



Fair Hill Nature & Environmental Center

# habitats

November 1990

Fair Hill Environmental Foundation, Inc.

Volume 1 Number 2

## Students prowl for knowledge *First graders are animals*

Bainbridge Elementary's first graders were the first student visitors to the Nature Center on September 5th. The day's program was *How the Wild Things Grow*, a study about animals' basic needs.

The first graders were excited to be outside, and were ready for a walk in the forest. Each child was given a badge with a picture of an animal and told that they should pretend to be that animal.

They discussed the animals' need for food, water, air and shel-



*Excited and weary first graders return from the forest with teacher/naturalist, Janet Hokuf.*

ter. Then the children went out on the trails to find these essen-

tials for their assigned animal.

They took turns carrying a shopping bag which was used to collect samples of berries, bark or leaves and pictures of the animals they found.

Some of them saw birds, deer, squirrels, rabbits, frogs, toads, turtles, snakes and salamanders. But the neighbor's dog, Dram, who accompanied us on most of our walks was the most popular attraction, especially whenever he found a mouse or a turtle for the children.

## Leaves, leaf litter and liverworts

Forestry was the topic for fifth graders. A remarkably detailed curriculum has been designed for the study of trees, and the ecosystems in evergreen and deciduous forests, and meadows.

The internal and external physical characteristics of trees were discussed as well as the importance of trees to animals, other plants, people, soil, and their effects on weather.

The students compared the soil profile of a deciduous forest to the soil beneath a grove of evergreens.

ADNR forester lent us his tools for measuring trees.

see Forest, page 2

## Chesnet/S.O.S *Young scientists evaluate Cecil County's waterways*

The seventh grade science students from Cecil County's middle schools visited the Nature Center in October. They are participating in a program designed to test the health of nine waterways which flow through the county to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesnet (Chesapeake Environmental Science Network) water quality test kits contain everything needed to test for fourteen ions. The Chesapeake Bay Trust provided funding for the monitoring kits. The students gathered on the Center's new porch to learn

see Chesnet, page 2

# Solarium dedication ceremony General membership meeting

September 16, 1990

Ralph Young, President, called the general membership meeting to order at 2:10 on the back lawn of the Nature Center.

Linda Bystrak introduced the new teacher/naturalists, Holly Hannum, Janet Hokuf and Julie Klapproth. She said that Bainbridge Elementary School was the first school to visit the Center for classes, beginning September 5th. The Chesapeake Bay Trust gave another grant of \$982 for fourth grades' scientific equipment.

We still need taxidermy specimens for the third grade.

Most of the Foundation's money is in a money market account with a current balance of \$15,292.58.

The total memberships as of September 16, 1990 was 150: 114 families and 36 individuals.

Linda Kleiner, chairperson for Special Events, thanked her committee for providing refreshments for this meeting.

All of our committees still need volunteers, especially to help with trails and special events.

Betty Salmon-Wilk nominated Julie Klapproth to replace the chairperson of the Teaching Aids and Trails Committee. She has been to every trail work day and teaches on our trails daily. The nomination was accepted, and Julie is our now new chairperson.

The next general meeting was scheduled for December 9th. Ralph requested a motion to adjourn the meeting, which ended at 2:30 p.m.

Reid Cameron introduced the

guests of honor, Mr. & Mrs. Dale Nowland. He thanked the Nowlands for their generous contribution of the porch, which was named the Dale Nowland Solar-

ium. He also gave them a framed photograph of the porch, and showed a plaque listing the names of those who donated materials and labor for its construction.

## Chesnet

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how to test water samples from the Big Elk Creek and from waterways near their schools. They performed tests required by Chesnet to look for signs of ammonia, nitrogen and phosphates, and record pH and salinity readings. The data will be posted biweekly on the METNET electronic bulletin board by seventh grade students using modems. The data will be available for publication in local newspapers, on the radio and in *habitats*.

Once the ion testing was done the students went outside, down a hill, through the muddy pasture to the island in the Big Elk Creek to practice biological and physical tests. They were all waiting for: a chance to get their feet wet!

For the physical tests, they checked the color and odor of the water, looked for signs of foam, and recorded the water temperatures in the sun and in the shade. Then they used the secchi and Fair Hill disks for turbidity readings.

The Save Our Streams biological test, fondly known as the S.O.S. *bug test*, is the more accurate measurement of a stream's health, and it's fun. Our young scientists balanced on rocks or waded into

the creek, picking up rocks from riffles, looking for certain insects.

A stream's health is judged as excellent, good, fair or poor depending on the presence or absence of three indicator species. Students are taught to find the aquatic stages of may flies, stone flies and caddis flies. All three insects were found in the Big Elk Creek, giving it an excellent rating.

Our instructional program has been captured on video by John Malatesta of Avio Productions in Rising Sun. The video is available for loan to schools and other groups interested in viewing our program.

## Forest

—from page 1

One by one, the fifth graders measured tree heights with a clinometer. Two by two, they measured circumferences and diameters using loggers' tapes. They counted tree rings to find a tree's age.

Each student carried a leaf key, and in small groups they followed the roads and trails with the teacher/naturalists to find those

trees, their leaves, seeds and fruit, and to see some rare liverworts, a tiny nonvascular plant.

They collected leaves in a bag that they took back to school for a follow up discussion. The squirrels took most of the black walnuts before the forestry program even started, but left enough Osage oranges for most classes to see.

## Fair Hill Nature & Environmental Center *habitats*

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Reservations are required.

(301) 398-4909

# Why don't we take a hike?

Keeping unused trails open is a major endeavor. Once trails are cleared, continuous use by hundreds of students keeps them open. However, a few weeks without use is enough time for the path to be covered with leaves and branches or to become overgrown with wild roses and vines.

Trails Committee volunteers have done a lot of valuable work this fall on both trails and bridges. The island and other trails had too many stumps and logs as well as poison ivy vines and briars.

Julie Klapproth, Bob and Janet Fallon, Jack and James Lynn, Ken Wohner, Brad Walker (with his chain saw), Steve Fields, Bill Parks, and others worked hard on the trails.

#### Bridges: 1 & 2

Bob Elam, an Eagle Scout candi-

date from Elkton, has built two bridges across the spring-fed streams which empty into the Big Elk. He designed the bridges to be placed along side of the trails, leaving room for horses to wade through the streams. Bob built these sturdy bridges with telephone poles donated by COPCO and Delmarva Power, lumber from Builders Choice, and hardware from Delmarva Power. He worked with his father hauling the poles and lumber on a car trailer, then a tractor, then by hand. Several other Scouts from troop 443 helped with the construction of both bridges.

#### Bridges: 3 & 4

James Lynn built a retractable bridge to connect the island with the nearby trails. The bridge rolls out on wheels along a track, and

can be pulled back up by ropes attached on both sides. James, an Eagle Scout candidate from Elkton, used donated lumber from Builders's Choice, hardware from American Home & Hardware, steel cables and nylon rope from S.L. Abbott Sailboats in Ocean City, N.J., and recycled materials to build the wood and steel bridge. Steve Lucas provided technical assistance.

#### Bridges: 5

A temporary tree bridge connects the pasture to the island. The huge tulip poplar tree washed down stream and got stuck in the mud during a nasty storm. A railing is now attached to the fallen tree. Paul and Karl Bystrak, Jack and James Lynn, Bill Parks, and Boy Scout troop 30 built a bridge connecting the pasture to the tree and to the island.

## Bluebirds find a home at Fair Hill

Jerry Newman of Rising Sun, a member of the North American Bluebird Society, is dedicated to the reestablishment of bluebirds. He is helping to monitor the 100 bluebird houses at Fair Hill.

He will show local Girl Scouts how to clean out the houses, and how to build new ones. Scout lead-

ers interested in this program, which begins in February, should phone the Center at 398-4909.

Jerry will also direct a Saturday afternoon bluebird workshop for the general public in early March. The workshop will include a slide show and the opportunity to build bluebird houses.

To help lower the costs, the Center is asking its members to donate untreated scrap lumber larger than 1x4, galvanized nails, hammers, electric or hand drill with a 1/16" bit and an extension cord.

The tools will become a permanent part of this ongoing bluebird program.

☆ Looking for  
Holiday Gift Ideas?

☆ Why not give a gift  
membership to the Fair Hill  
Environmental Foundation, Inc.

☆ Note cards designed  
by Geraldine McKeown  
now available as  
a Nature Center  
fund raiser ☆



## Briefs

### Out of County Rates

• Rates for out of county visitors for classes less than three hours are \$3.50 per person with a \$50 minimum.

### Marsh Update

The replacement marsh planned to be created in the pasture by the Nature Center has been approved by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and state highway officials. However, because of a freeze in state funds, the weigh station scheduled to be con-

structed on a marsh next to I-95 has been postponed until the freeze is lifted.

### Statistics

• Classes visiting, Autumn 1990:

	students	teachers	chaperones
1st	1078	48	124
7th	875	22	28
5th	987	37	61
pre-school	65	3	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3005</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>222</b>



# habitat NetWork

## Visitors

- Cecil County Arts Council
- Economic Development Council
- GED classes (two times)
- Maryland Conservation Council
- Boy Scouts
- Cecil Senior Center, Elkton
- Brownies

## Donations

- John Malatesta, **AVIO PRODUCTIONS** - Water quality testing video; table, display shelves
- Mildred Gebhard - field guides, calendars, nature books, bookshelf, wooden bucket, stamps
- Stewart Dotts, **CURTIS PAPER COMPANY** - Curtis Tweedweave & Flannel for arts & crafts projects
- Boy Scout Troops 443 & 30-bridges
- Sue Downs - ant farm
- Gary Chatham - refrigerator
- William Faix - bird feeders
- Department of Natural Resources - tools and assistance for the fifth grade forestry program
- John K. Burkley Company - two months free insurance coverage
- Ruthalee Carroll - aquarium
- Jim Smith - 3 secchi disks
- ☆ PATRONS: Dr. Lloyd Garren
- ☆ GRANTS: Chesapeake Bay Trust - \$982 for 4th grade

## Wish List

- Slide Projector
- Tape Player
- Desk Lamps/Floor Lamps
- Dymo Label Maker
- Household

## CALENDAR

- Our next **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** is scheduled for **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9TH from 2 to 4 p.m.** The animals featured in the popular *Scales and Tails* program will be introduced to our members in a short program following a business meeting at 2 p.m. Members are asked *not to bring guests* to this meeting because of limited space. The *Scales and Tails* wild animal rehab. presentation is the Nature Center's kindergarten program through December 17th..
- The Maryland Cooperative Extension Service is sponsoring an **International holiday workshop** here on **December 1, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Make holiday wreaths and decorations. Fees range from \$1.50 to \$4.00. Decorate our tree...break a piñata! Don't forget to bring lunch. Phone 398-0200 for information and reservations.
- Mid December to March is **hibernation time** for the Nature Center.. The director and assistant will be available part time to check messages and mail. The Director, Linda Bystrak will be writing grant proposals, attending meetings with civic and business groups, attending workshops, and writing the curriculum for the Young Naturalist summer program.

- Tools •Telephone •Bulletin Boards •Grow Lights •Photocopy Machine •Unabridged Dictionary •Wastebaskets • Bookshelves •Arts & Crafts Supplies •Office Supplies •Extension Cords •Wall Clocks •Lawn Mower •Taxidermy Specimens •Purple Martin House •Bird Seed •Laser Printer for Macintosh •15 Microscopes •Data Base Software suitable for membership list & information

## Volunteers

- Vivien Davies has donated her time as a **Chesnet** instructor
- A committee is being formed to plan a **permanent foot bridge** to the north end of the island. Anyone

- with **engineering** experience or lots of **common sense** is invited to participate. Please phone 398-4909 before 5 p.m.
- The **Special Events** Committee needs more volunteers to help plan our annual **Earth Day Open House**. Phone 398-4909 or come to the Center **Nov. 28 at 7 p.m.**
- The **Trails Committee** will meet **Dec. 1 at 1 p.m.** to mulch two trails. Wear gloves and bring a wheel barrow if you have one.
- Bluebirds**: see story, page 3.

## Autumn Events

- Dann Bystrak demondstrated **bird banding** on September 29th at the Nature Center.

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