



# HEMLOCK HAPPENINGS

**Deep Creek Lake State Park Master Naturalist**

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 SPRING/SUMMER 2024

## Welcome to Hemlock Happenings

**By Ranger Cricket Smith**

Welcome to Issue 2 of Hemlock Happenings! As park operations and visitation increase for the upcoming season, so do the volunteer opportunities! While the park may be buzzing with seasonal and classified staff, we need lots of volunteer coverage to help us provide the best experience possible for our park visitors. Field trips and summer programming are underway here at the Discovery Center and we'd love to have your help!

In this issue you will find information on our new volunteer sign up page, recent events that have been held in the park, info on our local Black Bears and how you can protect them and more. Enjoy this amazing publication!

## Use New Online Tool to Sign Up for Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Deep Creek Master Naturalists can now use a new app called SignUp (an online signup and reminder tool) to sign up for upcoming volunteer opportunities. The platform is easy to use and user friendly.

Individuals can scan the QR code with your smartphone camera and be able to sign up for Master Naturalist volunteer coverage right on-the-spot.

Please sign up as there are lots of volunteer opportunities coming up this summer and early fall. Please reach out to Ranger Cricket if you have questions.



<https://signup.com/go/NiveVCh>

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# Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

## June

June 3

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**Garden Installation** 9:00AM- 1:00PM  
**Sang Run State Park**

**4 - 6, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday**

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**Front Desk Coverage** 10:00am - 5:00pm  
**Discovery Center, Deep Creek Lake State Park**

**4 - 6, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday**

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**Front Desk Coverage** 10:00am - 3:00pm  
**Sang Run State Park**

**June 17 - September 1 Thursdays**

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**Front Desk Coverage or** 12:00pm - 4:00pm  
**Lead Craft Activity or Program**  
**Discovery Center, Deep Creek Lake State Park**

## July

**13-14 Saturday & Sunday**

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**Art in the Park** Sat. 10:00am - 5:00pm  
**Deep Creek Lake State Park** Sun. 10:00am - 4:00pm  
**Sat/Sun is in volunteer tent**

## August

**10th, Saturday**

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**Dog Days of Summer** 11:00am - 2:00pm  
**Sang Run State Park**

**31st, Saturday**

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**Corn Roast and Native** 11:00am - 2:00pm  
**Plant Sale**  
**Sang Run State Park**

## September

**28th, Saturday**

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**Fall Fest** 11:00am - 3:00pm  
**Sang Run State Park**



# AARON MILLS

## PARK ASSISTANT MANAGER

### PROFILE

Aaron Mills' favorite part of job in the busy season is watching the visitors have fun in the park and enjoying the gem that is Deep Creek Lake. "I love being able to answer their questions or give them that little tidbit of information that makes their day. No two conversations are the same," said Aaron Mills, assistant park manager at Deep Creek Lake State Park.

Mills said the park rangers put a special emphasis on engaging visitors, more so than with other parks. "We add new programs every year for our visitors to experience and we encourage staff to engage with the visitors and try as much as possible to give people one on one interaction both here at Deep Creek and at Sang Run."

More than a half million people visit the park each year and 75 percent come between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekend. On a busy day in the summer, five to six hundred people visit the Discovery Center. "A big part of the job is helping keep people safe who are visiting the park and providing them with new experiences."

Mills started with the Maryland Park Service at the Fort Frederick State Park in 2008 in Big Pool, MD. Then in the Spring of 2015 he came to Deep Creek as a ranger, working the trails and running the camper contact station. Three years later, Mills was promoted to assistant park manager.

A native of Clear Spring, MD, Mills had a keen interest in the outdoors. In his sophomore year of high school he attended Camp Hickory Environmental Educational Center careers camp and that sealed his future career. "We had a

careers day, and I made a poster that I was either going to be a game warden, a park ranger, or a wildlife biologist."

"The work changes for Mills as the seasons change. "In the summer, we triple the number of staff, and much of my job is engaging with the park staff, getting the newer staff comfortable with their jobs, and touching base with all the duty rangers and the Discovery Center staff." Mills is also responsible for creating the operational ranger schedules as well as managing the park budget.

In the off season of October to early May, Mills' job entails more natural resource management, and is more hands on, getting rid of invasives, hiking the trails, and cutting the trees.

"September is a particularly busy month with lots of special events given the early Fall coverage. We have Fall Fest at Sang Rung, lots of weddings, and then the NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) bike race."

Mills lives at Sang Run with his wife Emily, and dog and cat. In his spare time, he loves to be outdoors. He particularly enjoys deer hunting in the Fall. He also enjoys camping and hiking with his wife Emily.

Mills encourages master naturalists to get out and use the skills they've learned in the program. "Do whatever you want to do but keep learning. Go with your interests and enjoy the skills and knowledge you acquired in taking the class. We have lots of programs—a little bit of everything. The parks have so much to offer, and we are always looking for volunteers."

# News You Can Use

## Next Deep Creek Master Naturalist Program Slated for Sept 11 – Nov 13th

Know someone interested in becoming a master naturalist? The next program for Master Naturalists at Deep Creek Lake State Park is slated for September 11 – November 13th. Classes are held on Wednesdays, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm. Cost is \$250. Once accepted into the Master Naturalist volunteer training program, you will receive 52 hours of classroom instruction and 8 hours of hands-on experience outdoors (60 hours total training).

### Want an Easy Way to Earn Hours?

Help promote upcoming Deep Creek programs by distributing flyers at local businesses and bulletin boards. Contact Ranger Cricket for details.

## Call for Submissions, Story Ideas for Next Issue of Hemlock Happenings

We would love your ideas for the next issue of Hemlock Happenings. Like to write? Please jump in and share your article with our community. Photography your hobby? Show us your stuff!

Thanks to the following individuals who have helped make this issue possible. Deb Carey, Carter Conoway, Linda Harris, Chris Hull, Aaron Mills, Eric Null, Nick Smith, Reese Tacka and most of all—Ranger Cricket Smith.

We are already at work on the next issue of Hemlock Happenings and planning on a September publication date. Please send your input to us by August 1. Send an email to [jeanniecampbell1136@gmail.com](mailto:jeanniecampbell1136@gmail.com) and please copy Ranger Cricket Smith at [ChristineN.Smith@maryland.gov](mailto:ChristineN.Smith@maryland.gov) to share your thoughts and feedback for future issues of the newsletter.

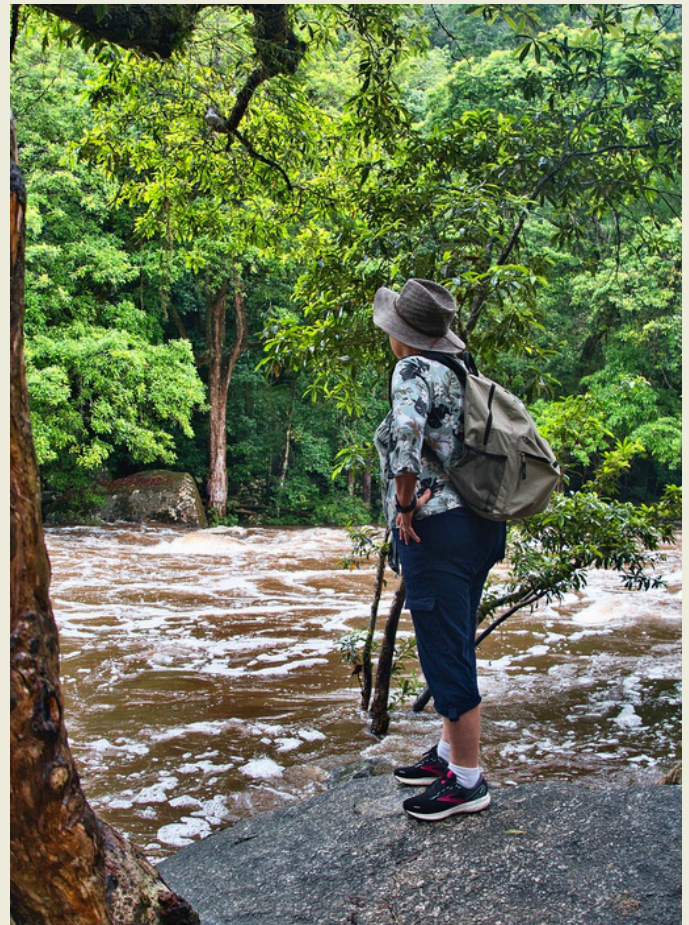
## Amphibian Week Resources

Did you know that May 5 – 11, 2024 is Amphibian Week? This year's theme will be Extreme Athletes: Amphibian Edition. As a global initiative, Amphibian Week promotes the sharing of experiences and insights about amphibians and to celebrate all things amphibian.

Amphibian Week was started in 2020 by the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) is celebrated annually the first full week of May. <https://parcplace.org/education/amphibianweek2024/>

PARC has a [social media toolkit](#) with ideas including sample posts you can copy and paste, photo sources, and more.

There is also Herp-y education ideas, including a new amphibian and reptile coloring book by the Department of Defense and a new amphibian scavenger hunt that you can download and print at home. These resources and others materials can be found here: <https://parcplace.org/education/herpeducation/>



## Don't Forget to Track Your Volunteer Hours

Each Master Naturalist is required to obtain 40 volunteer hours each calendar year. Activities must be approved in advance by the program facilitator.

Master Naturalists can either use the excel spreadsheet or the MS Word tracking sheet. <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/master-naturalist-program/resources/>



# Master Naturalist Spotlight:

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## Deb Carey

From Left: Deb Carey, Olivia Hager, and Peggy Chappel. Back row: Ranger Cricket Smith, Ranger Kati Barger, Rusty O'Neal, and Beau Hartman joined together to support last year's busy Art in the Park.

Deb Carey said that at this point in her life she is thrilled to be immersing herself in nature. "When my kids were small, I really encouraged them to be in nature even though we were living in New York City. Now that I am older and I have the time, I am thrilled to learn for myself."

Deb said she found her master naturalist classmates to be incredibly welcoming and willing to share their knowledge. "The thing that surprised me the most was that there was such a treasure trove of resources in the rangers, the presenters, and my fellow classmates. I have been able to work with many of them and have learned a lot from them."

She encourages other master naturalists to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible and to take the time to get to know other master naturalists. "I have been so amazed at the depth of experience each master naturalist brings to the program. Each person brings something a little different."

Last year Deb volunteered at Creek Crafts at the Discovery Center at Deep Creek as well at the Art in the Park Festival and the Sang Run Fall Festival.

Each opportunity is a new adventure, and sometimes volunteering brings with it laughter and funny memories that last well after the event. Most recently, she has been volunteering at New Germany State Park. This past February she helped with a suet bird feeder activity with Ranger Noah. She thought it was an activity using Crisco, pinecones, and seeds to make little feeders.

Turns out they did make bird feeders, but not the way she had expected. "I go in there and Ranger Noah has a crockpot going that smelled so good. I asked him if we were having lunch? There was a beaver skull, a racoon skull and a deer skull sitting in front of the crockpot. Ranger Noah explained that we were making suet feeds from the animal fat!

Shortly after that experience a memory video showed up on my iPhone called 'cooking through the years,' and it has my Thanksgiving turkey and all these meals I have made for my family and the very last photo is Noah's crockpot with skulls in front of it. Here is my famous stew..." Her family is very impressed with her newly found "cooking" skill!

Deb has taken advantage of many opportunities to volunteer as a master naturalist, and not all those opportunities come from the rangers. "I really like to be intentional in what I do, and I have created simple nature crafts and lesson plans to make these activities easier for the next volunteer to replicate."

Deb said the Project WET program was a good example for her to follow when developing lesson plans. "You want someone who is coming in behind you to be able to lead the activity, know what supplies are needed and the age group the project is appropriate for."

She also looks for opportunities to make the activities purposeful and has made laminated fun facts about owls and eastern box turtles. "That way a parent can read the fact sheet and engage in the activity with their child." The highlight in volunteering for her is to see families, grandparents, cousins, and friends engaging in activities together.

When not volunteering as a master naturalist, Deb works to help strengthen communities through education. In 2015, Deb started a non-profit educational program in the rural mountains of Guatemala called Run:Hope. The program is focused on strengthening teachers, students, and local communities and provides scholarships for mostly indigenous people of Guatemala, where children often only go to elementary school. "We help kids continue on in their education to middle school and high school and also provide scholarships for the teachers to continue their training."

Interacting with nature is a passion that brings her great opportunities for learning and teaching whether volunteering in Maryland or Guatemala.

# Volunteers in Action



Master Naturalists attended the Power of Native Plants Symposium held at Garrett College last month. Left to right: Jeannie Campbell, Laura Kessler, Deb Carey, Shanna Sincell, Pam South, Linda Harris, Deb Shumaker, Jenny Neville, Rusty O'Neal, John Wack, and Ranger Cricket Smith.



Several Master Naturalists and volunteers helped harvest and clean ramps a few days before the Ramp Cook Off in late April.



Volunteers for the Easter Egg Dyeing program were from left: Liz Smith, Shanna Sincell and Jay Condon. Back row: Nancy Bensley, Deb Carey, and Nick Smith. More than 360 people attended the popular event.



# Saving Western Maryland's Hemlocks and Their Habitat One Tree at a Time

This month (May), members of the Maryland Conservation Corps will spend a week at Swallow Falls State Park, treating the 37 acres of Eastern hemlocks against the woolly adelgid. Using GPS and a detailed grid mapping system, the 50-person crew will treat almost 3,000 hemlocks this Spring, camping out in the woods and ferrying supplies and insecticides to hemlock groves with trees that have stood more than 360 years.

The tiny insect is closely related to the aphid and with its piercing-sucking mouth feeds on the sap of the Eastern hemlock. Heavy infestations of woolly adelgid affect the health of the Eastern hemlock and eventually, kill the tree.

To help stop the spread of adelgid populations, the Maryland Conservation Corps inoculates the hemlocks in Garrett County. Crew members treat the trees for a week in the Spring, and then different trees in the Fall. Once treated, the hemlocks recover and produce new growth.

Reese Tacka and Carter Conaway are both members of the Maryland Conservation Corps and look forward to the impact they can make in treating more than 500 hemlocks a day. "You can make a difference in the environment that will last," Tacka said. Both enjoy being in the woods, saving parts of the park system that people may never see.

"The woolly adelgids only attack Eastern hemlocks and no other trees," said Conaway. "They burrow into the wood and suck nutrients out of the tree, preventing the tree from growing and dying from within."

Conaway said the hemlocks are a wonderful wildlife habitat for many species and produce a unique ecosystem not found anywhere else in the world. "The hemlocks provide dense

foliage and moist ground where hundreds of different species rely on the hemlock trees, so protecting the hemlocks is more than saving the trees, but the entire ecosystem."

Conaway is in his first year with the Conservation Corps which engages young adults, 17-25 years old, in extensive natural resource and park conservation projects. During the 11-month program, individuals support the community and the environment by preserving, protecting, enhancing, and restoring Maryland's natural resources.

Tacka, who is in her second year with the Conservation Corps, explained that there are three crews tasked with treating the hemlocks. "The mixing crew prepares the insecticide and gets it out to the soil crew which hikes into the tree stand and pumps the pesticides into the soil around the tree. The third crew, called the stem crew, treats the trees that stand close to the water, inoculating the tree roots to avoid getting the pesticide into the water." Once initially treated, the trees are then treated every 4-6 years.

While master naturalists are not able to volunteer for certain aspects of the treatment program, including mixing chemicals and the actual application to the hemlocks, there are opportunities to assist the crews, potentially running supplies to the teams from the command center, assisting with meal prep and clean-up and other support roles. Master naturalists interested in learning more should contact Ranger Cricket.

In 2023, the Conservation Corps treated almost 6,500 trees. The number of trees treated is controlled by several factors including crew experience, hemlock population density, weather, terrain, and access to treatment areas.

# Protecting the Pristine Waters of Deep Creek Lake and Its Ecosystem

Deep Creek Lake is unlike any other lake in Maryland and the job of the Lake Management Office is to help keep it that way. Protecting the recreational and environmental quality of the lake and its ecosystem is something Eric Null, manager of the lake management office takes very seriously.

“No other reservoir or river in Maryland has the water quality of Deep Creek. The ecosystem here is pretty balanced and we don’t have the issues of some of our neighboring lakes where we have massive amounts of agricultural land draining into the lake.” Eric Null said.

The man-made reservoir is unique in many ways according to Null. “Deep Creek Lake has an extremely slow cycling time -- meaning when a drop of water comes into this lake it spends a long time in the lake before it goes out the dam.

“The cycle time is over a year. Typically, when you look at slow cycling lakes like Deep Creek you introduce a lot of nutrients and pollution and that pollution can spread and magnify because there is nothing flushing it out of the lake, so you get the full brunt of that pollution.”

Null said despite the slow cycling time of Deep Creek Lake, this is probably the cleanest water in the state of Maryland that’s available for recreation.

“For all the development that has gone on in Deep Creek Lake, it is as perfectly balanced ecologically as you can get. By location and by ecology, meaning submerged aquatic vegetation and fish communities as well as by its chemistry,” Null continued.

One of the most important factors contributing to the pristine nature of Deep Creek Lake is the lack of industry. “We aren’t surrounded by industry.



“Fortunately for Deep Creek, where it lies geologically on the Continental Divide on the riff, the entire southern end of the lake doesn’t have coal, so it was never mined,” Null said. On the northern end of the lake, Cherry Creek Cove has mine drainage that is being treated effectively, and while Red Run lies in similar geology, there has been no mining in that watershed.

“Deep Creek is one of the cleanest bodies of water in Maryland, basically because it can’t be exposed to the pollutants that other bodies of water can,” Null said. For example, Cheat Lake has the city of Morgantown as well as the Cheat River running into it which is picking up nutrients that end up in the lake.

“I don’t know of another lake in the East that was built in a more perfect setting to preserve water quality than Deep Creek Lake,” Null said. The location of where Deep Creek Lake was built did not expose it to massive coal mining and the lake was not exposed to gas drilling because there is not a lot of natural gas where it is easy to get to in Western Maryland.

Several other factors help protect the lake Null said. “We don’t have any big navigable rivers around the lake. We only have one big highway – Interstate 68. We don’t have a big airport, so naturally, in Garrett County, there is a deterrent to big industry like power plants and steel mills, or other things that we equate to a lot of water pollution.”

“For someone who has worked in the Ohio watershed for most of my life, Deep Creek is the only place I can be proactive vs reactive. In the Ohio watershed it is very rare to be proactive because the Ohio watershed has been hammered by industry, power plants, mining, and extreme urban development so in the last 30 years we find ourselves reclaiming all that we damaged. Meanwhile, here at Deep Creek Lake, we have a pristine body of water that just needs protecting.”

**Continued Page 9  
Pristine Lake**





**Photo of Ranger Andy Ogle (left) and Seasonal Ranger Reillee Beeman putting the beach lines in the water for the season last Spring. Photo by Ranger Katie Mitchell.**

# Pristine Lake

(Continued from Page 8)

Null said the lake is distinctive in terms of the amount of shoreline it has for as narrow of a lake as it is. It has 67 miles of shoreline and is 3,900 acres. Its average depth is 22 feet. By comparison, Jennings Randolph Lake, also in Garrett County and owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers, is 900 acres but holds more water volume than Deep Creek Lake because it's so deep.

The man-made lake got its start in 1925 and in 2001, Maryland purchased the lake from the Pennsylvania Electric Company for \$20 million.

"We are fortunate to be sitting in Garrett County where most of the land is open space—state and county land — a lot of this land is preserved as open space, so we don't have to deal with the urbanization or massive industrial development that other places have to deal with," Null said.

Spring is a busy time of the year for Null and his team. Null said erosion and storm water control are the immediate threats to the water quality of the lake and the lake management office works proactively to prevent pollution before it happens.

In the winter, most homeowners around the lake are not here, and when they return this Spring, there are often damaged trees, storm water concerns and dock issues that need to be addressed. And, said Null, property owners have had the winter to plan how to improve their property. All these matters will more than likely require the lake management office to consult with the homeowner and the subsequent issuing of the appropriate permit.

Null and his crew are focused on the buffer strip — the land between the property and the water that is owned by the state of Maryland that serves to protect the ecosystem of the lake. In some areas around the lake, the buffer strip can be anywhere from 200 yards wide to only a couple feet wide feet, where on other property the buffer strip is only a couple feet wide.

These buffer strips were established to keep a "buffer" between the waters of the lake and development. It's not a one size fits all. Pennsylvania Electric in the '20s tried to get as much buffer strip as possible for the landowner which means a varying buffer strip around the lake."

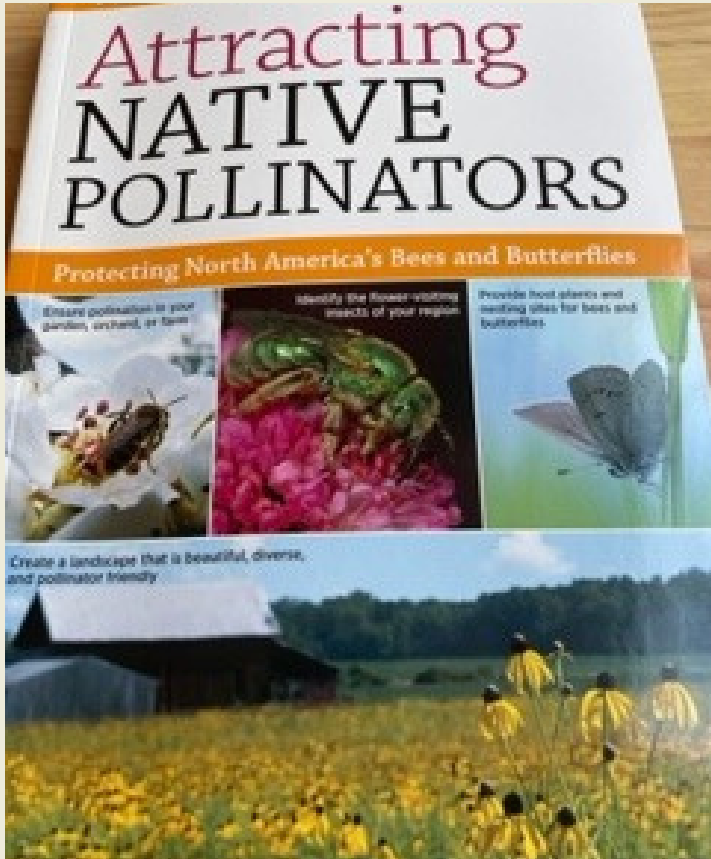
These buffer strips are heavily regulated, and homeowners are required to have approved permits to make any changes. This includes changes with a dock, constructing a firepit, taking down trees or putting in a garden or other property improvements such as installing lighting or electrical fixtures, and constructing stairs

Null became the Deep Creek Lake manager in 2013 and manages a crew of two permanent employees and 3 to 4 seasonal employees each year. "We work hand in hand with some great stakeholders, partnering with the property owner's association, the Deep Creek Watershed Foundation, and the Chamber of Commerce to get the message out about what homeowners need to do to protect the lake."

Null, in partnership with the Deep Creek Watershed Foundation and the University of Maryland Extension, produced a video to educate homeowners on shoreline erosion control strategies and best management practices for the buffer strip. The video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjRni71LoM4&t=1622su>.

# Best Books

Reflects the latest understanding about creating and managing pollinator habitat.



**“Native plants are four times more likely than nonnative plants to attract native bees.”**

*Attracting Native Pollinators – Protecting North America’s Bees and Butterflies* is a wonderful book that provides detailed garden plans and techniques showing how to create flowering habitat to attract a variety of pollinators, provide pollinators with nesting sites and help to expand the pollinator population.

This comprehensive guide is divided into four detailed sections including: pollinators and pollination, taking action, bees of North America and creating a pollinator-friendly landscape. It explains the value of pollinators and includes informative chapters on the natural history and habit needs of bees and butterflies.

*Attracting Native Pollinators* is a comprehensive guidebook for gardeners, small farmers, orchardists, beekeepers, naturalists, environmentalists, and public land managers on how to protect and encourage the activity of the native pollinators of North America.

Written by staff of the Xerces Society, an international nonprofit organization that is leading the way in pollinator conservation, this book presents a thorough overview of the problem along with positive solutions for how to provide bountiful harvests on farms and gardens, maintain healthy plant communities in wildlands, provide food for wildlife, and beautify the landscape with flowers.

Readers will also find useful instructions for creating nesting structures, educational activities for involving children, and an extensive list of resources.

*Attracting Native Pollinators* is an essential reference book and action guide for anyone who is involved in growing food or is concerned about the future of our food supply.

**Hemlock Happenings** is the newsletter for the Deep Creek Lake State Park Master Naturalists and is edited by Jeannie Campbell, Master Naturalist, class of 2023.

# Hull Shares His Knowledge of Mushrooms, Love of Foraging in Western Maryland

According to the National Institutes of Health, mushrooms have been consumed since earliest history—the ancient Greeks believed that mushrooms provided strength for warriors in battle, and the Romans perceived them as the “Food of the Gods.” For centuries, the Chinese culture has treasured mushrooms as a health food, an “elixir of life.”

Today, mushrooms are popular foods, low in calories, rich in protein, high in fiber, low in carbohydrates, fat, and sodium and are cholesterol-free.

And there are many more health qualities of mushrooms. Mushrooms are one of the richest sources of antibiotics.

Chris Hull has explored the wonder of mushrooms for more than nine years. He calls himself an “amateur” mycologist, but with his seemingly boundless knowledge and passion to educate others about mushrooms, it’s hard to picture him as anything less than an expert.

“For me, in the beginning it was all about walking through the forest and finding mushrooms I could eat.” He has discovered more than 80 different edible and medicinal mushrooms while foraging in Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Hull’s day job as a Natural Resources Technician with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service is a perfect complement to his love of nature and of course, mushrooms. As a natural resource technician, he often works managing wildlife habitat, conducting wildlife research projects, and engaging in public relations with hunters. This time of year, Hull is also caring for black bear sows and their cubs in the dens, making sure the sows and cubs are healthy.

Hull cautioned that it’s great to get outside and look for mushrooms and take pictures, but you really need the knowledge of how to accurately identify them to know which ones are safe to eat. “Never forage and consume mushrooms on your own without having the knowledge to identify a mushroom one hundred percent.”

He suggests beginners join a club. “The West Virginia Mushroom Club, the DC Mushroom Club (The Mycological Association of Washington, DC), and Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club are very active. These clubs can help you identify mushrooms. Many mushrooms look alike, and some are perfectly fine, others can really cause a very serious health problem and even death.”

A good starting place for someone interested in learning more, is to grow your own mushrooms. Hull encourages individuals to begin with a grow kit. “Oysters, shitake, and lion’s mane are easy to grow. They need moisture, a growing substrate, and a little bit of love.”



“Something like Field and Forests Products ([www.fieldforest.net](http://www.fieldforest.net)) or North Spore ([www.northspore.com](http://www.northspore.com)) are excellent sources for everything you need to get started.

Hull said he has gotten several different types of growth kits and had success. “You can buy spawn plugs and drill holes in logs and plug them. You can use sawdust or get liquid cultures.” Spawn is any material that has been inoculated with mycelium, the vegetative growth of a fungus. Mycelium eventually produces mushrooms under the right conditions.

One way to start growing mushrooms is to take the mycelium from oyster mushrooms, roll it up in wet cardboard, put in an open Ziploc bag and leave in a dark place for a couple of weeks. “The mycelium just overtake that piece of cardboard,” Hull said. “You can then use a clothes basket or a five-gallon bucket with some holes cut in it, and fill them with wet straw, sawdust, or wood chips. You’ll need to inoculate your straw, sawdust, or wood chips with cardboard spawn of course.” Hull said you can grow oyster mushrooms in less than a month.

Hull enjoys sharing his knowledge with others and in addition to presenting to the Master Naturalists, Hull has worked with the Master Gardeners. He has also taught continuing education classes at Garrett College and provided training to the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops offered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Hull will be working with All Earth Eco Tours in Friendsville, MD throughout this year guiding plant and mushroom hikes.

# Hungry Black Bear Encounters a Sign that Spring is Here

Living in Western Maryland often means sharing space with the 2,000 or so black bears that are thriving in Alleghany and Garrett County. Master Naturalist Nick Smith recently had an up-close encounter with a bear in his bee apiary. “We woke and found the bear had gone down the row of hives and had licked every single frame of honey from one of the hives. I called DNR to report it and found out that that same bear had hit another hive a couple of miles away and DNR also said that the bear would be back since it got a good meal.”

The next day, DNR let Smith borrow an electric fence and helped him set it up. “That night we had a camp out party with Liz (also a master naturalist) and Liz’s mom. At about 12:30am we saw the bear. “I don’t think I will ever forget running after a bear in the middle of the night with a flashlight.”

Local rangers, DNR personnel, and master naturalists all work to keep bears safe when they tread too close to humans here in Garrett County. One great resource that helps people co-exist with bears is [BearWise](#). BearWise shares ways to prevent conflicts, provides resources to resolve problems, useful checklists and encourages community initiatives to keep bears wild.

After months of not eating or drinking, bears are hungry and in search of easy food. Black bears rely on their powerful sense of smell to locate food and are attracted to anything that resembles the scent of food, like birdseed, chicken feed, dog food and trash.

Bears are intelligent, curious, and opportunistic feeders, which mean they will eat whatever is accessible. Largely vegetarian, common foods include berries, cherries, other fruits, acorns, beechnuts, hickory nuts, insects, roots, grasses, reptiles, amphibians, and carrion. Acorns remain the single most important natural food for bears.

Trash and bird feeders are the most common attractants responsible for luring bears to human dwellings. Pet food, charcoal grills, fruit trees and gardens may also attract bears. Once a bear finds food around your home it will likely return.

Black bears are the smallest North American bears, ranging from 5-6 feet long from muzzle to tail. A black bear’s tail is short- averaging 3-5 inches in length. Males and females are generally similar in appearance, but males often are a little larger. In general, sows (females) weigh from 110-250 pounds while boars (males) can weigh from 150 to 450 pounds.



Black bears were driven to near-extinction during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries in Maryland. They landed on the state’s endangered species list in 1972. Just over a decade later – in 1985 – they were removed from that list. By then, black bears had reestablished themselves in the western mountains, a testament to their own resilience as well as to improving habitat conditions and human tolerance. Ever since, DNR has managed the black bear population to grow at a healthy, sustainable rate.

# BearWise Program Helps People Coexist with Black Bears

## BearWise Offers Advice on Keeping Bears off Your Property

- Reduce garbage odors. Rinse food cans and wrappers before disposal.
- Compost vegetable scraps properly away from house.
- Keep meat scraps in the freezer until garbage pickup day.
- Wash garbage cans regularly and use lime to cut odors.
- Keep garbage cans in a bear-proof container or in an enclosed building until trash pickup.
- Remove bird feeders in the spring. If you persist in feeding during summer, remove seed, suet and hummingbird feeders at night.
- Keep pet food inside.
- Keep barbecue grills and picnic tables clean.
- Use an energized fence to keep bears out of beehives, sweet corn, fruit trees and berry patches. (An energized fence is powered by a low-impedance, high-voltage energizer that provides a short-duration, high-energy impulse.)
- Barking dogs, bright lights and noisemakers will sometimes discourage bears from coming into an area.



Rangers Katy Barger, foreground, and Cricket Smith were part of the team who helped relocate a black bear sow and four male cubs who had taken up residence in a McHenry, MD business.

## Black Bears Rarely Become Aggressive

Black bears rarely become aggressive when encountered. However, it's best to avoid bear encounters, and to know what to do if an encounter happens

"Know what to do when you see a bear. NEVER run from a bear. Don't approach a bear – just quietly move away and leave the area. However, if a black bear does approach you, make yourself look big, make loud noises, clap your hands, and continue to back away."

Jaime Sajecki, Black Bear Project Leader  
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

For more resources go to [BearWise](#)



# Plans Underway to Build Rain Garden Near Tamarack Shelter

**By Linda Harris**

My favorite thing to do is designing a new ecological garden - or one that serves a specific purpose - like a rain garden. Katy Barger, the Director of the Discovery Center, asked me to do just that on the hillside next to the Tamarack Shelter down near the boat launch. We looked at the area together and she shared her vision and what the problem was - whenever it rained, all the runoff from the parking lots and road above ran down the hillside for days after. It has created a ditch on its way to the lake. She asked for a rain garden, and it all made sense - place some native grasses and sedges to help hold the hillside and filter the runoff. Added benefit, deer do not eat grasses and sedges!

Being right next to the shelter, the area is seen by many using this most popular picnic spot and it could be a showcase and educational opportunity for how rain gardens work and the ecological purpose they serve. We will be defining the stream the runoff has already made with gravel to direct the flow under the walkway bridge and on to the

lake. The grasses and sedges will be placed in the area along this stream to control the overflow and stabilize the hill. It will also beautify this area that is currently just field grass and a few invasive plants.

Grasses and sedges offer lots of ecological value throughout all four seasons and plenty of beauty too. The “bloom” with its resulting seed heads provide food for birds in summer, fall and winter. While the plants will deal with the runoff they will also be drought tolerant for the summer season when the intense sun will take over. These plants provide for pollinators also and lots of ornamental foliage with striking fall colors and then winter cover for birds and small mammals. Sounds like a win for everyone!

We plan to add interpretive signage about rain gardens at the bottom of the area near the shelter walkway. We will be working on this project in early June and I will be sure to let everyone know what help we will need and when - it will be a fun and educational project and I hope you will want to participate.