



# HEMLOCK HAPPENINGS

**Deep Creek Lake State Park Master Naturalist**

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 WINTER 2024

## Welcome to Hemlock Happenings

**By Ranger Cricket Smith**

Welcome to the debut edition of the **Hemlock Happenings** newsletter!

As we step into 2024, Deep Creek Lake State Park is poised for a year of remarkable growth and opportunity. I'm honored to lead the Master Naturalist community and provide assistance to our dedicated park volunteers. Within these pages, you'll uncover thrilling volunteer prospects, become acquainted with our passionate staff, delve into the diverse flora and fauna of our surroundings, peruse suggested reading materials, and more! Keep your eyes peeled for updates on all things park-related. Join us as we embark on this exciting journey together!



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# Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

**March**  
**30th, Saturday**

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**Natural Egg Dyeing** 11:00am - 1:00pm  
**Deep Creek Lake State Park**

**April**

**23rd, Tuesday**

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**Ramp Cookoff** 11:00am - 1:00pm  
**Deep Creek Lake State Park**

**June**

**First week of June, TBD**

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**Garden Installation**  
**Sang Run State Park**

**July**

**13th, Saturday**

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**Art in the Park** 10:00am - 5:00pm  
**Deep Creek Lake State Park**

**14th, Sunday**

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**Art in the Park** 10:00am - 4:00pm  
**Deep Creek Lake State Park**

**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 Plant Sale** 11:00am - 3:00pm  
**Sang Run State Park**



# ROY MUSSELWHITE

## PARK MANAGER

### PROFILE

Deep Creek Lake State Park Manager Roy Musselwhite grew up in the rural countryside of Locust Grove, not far from Mt. Savage, and spent his youth outdoors, exploring the mountains and deep forests of Western Maryland.

Following graduation from Allegheny College with a degree in forestry, he worked in the private sector for a few years, including work as a surveyor before beginning his journey as a park ranger. "I answered an ad for a trail specialist at Green Ridge State Forest near Flintstone, MD." Then in 2005 Musselwhite accepted a job as a park ranger at Deep Creek Lake State Park followed by a stint as a crew supervisor at Swallow Falls State Park where he was promoted to assistant manager. He returned to Deep Creek as park manager six years ago.

With more than 20 years of park service, Musselwhite said it was both opportunity and fate that drew him to the job he loves. In addition to Deep Creek, he also manages Sang Run State Park and is the river manager for the Youghiogheny River. "Park rangers are responsible for visitor experience, environmental education programs, conservation and habitat maintenance, park maintenance and facilities management."

"People don't get into this career for the money," he said, "but for the love of the outdoors and desire to protect it. We are stewards of the public land and short-term caretakers for this special place."

When not working he enjoys camping and hiking with his wife Julia Musselwhite, a park ranger at New Germany State Park, and their 12-year-old bloodhound, Rosey. "What I do for fun is very much tied to what I do for work," he said. He is also a competitive shooter, a hobby that he started in high school and now competes nationally and internationally. He has been the Maryland Service Rifle Champion seven times and uses his skills to teach firearms instruction for the Maryland Park Service. "I love to share my passion for shooting with others and help them succeed," he said.

In the future, Musselwhite hopes to create educational programs for teenagers in small group settings. "I got hooked as a teenager on nature and the outdoors and want to provide that opportunity to others." He shared that one of his most rewarding experiences was working with two teenagers at Backbone Mountain Youth Center last year. "It was really the highlight of my summer and spending quality time mentoring two young men was very special."

As park manager he makes it a priority to spend time each day with the rest of the staff which includes four other rangers, administrative and operational staff, along with approximately 25 seasonal workers each year.

"I make it a point to talk to each of the staff every day to hear their ideas and concerns and provide them with updates and share information. We're always looking for ways to improve the parks and visitor experience."



Stay tuned for more details of the natural egg dyeing volunteer opportunity slated for Saturday, March 30th 11:00am - 1:00pm at the Deep Creek Lake State Park Discovery Center. This popular event is always a big hit with the kids.



Several Master Naturalists volunteered at the Christmas Open House at the Deep Creek Discovery Center helping children decorate Christmas trees. Volunteers included Deb Carey, Peggy Chappell, Jay Condon, Rusty O'Neal, Deb Shumaker, and Shanna Sincell.

## 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/>



# Maryland Master Naturalist Program Continues to Grow With Banner Year

2023 saw the largest number of graduates completing the Maryland Master Naturalist program with 270 people successfully completing the training, representing 22 host sites throughout the state. Since the program began in 2010, more than 2,255 people have completed the training.

For Deep Creek Lake State Park, eight individuals completed the inaugural program in 2022 and 10 completed the program last year.

The statewide program is managed through the University of Maryland Extension and Joy Shindler Rafey has been with the program since 2013 and has seen the program continue to gain interest and expand in host sites.

“University of Maryland Extension first explored the Master Naturalist program concept in 2005 and, after careful planning and the work of many agencies and individuals, the pilot Maryland Master Naturalist volunteer training began in March 2010 at the Howard County Conservancy.” One year later, 14 trainees went on to become certified Maryland Master Naturalists. Since then, the program has grown to nearly 50 host sites throughout the state, and an average of 200 individuals enrolled in the program each year.

At first glance the program can seem intimidating Rafey said. “It’s a rigorous schedule with a lot of content. We expose students to a lot of material, but we don’t expect them to know all of it.” The goal is to teach students to be comfortable with the subjects, gain some basic knowledge and feel capable of finding an answer when asked. “The program is not designed to provide knowledge just for personal acquisition, but knowledge for application as a volunteer in the program.

Each host site follows a standardized curriculum outline as required content with time requirements for those topics, and program facilitators can add site specific programming of interest to their geographic area which helps customize the training for each host site.

In addition to the obvious volunteer opportunities available through the program like guiding hikes and trail maintenance, many volunteers come into the program with a lot of life skills that really add to the program.

“In my Master Naturalist class, we had a recently retired University of Maryland librarian who was great at cataloging all of the pre-school supplies and combing through the site’s library, organizing and managing all of the educational resources.”

Rafey is also the 2024 president of the Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach & Service Programs (<https://anrosp.wildapricot.org/>), a peer support organization for Master Naturalist-type programs. She noted that most states have a Master Naturalist-type program and many are similar to the Maryland program, though others have smaller geographic service areas or are non-profit rather than university or extension-affiliated.

Rafey said that regardless of where a host site is located, anyone who becomes a Maryland Master Naturalist becomes a part of the statewide Maryland Master Naturalist ecosystem. She encouraged volunteers to visit other host sites and see how they are doing things and bring back good ideas to their local program.

“We don’t have programs in Washington and Allegheny Counties yet, so Deep Creek is kind of an outpost. I encourage our western Maryland Master Naturalists to connect with staff and volunteers, including Maryland Master Naturalists, in other state parks. At the state level, we can support this through the statewide Maryland Master Naturalist GoogleGroup Listserv, so be sure to share event announcements and invitations to Deep Creek programs and watch for events and activities in neighboring areas.”

Using valuation calculated by Independent Sector, a nonprofit that tracks volunteer service, Maryland Master Naturalists contributed more than \$1 million in volunteer time last year and almost \$6 million in volunteer time since the program began.

Rafey invites Master Naturalists to stay in touch via email at [jrafey@umd.edu](mailto:jrafey@umd.edu).

# Master Naturalist Spotlight:

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## Linda Harris



*Editor's Note: In each issue of the newsletter we will highlight a Master Naturalist and we're starting with Linda Harris, who was in the first graduating class of Deep Creek Lake State Park.*

Harris lives in Swanton, MD near Jennings Lake and is a transplant from Ellicott City, MD. She has lived here since retirement 17 years ago after a 23-year career as a commercial real estate financial administrator in Baltimore. She grew up here at Deep Creek Lake on Penn Point.

### **Why Master Naturalist?**

I always wanted to attend a MN program that was relevant to Garrett County, was the first person to sign up for the class, and recruited several other people to take the course.

I loved the program and particularly enjoyed the water ecology and tree ID sessions, learning about the lake and the surrounding wetlands. I loved the trip to the swamp with Kevin Dodge.

Plants are my big thing and the wildlife part was always missing and that's where the Master Naturalist program came in. The class rounded out all the things I was naturally interested in. When the class was over, I really missed it. It was so interesting, and the speakers were so good. The class really filled in the parts that were missing for me from a conservation standpoint.

I have been in the Mountain Laurel Garden Club for many years and am the Chair of the Conservation Committee. My committee members do a lot of things to support the Discovery Center including elementary school field trips in the Spring. The Discovery Center invites the local elementary schools to visit the park and we help with the pollinator games and making seed balls using native wildflower seeds. We also have several projects at Sang Run which we adopted early on.

### **What Has Been Most Rewarding?**

I love teaching others about native plants. I have a greenhouse and potting shed and grew 720 native plants last year for the plant sale at Sang Run, Labor Day weekend at the Corn Fest. They sold out in 45 minutes. I raised them from seed and took care of them all summer. We had 26 different species of native plants, all of which were pollinator plants. I love to share information about native plants and help people grow their own.

We also did all the plantings at the at the DCLSP Headquarters Building last year. It was our MN Project that Jenny Neville and I worked on for the course.

### **Advice for New Master Naturalists**

You need to be aware of all the things that are happening at the state parks. There is so much going on; find something that you are really interested in. There are so many opportunities—not just at Deep Creek but also at Sang Run which is a hidden gem. If you don't see what you are looking for, then don't be afraid to suggest something.



Pictured above is the Class of 2023 Master Naturalists. From Left Front Row: Jeannie Campbell, Shanna Sincell, Jay Condon, Nancy Bensley, Nick Smith, Liz Christmas Smith and John Wack. Back row from left: Gary Crites, Deb Shumaker, Ranger Cricket Smith, and Lashly Lloyd. Not pictured is Sheri Kosh.



Winter sunset at the beach at Deep Creek Lake State Park.

## Maryland Group Calls for Plastic Bottle Deposit to Discourage Littering

A Maryland group is encouraging lawmakers to pass a bill that would create a 10-cent plastic bottle and can deposit program.

Martha Ainsworth, chair of the Maryland Sierra Club's Zero Waste Team, said the goal of the program is to capture the billions of beverage containers that don't get recycled. There are over five billion single-use beverage containers sold in Maryland every year, she said, and only one-fourth of them are recycled.

On February 8, the Maryland Bottle Bill Coalition hosted a virtual rally on Zoom in support of Maryland House Bill 735 and Maryland Senate Bill 642, legislation creating the Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Program. More than 180 people from all over the state attended the virtual rally.

Listen to the recording here. !  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f98666s0fBM>

## Call for Submissions, Story Ideas for Spring Issue

We would love your ideas for the Spring 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, Linda Harris, Ranger Roy Musselwhite, Joy Shindler-Rafey, Liz Christmas Smith, Kerri Wixted, and most of all-- Ranger Cricket Smith.

We are already at work on the Spring issue of **Hemlock Happenings** and planning on a May publication date. Please get your input to us by March 30.

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.

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



# Screams in the Night

By Kerri Wixted

On winter nights, you might hear harrowing sounds reminiscent of a woman screaming in the woods. Those chilling calls are actually from our local red foxes.

Red fox mating season begins in January and continues through March. During this time, competing males will scream at each other while females, aka vixens, will scream to attract potential suitors. As a quick aside- the fisher “scream” is a myth and is actually a red fox call.

Red foxes can breed around 10 months of age. Typically, males and females will form pair bonds but don't always keep it monogamous. They will either construct a den site or take over an area made by another animal, like a groundhog. Occasionally, they will also den under sheds and porches, so be mindful if you see foxes hanging around those structures.

The young, known as kits, are born 7-8 weeks after mating occurs. Kits average 3-4 ounces when they are born, and the female will meticulously tend to them for the first couple of weeks. During this time, the family will be dependent on the male to supply food, so he will spend long hours hunting. It is not uncommon to see a weary fox out during the day trying to make ends meet for his hungry family.

Around 5- 6 weeks after birth, the youngsters will begin to travel short distances outside the den. This timing is usually in late April/early May in our area. As the kits get older, they will travel further away. It's not uncommon to see the kits out on their own, but the parents generally are not farther than earshot away. Interestingly enough, it is not unusual for shoes, pet toys, and other objects left outdoors to go missing as foxes will take them to play with. I have found all sorts of things from gardening gloves to Crocs to underwear outside of active dens during kit season!

Like other wildlife, the top ways to help are to respect their space and to not feed them. If you see foxes trying to den in or around structures, then the best thing to do is exclude them with fencing or other means before kits are born. It's also important to note that foxes, like other wildlife, need habitat and not handouts. Feeding foxes can create dependencies and can cause them to congregate, making it easier for them to pass disease to one another and to create conflicts with themselves and your neighbors. **Reprinted with permission.**







# Wild Mushroom Bowl

**Contributed by Liz Christmas Smith**

Though Mycologist Chris Hull recommends coating oyster mushrooms in a seasoned flour mixture and frying in peanut oil to really make them shine (mmm - sandwich), I took an easier way out. Anyway, can't wait to try his strategy next time, but these were delicious over rice using the following simple methods.

Set Jasmine rice to cook on the stove (preferring a ratio of 1 1/4 cups water to 1 cup grains for a nice, firm texture that holds up to toppings (and makes for great leftover fried rice if there's extra).

Gently brush away dirt and moss from the oysters. Slice off dried parts or bits of stuck bark. I did not wash because, in my judgment, this particular specimen had nothing to hide.

Pull apart caps to examine each fan's gills, being particularly vigilant for bugs since oysters are known to harbor friends.

Pan fry the mushrooms over medium heat in a plant-based, soy-free buttery spread with salt and pepper until both sides of each piece developed a rich golden brown crisp (you might need to go medium-high depending on your setup). Note that my pan was a bit crowded, so cooking in two batches may have been ideal.

Deglaze the pan with a low-sodium soy sauce and continued to cook for just a bit longer, giving each piece a final flip. The entire cook took about ten minutes.

Remove mushrooms from the pan and slice them julienne style to loosely match the size and shape of other rice bowl veggies (raw cucumbers, carrots, radishes, and sprouts).

Before adding toppings, toss the cooked rice with ginger (finely chopped and fridge pickled in seasoned rice wine vinegar), honey,

and sesame oil. In the past, I've added Trader Joe's Yuzu Hot Sauce and Bachan's Japanese Barbecue Sauce at this stage for rice bowls and think that they're both stellar options for added flavor.

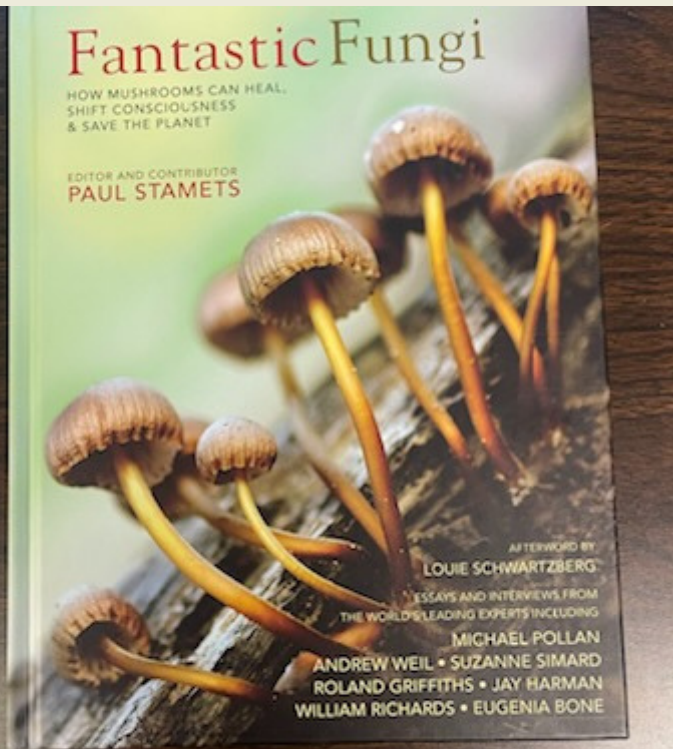


**Master Naturalist Liz Christmas Smith foraging for mushrooms and hit the jackpot with these oysters. Mycologist Chris Hull confirmed their identity and the two of them offer this simple and delicious recipe for a wild mushroom bowl. In the next issue, we will interview Hull as he shares his passion and incredible knowledge of mushrooms and fungi with us.**

**Note: Be sure to confirm the identify of mushrooms before consuming them.**

# Best Books

Considered one of the most comprehensive fungi books in the world and a call to action to learn more about mushrooms and fungi to the betterment of our planet—and ourselves.



nature. Edited by Paul Stamets, an international mushroom and fungi expert, the book makes the case that “mushrooms are food for the body and medicine for the soul.”

The book includes three sections that educate us on the power of mushrooms—for the planet, for the body, and for the spirit. *Fantastic Fungi* is a great book to begin your journey learning about mushrooms and how research points to mycelium as a solution to our gravest environmental challenges. It also examines research that reveals mushrooms as a viable alternative to Western pharmacology, and fungi’s marvelous proven ability to shift consciousness.

The photography is beautiful with more than 400 pictures of the mycelial world’s most rare and beautiful species in their natural environment.

*Fantastic Fungi* is a companion book for the documentary of the same name, available on Netflix. The 80-minute documentary is well worth the watch—educational and entertaining and the time-lapse photography of the documentary is simply stunning.

This book is a must-have for your library and is available at the Deep Creek Discovery Center.

Be sure to check out Stament’s 2008 TED Talk, “Six Ways How Mushrooms Can Save the World.”

*Fantastic Fungi: How Mushrooms Can Heal, Shift Consciousness, and Save the Planet* is a collection of essays and interviews from the world’s leading ecologists and doctors that explores how fungi and mushrooms can restore Earth’s ecosystems, repair our physical health, and renew humanity’s symbiotic relationship with

## Maryland Nature Facts



Male white-breasted nuthatch

White-breasted nuthatches can be found year-round in Maryland as well as throughout much of the United States, parts of Mexico and the southern reaches of Canada. They are a common feeder bird.

Nuthatches get their name from their habit of jamming large food pieces, like acorns, into tree crevices and then hammering them with their sharp beak to get the seed to “hatch”. Nuthatches are also known to cache seeds for future use.

In winter, the white-breasted nuthatch will join foraging flocks led by chickadees or titmice. This may be because it makes food easier to find. Also foraging in flocks allows more birds to keep an eye out for predators.