

Having a Ball

April Showers didn't keep the outdoor club indoors ... too much this month. Indoors or out, though, we partied it up to celebrate the coming of spring.

"Office Space" Movie Night

Organizer: Chih Lin

Maybe they didn't have a case of the "Mundays", but MOC'ers sure got rid of their winter blahs with this irreverent Friday night movie party. Complete with a "Jump to Conclusions" mat, costumes, TPS reports, and a Swingline stapler, the partiers definitely got rid of their work week frustrations, though no copier-smashing was allowed. With pizza and cake (for everyone except Milton), hilarity ensued before, during, and after the feature presentation. It was definitely good for the club.

Bike Ride around BWI Airport

Organizer: Ryan Meadows

You couldn't have picked a better weekend to get your bike back out of the shed than this ride. As Rob Copeland noted, "Boy, it's great to feel alive again." Starting off on the streets of Glen Burnie, the group watched the miles roll by as they passed the Amtrak/MARC station, the Dixon observation point where one can watch planes land, and then headed back to

Marley Station on the Baltimore and Annapolis trail. Only one flat tire slowed part of the group, and due to the "extreme social" nature of the MOC, everyone soon regrouped to finish the ride together, and round out the afternoon with lunch nearby. Riders enthusiastically suggested other locations for future rides, so anyone interested in scouting trails should contact Ryan.

C & O Canal Backpacking Weekend

Organizers: Colin Babb, Aaron Firoved

While the "weather gods" spoiled plans for the first backpacking weekend, they made it up to the campers this time. Though the previous weeks' rain almost spoiled the chances of campfires, the MOC soldiered on and eventually prevailed. Featuring visits to local hotspot Bill's Place, visits from locals looking for "whatever local entertainment was to be had from a campground that had only several portapotties and a water well as its facilities," and portapotty preaching, the trip was a great introduction to backpacking for the uninitiated. The route proved luckily shorter than first envisioned, but plenty challenging for the first trip of the season. Conversation centered around spam burritos, origins of four-letter words, and celebrity characteristics, lively words making up for the somewhat less-than-lively legs on the way home.

News You Can Use

Social Hour has moved!

To Red Robin in Columbia. See complete details on the web site under Events, where you can get directions and take a peek at the menu. We'll also be starting earlier, at 7pm. As always, please come and go as you like. Look for the orange, green, and white balloons and social greeters with name tags. See you there.

In this Issue . . .

Our Member Spotlight features Jeff Schneider, a native Marylander who is one of the MOC's regular hike leaders. An article by member John Putman shares the wonders of a short local Baltimore trail. Jesse Allen returns with a story of the horseshoe crabs' migration. See inside!

MOC Reaches 1500 Members

In March, the Maryland Outdoor Club hit the 1500-member mark. That means more and more people want to come to events. That's great! But, as our events are strictly member-run, that means we need even more members to organize events. If you're anxious about hosting an event by yourself, please feel free to ask an officer to put you in touch with other members looking to co-organize. Also be sure and tap your officer core for help with details of organizing. We hope to offer more new organizer clinics in the next few months in order to help you get the process started with the basic steps and details everyone needs to know.

Growing numbers means it's more important than ever to cancel out of events as soon as you can so that others get a chance to attend if you can't. Use the Member Area of the web site to cancel your event registrations.

We also need to make sure our files are up to date. Watch for an email in the upcoming weeks asking you to confirm that you still want to be a member of the MOC. We're not kicking you out, we just want to remind some of you that we're still here, invite you to come out to an event again, and keep our database streamlined.

Member Network

Our members value the ability to stay in touch, but we also don't want to be pestered. If you have a question about an event and whether it will be cancelled, please ask the organizer or the Events Coordinator, Brian Loughery. While members also often encourage contacts from other members, please be courteous and respectful when approaching and contacting members whom you have not met in person.



Backpackers cool their tired feet in the canal. Bikers cruise around the airport, enjoying the first buds of spring. Hawaiian shirts featured prominently at the "Office."

May Events

Sat., May 1
Difficult Loop Hike - Old Rag Mtn.
Shenandoah National Park, VA

Fri-Sun, May 7-9 @ 7 PM
White Water Rafting - Cheat River
Albright, WV

Sat., May 8
Difficult Hike - Catocтин
Thurmont, MD

Sat., May 8
Bahama Breeze Drinks and Food
Columbia, MD

Sun., May 9
Easy Hike for Mother's Day
Calvert County, MD

Sat., May 15
Difficult AT Hike - High Rock
Appalachian Trail, MD

Sat. - Sun. May 15-16
ROPES Course Adventure Weekend
Parkton, MD

Wed., May 19
Clinic on Event Planning
College Park, MD

Sat., May 22
Guided Walk at Brookside Gardens
Wheaton, MD

Sat., May 22
Difficult AT Hike - Washington Monmt.
Myersville, MD

Sat., May 22
Salsa Dancing and Dinner
Adams Morgan, Washington, DC

Sun., May 23
Easy Hike and Picnic
Greenbelt, MD

Sun., May 30
Moderate Hike and BBQ
Michaux State Forest, PA

Visit the web site for a complete listing of our Events!

Check out a Local Trail

by John Putman, MOC Member

Tired of going around in circles?

Baltimore has long been a little short in the biker/hiker path department. One can ride/roll/walk within the boundaries of Druid Hill park or hit the myriad paths within Patterson Park; or maybe take one's chances on the street. Now, however, there is a car-free path that starts at one part of town and actually ends in another part of town!

The recently improved and extended Gwynns Falls Trail runs in a generally east-west direction, following the Gwynns Falls stream valley. At the eastern end, the trail forks with one fork ending at the Inner Harbor and the other along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River near Cherry Hill Park. At the west end is Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, home to 1,200 acres and approximately 10 miles of trails (some of which were recently cleaned up by fellow MOC members!) in a unique urban setting. Currently, the trail is approximately seven miles in length. When completed in the summer of this year, the trail will run about 14 miles, and will connect with the Baltimore and Annapolis (B&A) trail.

The trail passes over bridges that leapfrog the stream in many spots. Mostly asphalt and crushed stone, the trail changes surfaces throughout. There are several street crossings too, so be prepared. Though not strenuous, the trail contains a few serious hills.

Since the trail passes through eight city parks, there is, mixed in with the urban environment, plenty of green along with the quiet gurgle of the ever-present stream. At one point, to the left, one can see immense, neatly hewn stone cubes piled high to support the railroad tracks. At the same moment, to the right, a tree full of singing birds arches over the trail from a sharply sloping hill covered with clover. The entire trail is full of such contrasts.

The trail currently goes through about 30 neighborhoods. Thus, there are opportunities to stop and experience various things the city has to offer. During my last venture upon the trail, I stopped at *Jim and Eda's Bar* on Wilkens Avenue to sample what they claim to be "The Best Crab Cakes In Town." I don't know about that, but they were good nonetheless.

The Gwynns Falls Trail is a great path that could really use more usage. When I was on it last I saw maybe two other people. This is both good and bad. While the trail was quiet and pleasantly empty, if the trail remains underused, it could easily fall into disrepair.

There is no better way to support a hiker/biker path than by using it. The trail is a terrific way to see parts of the city often ignored or overshadowed by the Inner Harbor and Fell's Point. The path also provides a good workout option as well as offering a respite from the urban chaos that surrounds us.

For more information and volunteer opportunities, please visit the Gwynns Falls Trail website at: www.gwynnsfallstrail.org

Editor's notes:

Check out some upcoming and ongoing events at the trail and Baltimore's other parks:

June 20: Tour du Parks, a thirty-two mile loop through Baltimore's parks and neighborhoods. A fifteen mile traffic-free option is entirely in parks and trails. Proceeds benefit the city's parks. www.tourduparks.org

2nd Sunday of the month hikes (1-4pm): Meet at the tennis court off of Windsor Mill Road and Eagle Drive in Leakin Park.

Preservation Press

Return of the Crabs?

Every spring, from late April through roughly late May, horseshoe crabs come up onto the beaches along the U.S. East Coast to mate and lay their eggs on the beach. Scientists estimate that they have been doing this for between 200 to 350 million years, making them one of the most ancient species on Earth. Not only do they predate the age of the dinosaurs, but they even predate the Atlantic beaches onto which they storm!

While the crabs come up all along the Atlantic coast, they rarely come in larger numbers in one place than the Delaware Bay basin, where the beaches turn black with their shells as they crawl up the beach and over each other to lay their eggs. And it is here too that another miraculous natural interaction takes place. Where the beach is not covered with crabs, it is covered with migrating birds digging through the sand for eggs.

Most of these birds are extreme distance fliers. They winter in warm quarters in the Caribbean and then fly north through the Delaware Bay region on their way to summer in the Arctic. Some fly even further: the red knot flies nearly 20,000 miles each year to enjoy two summers and no winters by migrating all the way to the southern tip of South America. For these birds, Delaware is a critical stop to feed up and restore lost body weight and energy before flying their last leg.

Timing is everything: if they come too early, the crabs may not be there yet or not in sufficient numbers to support them. Too late and they may not make it to the Arctic in time to have their chicks ready to fly for the brief Arctic summer when the insects swarm. The horseshoe crab eggs are not a particularly rich food source, but they are abundant enough that a week or two of feasting allows the birds to double their weight, giving them the resources they need to continue. The crabs plant their eggs too deep for the birds to reach them, but when the beach is covered with competing crabs, many eggs get churned up towards the top where the birds can reach them. Thus it

is also vital to the birds that the crabs are present in very high numbers.

These requirements of timing and numbers are true in Delaware Bay more so than anywhere else in the crab habitat areas. This makes the birds quite a sensitive indicator of crab numbers. Birders have noticed problems, with reports of a 50 - 90% decline in crab numbers since 1990, noticed first as declines in bird numbers. Obviously, loss of crabs impacts far more than the crab populations themselves.

Since 2000, the Atlantic states and federal government have enacted various legislation to protect the crabs from commercial trawling (crabs are used as bait in conch and eel traps, among other things). In 2001, the Commerce Department declared a 1500 square mile offshore horseshoe crab sanctuary which runs in shallow waters from Ocean City, New Jersey, to Ocean City, Maryland. States promote the use of bait bags, which reduces the quantity of bait needed in a single trap, and the University of Delaware has been working on an artificial scent lure for fishing that might eliminate much of the demand for real crabs.

It is too soon to tell just how much impact these will have. Female crabs take ten years to reach maturity and begin planting their first egg hatches. But biologists are hopeful that the rapid drop is reversible and has been caught in time to rescue the species as well as the wider web of wildlife that depends on them.

The crabs can be seen coming up on most Delaware beaches, but the best beaches tend to be in the area sheltered by Delaware Bay north of Cape Henlopen. They can sense storms and tend not to come up in high numbers when foul weather is approaching as they are more likely to get pounded in the surf getting onto the beach in these conditions. Scientists remain baffled about how they have been getting the Weather Channel for 350 million years from underwater. These miraculous survivors from before the Jurassic apparently have a trick or two still to teach us.

-Jesse Allen, Preservation Coordinator

MOC Member Spotlight

Jeff Schneider



*Primary MOC involvement: Hiking - leading and participating
*Favorite Adventure Sport, Travel, or Social Activity: Hiking, and I'm starting to get into back-packing. I go all over for live music, too.

*Currently lives in: Sparks, MD

*Originally from: Unlike many MOC'ers, I'm actually from Maryland.

*Favorite TV/books/movies/music: Globetrekker, The People's Court, Leave it to Beaver, "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter" - Carson McCullers, Michael Collins, The Karate Kid, Rock/Folk/Irish - Uncle Tupelo, The Pogues

*Favorite sports team: University of Maryland football and basketball

*Favorite local "getaway": The Charles Theatre

*Job: Database Developer

Other fun info about you: I've been to Ireland! (eds. Note: check out his web page for more info on his trip. See the Member Area)

*Best part about organizing for MOC: Introducing people to new places

*Anything else: It's a Halloween photo!

Eds. Note: Ahoy, mateys! As Jeff suggests, the pirate garb is not his usual MOC getup. Find Jeff leading a series of Appalachian Trail hikes as well as other local favorites with a big smile on his face. Look for an upcoming article from Jeff about the AT in this newsletter. His dedication to organizing great hikes makes Jeff our Member Spotlight this month.

Who would you like to see recognized here? Submit suggestions to: explorer@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Monthly Statistics

As of May 1st

1624 - Total Members To Date
102 - April New Members
60% - Female Members
40% - Male Members
32.3 - Average Member Age

Organize an Event

It's simple, fun to do, and gives you great leadership experience that you can use on your resume. If it sounds like something for you, please let us know. You can find step-by-step instructions in the Member Area of the web site, or come to a New Organizer clinic.

events@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Save a Tree

If you are done with this issue, please consider throwing it in your paper recycle bin instead of into a trash can.

Officers

Amy Pickwick

Founder & President

apickwick@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Mark Zawodny

Treasurer & Co-Founder

mzawodny@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Brian Loughery

Event Coordinator

bloughery@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Colin Babb

Historian

cbabb@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Katie Stofer

Newsletter Editor

kstofer@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Joanne Milne

Community Relations Coordinator

jmilne@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Jesse Allen

Preservation Coordinator

jallen@marylandoutdoorclub.org



Member Bulletin Board

The MOC does not maintain a bulletin board on its web site because it's too hard to monitor, so we've made it a feature of the newsletter. Use this area to hook up a team for a race, get a group together for another special event that wouldn't necessarily be an MOC outing, or for other networking.

Got a post for the board? Email explorer@marylandoutdoorclub.org

Bike Trail Scouters Wanted

Ryan Meadows of Owings Mills is looking for members interested in scouting bike trails in Annapolis, York, PA, and Gettysburg among others. Contact Ryan through the Member Area of the web site if you're interested.

Any Beginning Golfers?

Would you like to improve your game (or finally hit the ball in the air) without slowing down and irritating the more experienced golfers in your foursome? Brian Marron would like to organize regular golf outings for groups of beginners. "We will experience the frustration together and provide each other support. Play Par-3s as well as the more affordable full courses. Two rules: Thou shalt not throw thy clubs into yonder lake, at other players, or at course employees; and, thou shalt not use the golf cart to run down the goose that stole your ball. Contact Brian for details.

Interested in Monday Events?

Katie Stofer is looking for people interested in hiking, biking, etc. on Mondays as her work schedule is changing to give her that day off. If you're a student or otherwise have Mondays off, let's get out there and explore this summer. Please contact her for details.

Log on to the Member Network on the Member Area of the web site to contact these members.

Join the MOC - It's Free!

The Maryland Outdoor Club conducts all administrative tasks through our web site to cut down on processing time & costs. If you are interested in signing up for membership, go to marylandoutdoorclub.org and click on any of the "Join Now" buttons you'll find throughout the site. The short process will save you time later on when you sign up for events and don't need to re-enter your information.

The MOC does not sell or share your personal information with any 3rd party.

Ads & Classifieds

Your business can reach hundreds of potential customers each month with an ad in exchange for items/goods. MOC members can sell single used items or place notices. Classifieds are \$5.00 per 25 words or less. Contact the Editor for details.

Editor's Corner

I am very excited this month with all our Member-submitted content. I've actually got a few articles on the line for next month already. What does this mean? It means seeing more of what YOU want in the newsletter, not just what I find to fill pages. I'm to the point where I'm wondering if I can find any space to write anything myself, and that's the best feeling I can think of. So, keep them coming! Tell us about a great trip you took, or offer us some advice from your last shopping trip to buy equipment. Don't feel you have to limit yourself to articles, either. If you're a budding cartoonist, photographer, poet, whatever, feel free to submit your content. Or if you just have ideas for things you'd like to see, I will find someone to write about the topic or do it myself.

Watch the web site in the upcoming months for a more formal poll about how you like the newsletter, and what you'd like to see here. -Katie Stofer
explorer@marylandoutdoorclub.org