



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

AUGUST NEWSLETTER 2021



Upcoming Events (click on each for more details)

- **Living Local Educator Programs**
- **25th Anniversary Celebration**
- **Creature Feature - you have to peek!**
- **Ghost Pot Busters**

Director's Notes

A Note from the Director

I love a black gum.

Ask most folks what their favorite tree is, and I doubt that you'll find many who will offer up the black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) which is also called tupelo or sour gum. It's typically a bit scraggly, not very stately and grows at a snail's pace. Tree harvesters aren't so keen on black gum. The dense grain of the wood makes it difficult to harvest, but it makes for excellent tool handles.

But here's why I love it. It's my favorite harbinger of fall. Black gum is one of the first trees to turn color come fall. Sometimes as early as August. Particularly those that grow along a stream or shoreline. Turning a particularly brilliant scarlet or red with traces of yellow, green and purple. It's a truly magnificent autumnal sight.

Birds love black gum too. The 12-inch blue-black berries fall in the spring and are eaten by a variety of birds like thrushes and wild turkey. Black gum is also an excellent, but often overlooked, tree for pollinators. I know you've all heard of tupelo honey - which is generally considered the best tasting honey. Truth be told, I'm partial to black locust honey. But black gum is one of my favorite early autumn visuals. It signals those cooler days are ahead and that's always a good thing in my book.

Speaking of cooler days and autumn, you should also be on the lookout for the Coastal Bays Program's 25th Anniversary Celebration and Movie Night, Thursday, September 30th (Rain date October 7th) at the Windmill Creek Winery and Vineyard. I promise you it will be a fun evening with music, kid's activities, a great movie ("The Biggest Little Farm") and, of course, wine.

And, about fall, we'll also be releasing our Coastal Bays Report Card in October. This is where all the monitoring work performed by our partners and volunteers bears fruit. At this moment, folks at the University of Maryland are busy synthesizing the data collected over the last two years. It's a bit nerve-racking for us. We're anxious to know how the Coastal Bays are doing. We know you are too.

As August rolls out and the first signs of autumn gently appear, be sure to look out for the black gum. Paddle the upper portions of any of the Coastal Bay tributaries like Marshall Creek, Ayers Creek, Shingle Landing Prong or Bishopville Prong. Look for a bit of red peeking out of the green leaves. Black gums aren't showy like the maples. They can be a bit of a shy tree. But well worth the effort once you find one turning color.

We look forward to seeing you at our 25th Anniversary Celebration on September 30th. You can purchase tickets [here](#)

Kevin

Coastal Bays Heroes

This is the seventh in a series of articles celebrating our "Coastal Bay Heroes" – those who have contributed to the establishment and ongoing work of the Maryland Coastal Bays Program.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

This month we feature two of our longest running volunteers



John McFalls

After 35 years with IBM, John McFalls retired to the Ocean City area.

An avid fisherman, he was referred to the Maryland

Coastal Bays Program by a friend who noted his interest and concern for the ecosystem and local habitat.

Trained by Dr. Cathy Wazniak, John served as a volunteer, testing the local waters for over 25 years. He retired from his volunteer service with MCBP last year.

As a water tester, John conducted over 300 tests. He humbly admitted that his greatest accomplishment might have been “being consistent because nothing is more important than the quality of water here.”

John would initiate these tests in the same spot, within the same window of time, every month, 12 times a year. He stressed that minimizing the variables when doing the tests was key. While conducting these tests, he would oftentimes be approached by a curious (perhaps suspicious) neighbor and in typical John fashion, he used those engagements to educate and inform.

He summed up his volunteer experience with Maryland Coastal Bays Program by saying: “MCBP is good people, doing good work. I have great respect for what they do.” He emphatically added, “and I wouldn’t do anything that wasn’t worthwhile”.

(And then he started to talk about fishing. . . again.)



Alice Tweedy

Throughout her life, Alice has had a passion for the outdoors as an avid skier, hiker, and canoer. We are very fortunate that she sought us out twenty five years ago, and like John, volunteered as a

dedicated water tester to the end. We are very sad to learn of her passing earlier this year.

Alice was also a favorite triathlon volunteer as her quick wit and sense of humor kept the staff entertained.

Dedicated to the ideal of developing honesty, leadership, and courage in young women, she spent 51 years on the board of trustees of pioneering summer camp for girls, Camp Onaway, in Hebron, NH which she attended as a camper and counselor.

Receiving degrees from Western College for Women and University of Pennsylvania, she worked as a physical therapist with a professional focus on disadvantaged children.

Not only did Alice volunteer for MCBP, she fulfilled 30 years of service as a Hospice volunteer and demonstrated life-long dedication to her churches.

As our lead scientist Dr. Roman Jesien commented "What a great lady and a great inspiration." All of us at MCBP concur and will greatly miss our Alice.

River Otters



Our Coastal Bays houses many fascinating species, including the River Otter. We asked our intern Jayne Barkman to provide a little write up for this month's newsletter-

There are a total of 13 species of otters in the world. One of which, the North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) is a native species that can be found throughout Maryland's tidal areas.

River Otters have brown fur, webbed feet, long tails, 36 to 50 inches in length, and can weigh from 11 to 30 pounds. Webbed feet and long tails help River Otters propel themselves through the water effectively and make sharp turns. They have thick brown fur that protects them from cold waters. They live up to 8 to 9 years and begin breeding at 2 years old.

River Otters are not violent unless it is the breeding season. They usually travel by themselves or in small social groups. The diet of River Otters are mostly carnivorous, consisting of crustaceans, fish, aquatic vegetation, amphibians and small mammals. They don't have many predators due to their awareness, but if preyed upon, it would be larger mammals such as bobcats or alligators.

Maryland's waterways are a perfect habitat for River Otters. They thrive in lakes, streams and rivers that neighbor wooded areas and rocky banks. They build their dens near waterways in order to have easy access to a food source and water.

In the past they were hunted for their pelt in the 19th and 20th century, which led to population decline. Today, they are still hunted in some areas and their range has decreased significantly. Water pollution,

habitat destruction, and diseases are also causing stress on River Otter populations. There are projects in the works that are aimed to help North American River Otters to return to several parts of the U.S. For more information [Click here](#)

Trail to Restore the Shore

Stayed tuned for the official launch of this new and exciting opportunity to learn about our restoration sites.

Thanks to the Enterprise Holdings Foundation for donating \$2,500 and donations from Burly Oak Brewery and de Lazy Lizard we will have a fun new way for you to explore and learn more about Coastal Bays restoration projects!

Maryland Coastal Bays Program | www.mdcoastalbays.org

