

NATURAL PLACES NEWS



Cranefly Orchid, Watkins Park, Maryland

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WELCOME to the inaugural issue of Natural Places News! This newsletter is a publication of the **Maryland Sierra Club Natural Places Committee**. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information and access to recent articles, publications, outings, and website resources that promote our mission. **Our mission** is to explore, enjoy, and protect natural areas in Maryland, and support the Natural Places Committee. **We value** native biological diversity of all plants, animals, and fungi, including native flowers, ferns, mushrooms, birds, mussels, butterflies, frogs, and racoons. We value the diverse native habitats, including forests, meadows, wetlands, rivers, mountains, and coastal areas. Our **NEXT MEETING** will be Saturday, February 15, 2020, immediately after the Merkel outing described below under outings, at the College Park office of the Maryland Sierra Club, 7338 Baltimore Ave., Suite 102, 2:30pm -4:30pm. Hope you can join us! RSVP [here](#).

Theme of this issue: Ecopsychology

No one left inside

Ecopsychology: How Immersion in Nature Benefits Your Health

How long does it take to get a dose of nature high enough to make people say they feel healthy and have a strong sense of well-being? Precisely 120 minutes per week. According to [Jim Robbins in Yale 360 magazine](#), “a growing body of research points to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on health, reducing stress and promoting healing. Now, policymakers, employers, and healthcare providers are increasingly considering the human need for nature in how they plan and operate” (January 9, 2020). Records on the recovery of patients in a hospital for 10 years found that patients with tree views had shorter hospitalizations compared to patients with brick-wall views.

This article builds on previously classic research published in the October 2008 edition of the Wilderness Society magazine, pages 20-21, that showed that people living in areas with a higher

percentage of forest cover had lower mortality rates for cancers of the lung, breast, uterus, prostate, kidney, and colon, compared with people living in areas with lighter forest cover, even after factoring in socioeconomic status (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/039463200802100113>). Other previous research in Japan also supports these findings. The physiological effects of “Shinrin-yoku”, taking in the atmosphere of the forest or forest bathing, have been found to include lower concentrations of cortisol, lower pulse rate, and lower blood pressure than city environments. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19568835>).

No One Left Inside: Upcoming Local Outings by Sierra Club and Friends

(Forest Bathing Resources) For further information and to register, click the link after the date.

Feb 1 [Cascade Falls Trail](#) 10:00am-12:00pm Elkridge



Let's go see the falls at Merkel Natural Resource Management Area. This 3.5 mile walk on gravel and natural surface trails will take us through fields and woods and along wetlands near the Patuxent River. We can expect to see a variety of birds, as well as diverse plants and animal tracks.

Feb 1 [Winter Nature Walk at Hellen Creek](#) 10am - 12pm Lusby



Join us for our first nature walk of the season as we explore winter on the creek. We will be looking for waterfowl, eagles, woodpeckers, turkeys, and other wildlife.

Feb 8 [Invasive Plant Removal at Ruth B. Swann Park](#) 9:45am-2:00pm Indian Head



Swan Park has 800 native plants of the 3,000 in Maryland. Please join us in removing invasive plants at this park—maybe you will see one of the 49 endangered native species that can be found here.

Feb 15 [Merkel Natural Resources Area](#) 11:00am-2:00pm Upper Marlboro



Let's go see what we can see at Merkel Natural Resource Management Area. This 3.5 mile walk on gravel and natural surface trails will take us through fields and woods and along wetlands near the Patuxent River. We can expect to see a variety of birds, as well as diverse plants and animal tracks. Allow 2-3 hours.

Mar 15 [Signs of Spring at Cedarville State Forest](#) 1:00pm-4:00pm Brandywine



Let's go look for new growth emerging at Cedarville State Forest. Our 4 mile walk will be along mostly natural-surface trails through hardwood forest and a pine plantation. It's mostly flat but may be wet in places. We'll see a variety of trees and plants of the understory and forest floor.

Mar 27 [Kid-Friendly Hike at American Chestnut Lands Trust](#) 11:00am-1:00 pm Prince Frederick



Come and join us as we Opt Outside for a fun hike suitable for families! We'll walk an easy pace for a max of 2 miles depending on abilities present.

Mar 29 [Loch Raven Reservoir Hike](#) 11:00 am-3:00 pm Timonium



A moderate hike of 7-8 miles along the shore of Loch Raven with a good chance of seeing ducks and other waterfowl. Bald eagles can also be seen in this area. Meet at Dulaney Valley Road and Seminary Avenue at 11:00 am.

More News on Natural Places

It is not just forests

Another way to save natural habitats and reduce climate change, in addition to forests, is properly maintained meadows. Recently, several local examples of well-maintained meadows have emerged. The best local examples are several acres at Port Tobacco River Park, maintained by Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Port Tobacco River Conservancy, and Ruth B. Swan Park in Charles County, with removal of remaining invasive plants led by Natural Places Committee chair Mark Imlay.

NIH has converted much of their lawn to properly maintained meadows. More agencies are converting lawn to native meadows. It can save an organization a lot of money to mow just once a year with a native meadow. Some areas are bringing back the buffalo which mow at a height of one foot and the native plants such as Indian grass, switch grass, bluestem and Joe-pye weed are flourishing.

Another local example was discussed in the Fall 2019 issue of [Marilandica, the Maryland Native Plant Society publication](#). Recently the grassland under the Sligo Creek powerline corridor was mowed. Many invasives such as Chinese pear (*Pyrus pyrifolia*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Chinese bushclover (*Lespedeza cuneata*), newcomer mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*) overran the area. An annual mow appears to level the playing field each year, so that natives have a better chance of dominating the ecosystem in the spring.

Please email [Natural Places News](#) with any native meadow landscaping success stories you notice in Maryland business or government properties.

Where can I Go for Maryland Native Plant Information?

1. [Maryland Native Plant Society](#)
2. [Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center Maryland Native Plants](#)
3. [iNaturalist App](#) Identify plants, animals, insects, trees, and contribute to the global database.
4. Bring your gardening and plant questions to your local [master gardener](#) or [master naturalist](#). **Montgomery County Master Gardener Plant Clinics**, held in the [Brookside Gardens](#) Visitor Center lobby on Saturdays, 10 am – 1 pm and Sundays, 1 pm – 4 pm from February 16-November 17, and Wednesdays, 1 pm – 4 pm from April 3-September 25. For additional horticulture information contact the Montgomery County Master Gardeners **Telephone hotline** at 301-590-2842, Tuesdays 10 am – 1 pm from March 5 – October 16.
5. [National Invasive Species Information Center](#)

Resources for Natural Places Issues and Information

[Owling: A Field Guide to Finding Winter Owls](#) “Many owl species are active now...”

[GLOBE Mission Mosquito](#) One-hour YouTube about Citizen Scientist project on collecting mosquito data.

SEND US YOUR NEWS ITEMS. If you hear, see, or read about an event or news item of interest to our natural places community, please send it to marc.imlay@mdsierra.com . Thanks for submissions this month from Linda Rieger, Lily Fountain, and Marc Imlay.