

Providing a Sanctuary During COVID-19

Allison Burnett, *JBWS Office Manager & Naturalist*



It likely comes as no surprise to readers that our Sanctuary has been affected by COVID-19. The pandemic and adopted safety measures Maryland has enacted have been a constant talking point for all of us in our homes, at work, and while out (masked up and socially distanced, of course). We would like to share our experience at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary with you since Maryland Governor Larry Hogan issued the Stay at Home order in March 2020.

The most stark and immediate difference was the increase in visitation. With all other sources of entertainment shut down, every child home from school, and most adults working from home or unemployed, people were and still are desperate to get out of the house. Additionally, health professionals have recommended ample outdoor exercise and fresh air to manage anxiety and maintain physical health, and Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman made the decision to waive county park entrance fees to limit person-to-person contact and increase access. JBWS was already seeing an increase in visitation at the beginning of 2020, probably due to the unseasonably mild winter we had this year. As you can see in Figure 1, visitation dramatically spiked during March to nearly four times

more than previous years. May was record shattering for visitation, with a grand total of 4,300 visitors to the Sanctuary Proper. These numbers do not reflect the increased visitation to our other properties like Glendening Nature Preserve, Patuxent Wetland Park, or Wootons Landing.

The dramatic shift from 60 weekend visitors to over 600 impacted our day-to-day staff lives at the Sanctuary. Our staff planning sessions shifted from our 35th anniversary celebration to how we can create more virtual options for ourselves and our patrons. We were scrambling to stagger office schedules and set up for telework when possible. We increased our social media presence, organized our very first webinar series, and canceled all our programs for April, May, and June. We started providing weekly “Moment in Nature” emails to keep our homebound visitors connected to the Sanctuary. Our education coordinator Sarah Kempfer created videos for schools and classrooms that had to cancel their scheduled field trips to JBWS. While we strove to maintain a positive attitude, we had many lunchtime staff conversations about the intangible negative impacts we were experiencing: stress, anxiety, and discomfort as we

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Jug Bay Sanctuary Walk-In Visitors

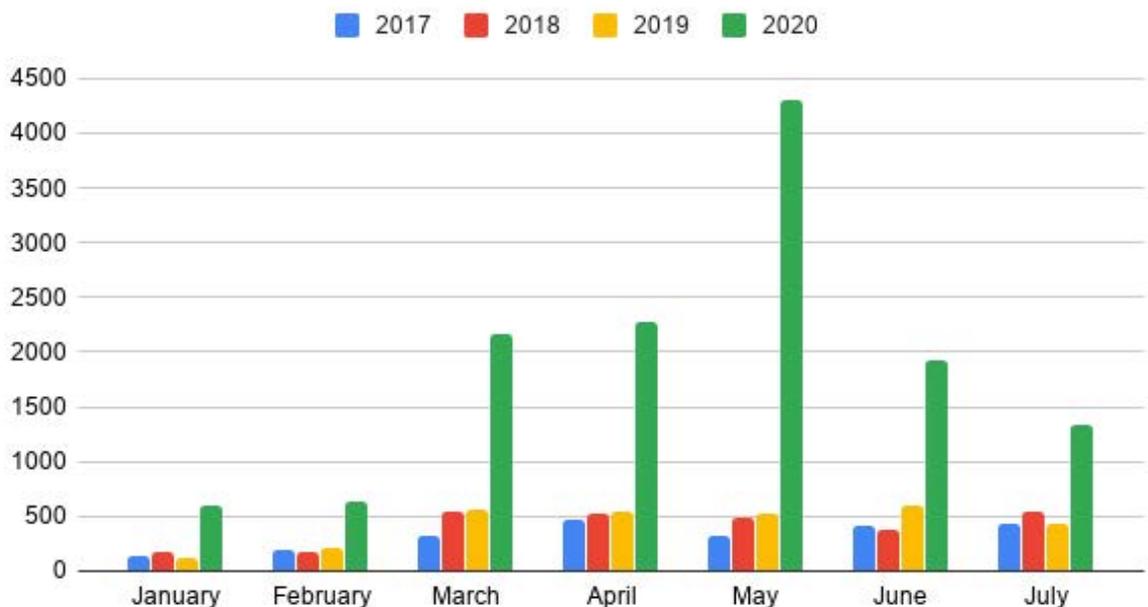


Figure 1. Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary walk-in visitors, 2017-2020.



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Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary is operated by the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks. It was established in 1985 with the goals of wetlands research, environmental education, and protection. The Sanctuary is a limited-use park. Groups are requested to make a reservation by calling the office before planning a visit.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary is a component of the Maryland Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, which along with 27 other Reserves around the country promotes scientific research, public education, resource management and stewardship in estuaries across the nation.

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Patricia Delgado, *Superintendent*
Liana Vitali, *Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator*
Debra Gage, *Volunteer & Program Coordinator*
Sarah Kempfer, *Education Coordinator*
Allison Burnett, *Office Manager*
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Vice President, *Vacant*
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Judy Hartman
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Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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Jug Bay staff and volunteers creating webinars for a virtual experience of the Sanctuary.

were inundated with new people, new expectations, and new procedures. These challenging impacts were also felt by some of our local community members, some who even went as far as to place homemade “Closed” signs at our park properties to dissuade people from visiting.

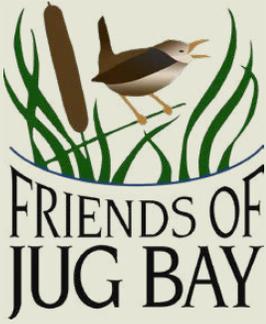
We have since seen a decline in visitorship for multiple reasons: the stay-at-home order was lifted in mid-May, the temperatures continue to rise, and park fees have been reinstated on weekends. However, JBWS is still experiencing far greater visitation numbers than in previous years. People are eager to visit the Sanctuary, and most of them are visiting us for the first time.

In July we finally started to offer public programs again. We hosted four summer camp sessions that went well but tested the limitations of ourselves, of children, and of recommended COVID-19 precautions. We slowly opened up small group programs, outside only, with masks. Mike Quinlan, a long-time volunteer naturalist at JBWS, was the first to host a public program (a “Bird Walk”) under new COVID-19 guidelines that include mask wearing and social distancing. He said that on a hot day the masks were uncomfortable and may have had a slight negative impact on the experience, but it seemed to be good overall. The Sanctuary itself has changed because of the number of people hiking the trails. Our Otter Point Trail monitor Doris

has been a volunteer and regular at the Sanctuary for many years. She remarked that the trails looked so much different; “they are much wider and clearer, you can tell people are using them.” JBWS is no longer a “best-kept secret” in the area. The Sanctuary was mentioned consistently in local publications such as the *Washington Post* and the *Capital* as an ideal place to commune with nature and escape COVID-19. Among Sanctuary regulars, there are mixed feelings about the secret being out.

Despite the increased visitation, we experienced a department-wide hiring freeze. Though I was interviewed and offered the JBWS Office Manager position in February before COVID-19 impacts were widely felt in the U.S., I had to wait an additional two months before I was cleared to begin my work as Office Manager. Additionally, our Chesapeake Conservation Corps Member was sent home, which meant even fewer staff members were available to deal with the volume of visitors. Increased expenditure was also a concern over the spring and summer months since we were unable to collect entrance fees. It was difficult to pass on information without being in physical contact with people, and our printing budget was well over-spent on maps, brochures, and signage we developed to serve our purposes. We shut down the Wetlands Center and rented port-a-johns for

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the fall 2020 issue of *Marsh Notes*.

The summer heat is making me want to stay close to home and enjoy the natural outdoors in shaded woodlands. As we continue to adjust to our new “normal,” I hope all are doing well and managing to find cool places. Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary continues to be open with the Wetlands Center and restrooms remaining closed. With limited group sizes and social distancing, what a great place to find that cool spot! Families are hiking the trails, kayaking the Patuxent River, and enjoying time spent together.

The Friends of Jug Bay (FOJB) Board has been busy managing the Jug Bay Farm Preserve House. The house dominated our recent virtual meetings. While the Board addresses many issues, it continues to go through changes. We have a need for a Treasurer, and I am reaching out to all members for a volunteer. With that said, I would like to recognize the outstanding job that Peggy Hartman, our departing Treasurer, did, including transitioning our bookkeeping to a more streamlined and accessible system. We will miss her. If anyone is interested in volunteering, please contact me at tbjerkne@friendsofjugbay.org.

Fundraising is another major challenge with today’s environment. With the absence of a dedicated Fundraising Chair, we have relied on membership fees for operating expenses. We need someone to promote activities, market, and raise funds. Once again if anyone has interest in leading or helping with fundraising, please contact me.

It is with gratitude I can say the Board, its members, and the FOJB organization are strong. These wonderful members who do so much as volunteers to support the Sanctuary turn these challenges into opportunities, not setbacks.

Remember, the Friends of Jug Bay is your organization. Any ideas, thoughts or interest in joining the Board are welcome.

Tor Bjerknes, *FOJB President*



Photo by Liana Vitali.

We welcome new and returning FOJB members:

Daniel Babinski
 Dante Berdeguez and
 Camille DiMarco
 Cynthia Bravo
 Mariayne Brodnicki
 Samantha Brown
 Christina and Robert Clark
 Cleveland and Margo Claybrooks
 Dee Cohn
 Mark and Wendy Collien
 Garrett Collins
 Kevin and Sue Collins
 Carol and Thomas Cook
 Flore de Preneuf
 Sierra and Nick DeFelice
 Brian Delphus
 Jessica Dove

Sue Dralle
 Sarah Franklin
 Laure Fuller
 Diane and Jeff Goldman
 Stephen Goldsmith
 Teresa Hayden
 Richard and Alexander
 Hinkemeyer
 Ann Hobbs
 Anthony Hopkins
 Alphonso and Irmgard Hubbard
 Tanushree and Sibren Isaacman
 John Kapustka
 Helen Kavanagh
 Thaddeus and Lauren King
 Michelle Lacombe
 Jenna Lane

Andrew Leyden
 Rick Malmgren and Judy Burke
 Madeleine Mankowski
 Gary McBrien
 Tom McSorley
 Thomas Miller
 Nicholas Minot
 Sarah Moore
 Tessa Muehlechner and John Day
 Brad C. Neumann and
 Stephanie L. Resnik
 Eric Nielsen
 Jeffrey Parker and Sabrina Dent
 Siobhan C. Percey
 Kerry and Kaitlyn Phipps
 Emily Pilgrim
 Sarah Preis

Jennifer Raulin
 Ian Rinehart and
 Delaney Wing
 Michael Rosloff
 Christopher FD Ryder
 Michael and Alison Smith
 Jesse Stewart
 Al and Ginny Tucker
 Randall Wagner and
 Debra Benator
 Mary Weadon
 Sarah Welsh and Jon
 Kawatachi
 Amy Whetter
 Davonta Williams
 Courtney Wright
 Brian Yermal
 Matt Youngmann

Eastern Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring Offers a Close View of Stewardship and Citizen Science

By Liana Vitali, JBWS Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator

Many would agree that the cheery sight of an Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) would brighten even the surliest of moods. Their deep, vibrant blue above and copper-colored throat and breast feathers below are a delight to spot through binoculars or along meadow walks at the Sanctuary. You can often spy bluebirds pouncing on the ground to trap a tasty insect in warm months or snacking on juicy winter berries in the colder months. Doting parents, both male and female bluebirds will care for their young and can even lay multiple broods each breeding season lasting from April until August or even later. Eggs require about two weeks of incubation time and hatchlings take between 17 and 21 days to fledge.

Bluebirds are cavity nesters. They prefer crafting their cupped, dry straw nests within tree holes or other similar spaces, including human-made nestboxes. With continued global loss of forest habitat, bluebirds are habitually outcompeted for ever-limited nesting space by more aggressive birds such as House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Hosting bluebird nestboxes in parks and on private property can be a wonderful stewardship and citizen science project. However, they do come with a commitment. It is imperative that nestboxes are checked weekly to identify potential signs of predator guard failures and to clear out fledged or failed nests. At times, other local cavity-dwelling birds such as Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Chickadees (*Poecile* sp.), or Tufted Titmice (*Baeolophus bicolor*) will occupy a nestbox, giving an



A female Eastern Bluebird refuses to be shooed from her nest. Photo by Liana Vitali.



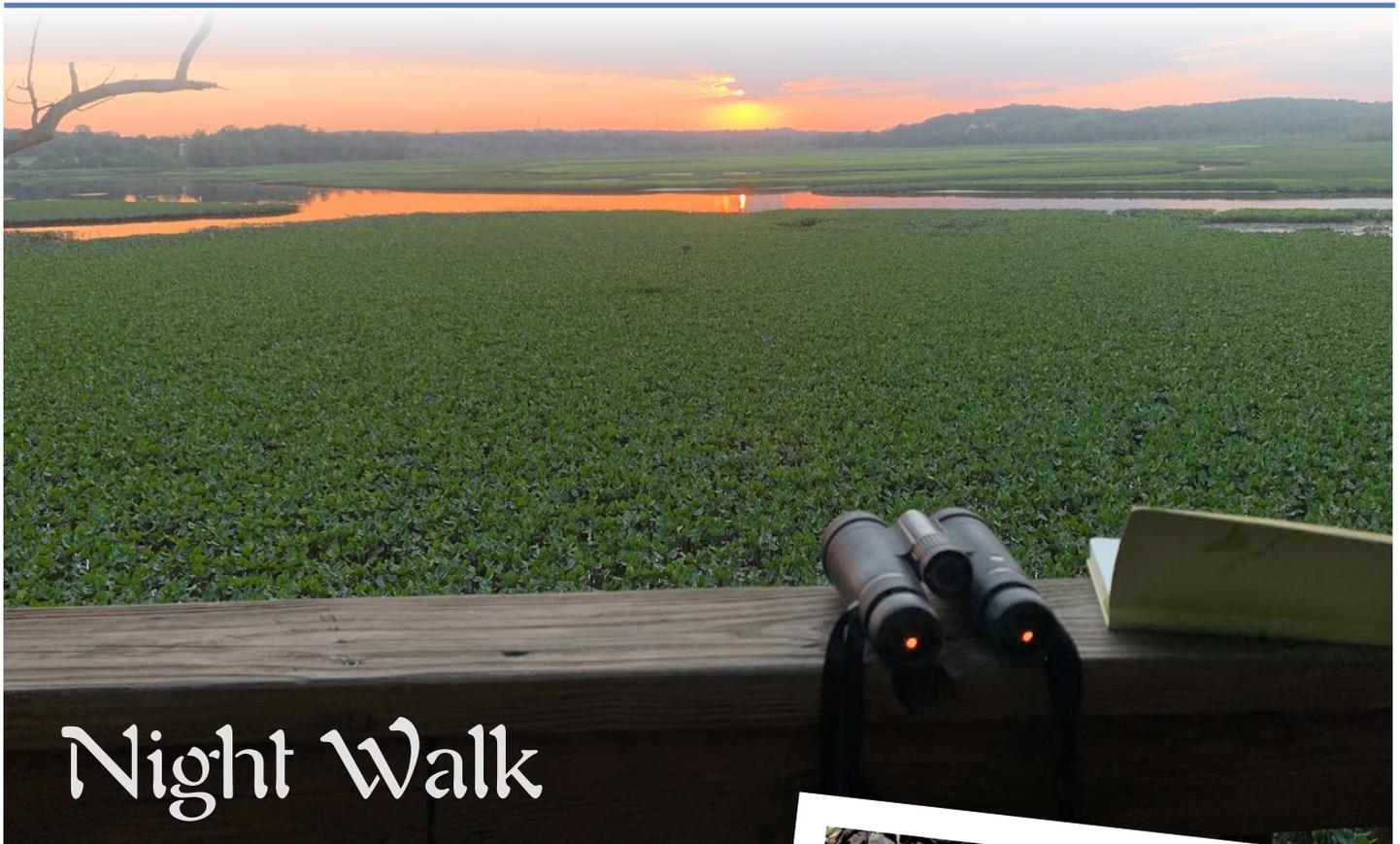
An Eastern Bluebird nestbox actively hatching. Photo by Liana Vitali.

opportunity to appreciate unique nest construction strategies of different species.

Currently at Jug Bay we are monitoring about 20 bluebird nestboxes from April through October. We have a small but mighty crew of Bluebird Nestbox Monitors who sign up week by week to visit the boxes, take photographs, and upload data through an online form. At the end of the season, our data will be uploaded to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Nestwatch project, making our findings available to scientists around the world.

Our 2020 monitoring season has revealed its fair share of remarkable encounters with nature from squeal-inducing baby bird cuteness to feelings of awe when encountering an exquisitely constructed Tree Swallow nest replete with dozens of feathers woven in and amongst the straw grass frame. Included here are some of the staff's favorite photos from the season.

If you are interested in becoming a Bluebird Nestbox Monitor for the 2021 season, keep an eye on our calendar of events for a training in April 2021 or subscribe to our Jug Bay e-newsletter to stay up to date with nature-based volunteering opportunities like this and more.



Night Walk

By Colin Rees, Friends of Jug Bay Member

As darkness comes, undergrowth grows larger but less distinct, and color drains the landscape to assume deepening shades of gray. Owls take wing, their calls provoking alarm in mice and men. Other predators stir as the moon rises to arc across a starry sky casting moving shadows.

So began a dawn to dusk walk at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary at the end of June to capture the fading summer solstice. I was accompanied by Patricia Delgado and Liana Vitali to explore wetland, forest, and meadow habitats and record events of the night. We began our walk by observing the setting sun from the Observation Platform. When birds ceased singing, a wave of chorusing Green Tree Frogs crossed the marsh, competing with katydids in the woodland behind us. Ospreys made their last pass over the marsh before settling in for the night with their growing young. A gentle breeze swayed wild rice and cattails and caught the ripples of the incoming tide. Over the meadow, bats pursued moths and rising fireflies flashed in hope of finding a mate. Our communion with nature had begun.

During the night, we trekked many paths, arriving at the marsh blind overlooking the south marsh around midnight. The beam from a flashlight followed a young beaver taking a leisurely swim past us before entering its lodge and later a water snake in search of prey causing a Wood Duck to take flight. In the distance a mockingbird happily plagiarized many a bird song. We found the forest alive with Green Frogs and Eastern Spadefoot Toads creeping along its floor, and in a vernal pool teeming American Bullfrog tadpoles were



Top: Sunset viewed from the Observation Platform at Jug Bay. Above: Io Moth.

caught in our flashlights. From time to time we inspected the moth screen set up by Liana. It offered a dazzling display of large and small, the most spectacular being the Io Moth.

A gray dawn slowly dissipated the mist. Sunlight finally broke through to caress the landscape and invite plants and animals to profit from the sun's eternal energy. We retired happy with the unique experience but glad for a nap.

Last December, I undertook a similar night walk during the winter solstice when one might expect the landscape to be devoid of life. This was far from true. With these and other observations, I am now writing up accounts of both night walks for a new book. Do try such an adventure and surprise yourself yet again with the wonders of the natural world.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary Open Hours

Sanctuary Wetlands Center: Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and (Mar–Nov) Sundays 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Glendening Nature Preserve: Wrighton Road entrance daily, gate open 9:00 am - 5:00 pm; Plummer House entrance Monday to Saturday, gate open 9:00 am - 5:00 pm (trails, Butterfly Garden, dogs on leash)

Patuxent Wetland Park: daily, dawn to dusk (fishing, hand-carried boat launch)

Wootons Landing Wetland Park: daily, dawn to dusk (fishing, loop trail, hand-carried boat launch)

Sanctuary Wetlands Center admission fee: \$6/vehicle

Free for current Friends of Jug Bay members, active volunteers, and active military and their immediate families.

There are no fees to visit our other sites.

Visit www.jugbay.org for directions, information and updates to our schedule.

Registration is required for all programs. Please call 410-222-8006 or e-mail programs@jugbay.org to register, or, in the case of ActiveNet programs, register online at <https://apm.activecommunities.com/aarecparks>. All programs meet at the Wetlands Center at 1361 Wrighton Road unless otherwise noted. An adult must accompany children under 13.

Visit www.jugbay.org and follow links to public programs offered at JBWS.

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some of our properties. We shopped websites and stores with everyone else trying to find paper products, cleaning supplies, and latex gloves. Thankfully, our county has been able to provide the extra funding and supplies needed to adapt to our new circumstances.

With the Anne Arundel County Public Schools decision to adopt a full virtual learning approach for the first semester of the 2020–21 school year, parents, educators, children, and their communities will be hungry for safe, hands-on, outdoor education options to accompany their children's digital curriculum. Since restarting our volunteer programs, we have become a small hotspot for high schoolers who need service learning or community service hours. We have also seen an increase in new volunteers eager to help in our pollinator gardens and on Field Work Friday mornings. We are all so grateful for your help. Unfortunately, we also had some of our older, long-standing volunteers step back because of the increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. We miss them dearly and hope to be able to welcome them back soon but fully understand and support their decision to stay home.

Our story is not unique. We are a microcosm of our nation. State, county, and municipal lands and parks everywhere are flooded with more visitors than in previous years. People are encouraged to stay close to home so they are exploring their local options for experiencing the outdoors. Timothy Hamilton, the Business and Marketing Director for Maryland State Parks, confirmed that visitation has at least doubled across all 75 of our state parks in Maryland. The numbers are still trickling in but all parks are expected to have increased

visitation next year as well. Some of the bigger, more well-known parks like Assateague and Sandy Point have seen even larger increases. Mr. Hamilton remarked at how amazed he is by the dedication of park staff throughout this time. They have been asked to shift from providing education and interpretation to directing traffic and cleaning bathrooms, and “they are exhausted, but they do it without complaint and for little pay.” Parks are persistently underfunded and understaffed. With landmark visitation increases, we are working even harder to stay open to provide people with the green spaces they need. Most if not all state and local Maryland parks have been experiencing the same problems that come with increased visitation: more trash, disagreements between visitors on appropriate precautions, parking and traffic issues, frustrated neighbors and locals, and an inability to effectively communicate proper park etiquette to newcomers.

We often discuss the extent of our responsibility for the safety of others at our parks during this time. We are given the green light to host summer camp, reopen programs, reopen bathrooms, and start taking fees again while we are also expected to keep ourselves and our visitors as safe as possible. We huddle as a team to plan for the best possible solution to daily COVID-19 concerns, but it is never perfect. When we are hosting programs we understand the onus is upon us to provide safety, but what about general visitation? Is it our job to argue with patrons on mask wearing, social distancing, and not crowding together? Is it our responsibility to manage crowds that have organized themselves and chosen to meet here? For our own safety, JBWS draws our lines of responsibility at our programs alone.

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Photo by Liana Vitali.

Insights into the Litter Found at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary

By Hadijah Lawal, *Chesapeake Conservation Corps Member at JBWS*

Every Saturday for the past two months I have been leading trash clean ups around Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary. The location would change each week and during the clean ups the volunteers and I would use the app Clean Swell to track what we find. The app records the duration of the clean up, the weight of the trash, the kind of trash, amount of trash, the location, and the number of participants. Overall, we have collected 8,048 items of trash from the Sanctuary, which equals over 2,000 pounds! Trash was collected from the Sanctuary Proper, Patuxent Wetland Park, Wootons Landing, Nature Preserve at Waysons Corner, Glendening Nature Preserve, and the Patuxent River (Figure 1). The five most common types of litter found were (Figure 2):

1. Pieces: Materials less than 2.5 cm in length. The pieces found were made of plastic, glass, foam, and metal. It is the little pieces that are commonly overlooked and yet they are the biggest problem across the

park. We found 2,400 pieces! The most glass pieces were found at the Nature Preserve at Waysons Corner.

- 2. Plastic Bottles:** 1,458 plastic bottles were found; a majority of those were floating in the Patuxent River.
- 3. Cigarette Butts:** Cigarette butts often blend in with the ground, but once you find one there will be others in the area. As a whole we picked up 544 cigarette butts, mostly from Patuxent Wetland Park.
- 4. Glass Bottles:** A total of 534 items were glass bottles; 212 of those bottles were found at Patuxent Wetland Park, and every single one contained an alcoholic beverage at one point.
- 5. Aluminum Cans:** 397 cans were collected across Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary; however, only 4 cans were found at the Glendening Nature Preserve.

Other items have also been found like food wrappers, toys, fishing line, grocery bags, take-out containers, bottle caps, balloons, tires, and, since the pandemic,



Volunteers picking up trash at the Sanctuary. Photo by Hadijah Lawal.

masks and gloves.

Usually the trash has been strewn about a trail or caught in plants or rocks, but there have been a few instances where nature has overtaken the trash. Trees have grown around metal pipes, an old shoe became part of a tree's exterior, and moss grew on old pieces of fabric, completely camouflaging it. We do not want occurrences like these to be frequent because it means that the garbage had been sitting in that spot for years to become so integrated with the environment.

Trash that was intentionally dumped has been found as well. We can tell it has been dumped because the trash is in bags or there are strips of plastic intermixed with trash indicating it was once in a bag. Large quantities of big pieces of metal and tires

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Amount and Types of Trash Across Jug Bay.

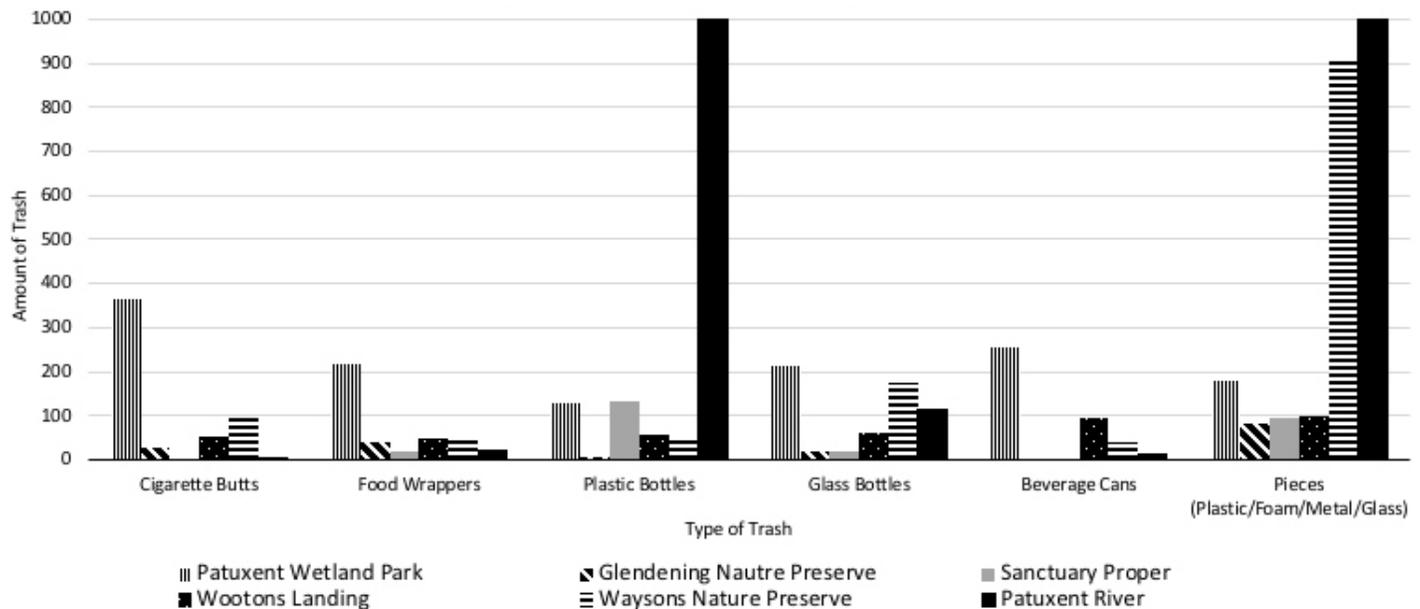


Figure 1. Comparison of amounts and types of trash found at the Sanctuary's properties.

Importance of Logging Volunteer Hours

By Debra Gage, *JBWS Volunteer & Program Coordinator*

Jug Bay and Friends of Jug Bay (FOJB) are very fortunate to have the help and support of so many dedicated volunteers. Your time and commitment to educating the public for a healthier natural environment is invaluable. Every year, volunteers donate more than 6,000 hours to Jug Bay and FOJB programs. The immediate results of your work are impressive, but the value in educating future generations is priceless. Please be counted!!! Reporting your volunteer hours monthly, including travel time, is crucial when Jug Bay applies for grants. It allows us to show our impact to grantors and prove we have a dedicated team to get things done. Reporting volunteer time can drastically improve our chance of being awarded grants.

Reporting your hours also assists Jug Bay in attracting and retaining new volunteers and donors. When we can share the number of volunteers who believe in our organization and the collective service hours they have contributed, we are confirming that people believe in our mission! By showing that we can leverage incredible community support to achieve your goals and mission, donors are much more likely to support us! You have done the time, that's the hard part, now please be counted! Visit <https://jugbay.org/volunteer/> and scroll down to the Log In Hours button that will take you to our Google Form.

Photo by Liana Vitali.



Litter, continued from page 7

Types and Percentages of Litter Found at Jug Bay.

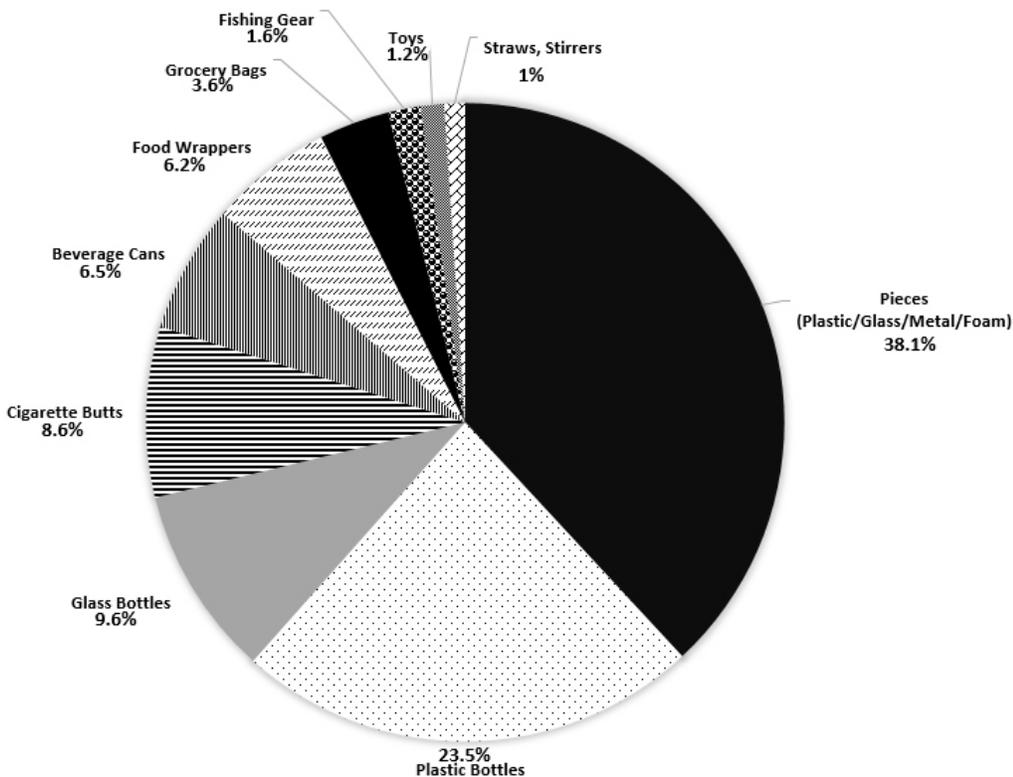


Figure 2. Types and percentages of total litter found at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary.

were other signs that trash was dumped. These instances are really unfortunate to see and they were observed in the Nature Preserve at Waysons Corner and Patuxent Wetland Park.

The volunteers and I noticed that more litter was found by the water, so it is not surprising to discover that the most trash collected came from Patuxent Wetland Park (2,616 items) and then the Patuxent River (2,501 items).

The Ocean Conservancy's app gives us the ability to see the litter in a whole new light. We are not only picking up trash, but gaining a better understanding of the problem. The data from Clean Swell can be found in an international database called Trash Information Data for Education and Solutions (TIDES). I encourage you to go to the website <https://www.coastalcleanupdata.org/> to see if there have been any clean ups near you! Jug Bay will continue to lead trash clean ups, so keep an eye out for them on the calendar.

Explore our volunteer opportunities online at www.jugbay.org/volunteer.

For more information, call 410-222-8006 or e-mail Volunteer & Program Coordinator Debra Gage at rpgage00@aacounty.org.

Summer Donations:

WeCare Denali: recycled yard waste compost for the community garden at River Farm; **Anne and Manfred Muecke:** canoe; **Toni-Lyn Spirt:** lawn mower cart; **Elaine and Joe Friebele:** materials for sanding and painting two outdoor chairs, two multi-tools.



Teacher training for Bay Invaders Program.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary Earns Maryland Green Center Sustainability Award

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary has again earned the Maryland Green Center Award honoring our efforts to implement environmental education, best management practices, and community engagement. As we have been a long-term participant, JBWS earned Sustainability Status! Some of the accomplishments we are most proud of include providing meaningful hands-on

By Sarah Kempfer, *JBWS Education Coordinator*

outdoor learning experiences to over 2,000 students per year, training teachers and volunteers to be confident nature educators, integrating sustainability practices into the function of the Wetlands Center, and using careful stewardship practices on

our properties. All of these activities are supported by wonderful volunteers who learn and work along with us. Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary has been a proud Maryland Green Center since 2012 and looks forward to future years of providing green leadership to the South Anne Arundel County community and beyond.

Thank You, Peggy Hartman

By Siobhan Percey, *Friends of Jug Bay Member*

The Friends of Jug Bay (FOJB) would like to celebrate the dedication of Peggy Hartman, a departing member from the Board of Directors. We are grateful for her generous contribution of time and effort on the behalf of Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary! Peggy came in like a whirlwind in July 2019 and remade the face of the Treasurer. She brought in a CPA as an independent agent to oversee FOJB finances and changed the bookkeeping software to an online updatable version. She activated and led the Finance Committee, revising and updating FOJB's financial governance documents. She is leaving a well-organized system for the next Treasurer. Peggy assisted with the Soup & Science program even before she moved to Maryland in 2017. Her favorite experience at Jug Bay has been dining with the vitners at the Riggleman House, a wonderful communal event, culminating in a toast at the dock! She finds the Marsh Boardwalk to be one of the most enchanting walks at the Sanctuary—the opportunity to walk on water at high tide! Peggy believes that directing money and donations to the programs in need is the most important function of FOJB—stewardship programs, internships, and captivating experiences with nature for children who may not otherwise have such an opportunity. She is keen to continue as a volunteer at Jug Bay in a capacity more unlike her job, focusing on nature! The expanse of the Sanctuary beckons!



Jug Bay is one of the three components in the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Maryland. The purpose of CB-NERR is to manage protected estuarine areas as natural field laboratories and to develop a coordinated program of research and education as part of a national program administered by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

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Check out the
CBNERR-MD web page at
[www.http://dnr.maryland.gov/waters/cbnerr](http://dnr.maryland.gov/waters/cbnerr)



Tenant house demolition at CBNERR-MD's Monie Bay component in spring 2020.

NOAA Grants Enhance Infrastructure at Two CBNERR-MD Sites

By Chris Snow, *Stewardship Coordinator, CBNERR-MD*

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System protects our estuaries providing places for scientific study and enabling reserves to contribute to community well-being. To facilitate scientific research and community engagement, most reserves have dedicated lab, housing, and public space at their facilities. In contrast, the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Maryland (CBNERR-MD) has two small labs, one at the Anita C. Leight Estuary Center, in Harford County, and the second in the McCann Wetlands Center at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, in Anne Arundel County. While these labs are functional for the projects of the site staff, the addition of visiting scientists would be difficult to accommodate. The Reserve has no overnight facilities of any kind. This has been a challenge when trying to entice researchers to consider our sites for projects. All the sites have limited capacity for public meet-

ing space. To change this has long been part of our management goals.

While we are unlikely to secure state and county funds to build infrastructure at the Reserve's component sites, we are able to seek federal dollars through NOAA's Procurement, Acquisition and Construction funding opportunity. Historically this program has funded construction projects at all our western shore sites. In 2017 we received funding for improvement to our Monie Bay component, and in the fall of 2020 we are set to receive our largest grant to date for a project at Jug Bay. These projects will set the stage for the construction of two field stations with laboratories, meeting space, and overnight facilities.

In 2011 the Reserve acquired a farm in Somerset County adjacent to the Monie Bay component. This was the first upland site with built infrastructure associated with the lower eastern shore component, and its

acquisition opened many possibilities. Pretty much every year since acquisition we have sought funds to improve this site. With feedback from NOAA and a refinement of our vision for the Monie Bay component, we were finally successful in 2017 with a request for the first stage of a plan to improve the site, with later phases including the construction of a new field station. We are currently working through this grant, which includes improvements to the road, electric network, and three sheds and the addition of a boat lift. A big portion of this grant includes the demolition of a small house that was taken down last winter and the removal of two chicken houses, which hopefully by the time you read this will be gone. Once complete, we plan to seek phase 2 funding, which would be for the planning and construction of an approximately 4,000-sq-ft structure.

While working through the first phase of the Monie Bay Field Station project, we were approached by the Director of the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary about the possibility of seeking funds for a field station complex to be located on the Anne Arundel County side of the Jug Bay component of the Reserve. What made this project exciting was that Anne Arundel County was willing to contribute significantly to the project. This underscores the value of the multicomponent Reserve, with the county pledging funds and the staff from Jug Bay handling a majority of the grant preparation. We were seeking funds to improve the newly named Jug Bay Farm Preserve just south of the Sanctuary Proper. The plan outlined a complex of cabins and a bathhouse for overnight accommodations. This would couple with a field station the county committed to build. Also in this

grant were improvements to the current buildings on site, including a well and septic upgrade necessary to accommodate the increased usage projected. We included the purchase of a mobile dorm unit in this proposal, one that could be deployed to any site where we need short term or seasonal housing. Work will begin on this grant October 1, 2020.

It is a very exciting time for the Reserve and our partners; we are moving forward with the development of two field stations, one on the western shore and one on the eastern. These centers will enhance Reserve programming and provide lab and overnight facilities for outside researchers and staff as well as educational and community programs, greatly improving the Reserve's reach and value in the areas we serve.

Sanctuary, continued from page 6

Other parks have had to draw their lines elsewhere, turning people away when visitation volume becomes too great. Even then, they face criticism from both sides of an argument. We have watched staff at other parks get metaphorically torn apart for staying open, for closing, for managing parking lots, or for not managing parking. As park staff, we sometimes felt trapped in a no-win situation while trying to decide which procedures we would adopt to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Thankfully, much of the ire over appropriate operations during COVID-19 has since cooled and criticism is less frequent. With consistent messages and daily experience, Marylanders have been able to relax into healthy routines and adapt to new precautions. JBWS is exceedingly grateful that the overwhelming majority of our visitors have been polite and cautious, following all health guidelines and recommendations without our urging. Thank you for your continued cooperation and understanding as we navigate these difficult times together. We are happy to see so many new faces in the Sanctuary and are hopeful that the coming months will be safe and enjoyable for everyone!



Jug Bay Inaugural Recipient of AACPS Partner of the Year Award

By Liana Vitali, JBWS Citizen Science & Stewardship Coordinator

Sanctuary staff were thrilled to learn of our nomination for the first ever Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) Partner of the Year Award hosted by the 21st Century Education Foundation. We were nominated in the "Business Partner of the Year: Over 50 Employees" category (qualifying through the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation & Parks) by Arlington Echo and the Office of Environmental Literacy, a vital component of our local school system leading outdoor education initiatives within our county. The award recognizes community organizations and businesses that have forged critical partnerships with programs and schools that directly benefit students in Anne Arundel County. The nomination itself was an honor; however, winning the award marks an exceptional achievement for our staff's efforts to create meaningful outdoor learning programs for children and adults alike.



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