors, Erney and Margaret visited outdoor markets and fairs. A few favorite recruits: a family who decorate gourds with varying designs, a young lady with a petting farm (rabbits, ponies, and goats), and yummy ice cream from Kilby’s dairy. Until two years ago, Erney served on Pickering Creek’s Board. And Margaret volunteers for individual assignments, helping at events and bringing homemade treats.

Woods and water: Erney and Margaret have loved them at their home on the Wye, along the trails at Pickering Creek, and they will find them, as well, along the Chester River at their new home on Heron Point. Will they continue to help out at Pickering Creek? Of course! “I am fascinated by the Farm to Bay Trail,” Ernie comments. “I like the peaceful environment. And most of all, the people—the friendships we’ve made over 15 years.” It is a friendship for which Pickering Creek is grateful.

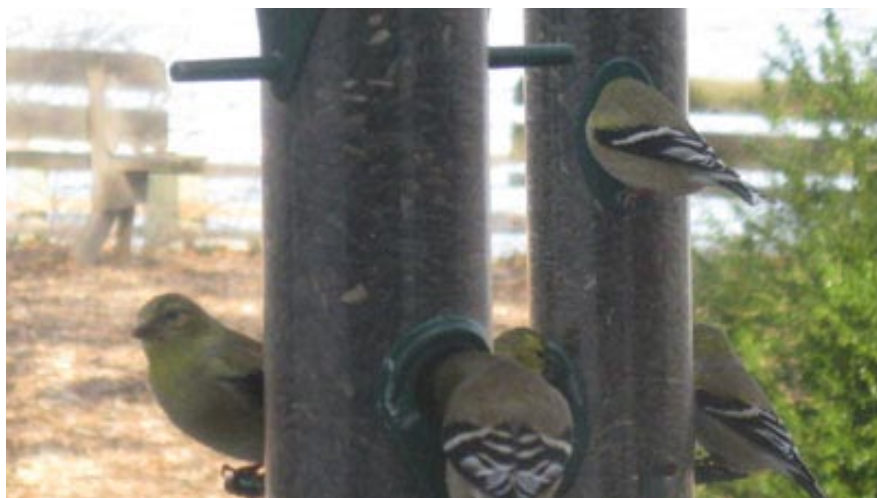
Coming Up in November

Wingwatchers Kickoff Celebration: Learn about Pickering Creek Wingwatchers and join the crew on November 6 from 3-5 pm at the Pickering Creek Office! Everyone involved with bird monitoring and citizen science activities is a Wingwatcher and, at the celebration, you will hear from experienced volunteers about ongoing and projected programs. These include Project FeederWatch (described below), Wood Duck and Bluebird nest-box monitoring, and a new bird trail monitoring project that starts in January. Enjoy a relaxed afternoon of treats and socializing and become part of the Wingwatcher volunteer team!

Come earlier in the afternoon, at 1:00, for the **Bird Walk n' Talk** program focusing on **feeder birds**. See below for a description of the program.

Waterfowl Festival: Volunteers are needed to meet and greet visitors at the display tables for Pickering Creek Audubon Center during the Waterfowl Festival, November 11-13. At each two-hour shift, starting at 10 am on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and continuing until 6 pm Friday and Saturday and 2pm on Sunday, a volunteer will work with a member of the Pickering staff. Please contact Samantha by Wednesday, November 9, to sign up. Festival information will be sent out with volunteer assignment confirmations.

Project Feeder watch, Wednesdays and Thursdays at Pickering Creek: Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology sponsors this nationwide project, described as " a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their reports to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broad-scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance."



Goldfinches busily eating at Pickering Creek 's Project FeederWatch station

Our observation days at Pickering Creek Audubon Center are on Wednesdays and Thursdays, beginning on November 16. Observations take place from a window in the Office, overlooking a feeder, and generally last about an hour per session. On the 16th, Samantha will meet first-time FeederWatch volunteers anytime from 10-11:30 or 3:30-5pm to introduce bird identification tips, as well as the process of recording the count. Contact Samantha to let her know the time you plan to come by.

November Public Programs

Bird Walk n' Talk Series ☐, **Session 2: Feeder Birds:** *Sunday, November 6, 1-3 pm.*

Location: Main Office. Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child. This series is designed to introduce birders of all ages to the birds found along the Delmarva Peninsula, exploring the habitats of different bird groups. Naturalists lead hikes, identify birds and their calls, and offer craft activities for adults and children.

Among the Ancients with Author Joan Maloof: ☐ *Wednesday, November 9, 5:30-7:00 pm.*

☐ Location: Main Office. ☐ Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child. ☐ In her new book, *Among the Ancients: Adventures in the Eastern Old-Growth Forests*, biologist and nature writer Joan Maloof takes readers on both a practical and lyrical journey to some of the oldest and least known forests in the land. On this journey, from giant hemlock groves in Pennsylvania to a lonely stand of pines in Wisconsin, readers will delight in the web of life as observed by a scientist with a poet's sensibility. Join her at Pickering Creek for a talk about her wonderful experiences around the writing of this exceptional guide.

Fall Foliage Hike and Crafts: ☐ *Friday, November 11, 2-4 pm.* ☐ Location: Welcome Center.

Cost: \$10/adult; \$5/child ☐ Breathe in the crisp, fresh air while exploring and learning about the colorful forests and fields of Pickering Creek. Be inspired by this beautiful season to make crafts from leaves, flowers and other natural things.

Note to readers: Look for the next issue of Bird Call in January 2012!

Contact Samantha Pitts, Volunteer Coordinator, to register for events or ask questions.

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