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Newsletter of Natural Resources in the National Capital Region

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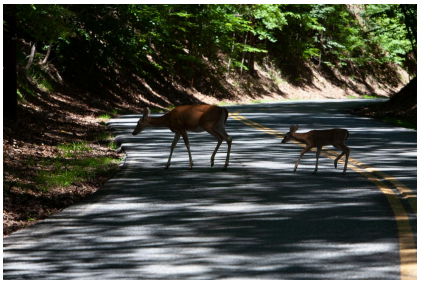
Reminder: Chronic Wasting Disease is on the March Towards NCR

by Scott Bates, NCR Wildlife Biologist



[Photo: Healthy deer cross a road at C&O Canal NHP. Credit: NPS]

A reminder for all National Capital Region (NCR) parks, regardless of deer management status: chronic wasting disease (CWD) is s-l-o-w-l-y moving towards us. These are the current locations of CWD in free-ranging deer and the distance to the closest NCR parks:

- Culpeper, Virginia: 32 miles to Manassas; 33 miles to Prince William
- Frederick County, Virginia: 20 miles to Harpers Ferry
- Clear Springs, Maryland: 18 miles to Antietam
- Arden, West Virginia: 16 miles to Harpers Ferry; 17 miles to Antietam

Current NCR policy is to use opportunistic and targeted sampling for CWD recommended in the NPS Chronic Wasting Disease Manager's Notebook. (This concurs with the American Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Best Management Practices for CWD.)
Opportunistic sampling is defined as the testing of dead cervids (members of the deer family). Targeted sampling is defined as killing and testing cervids displaying clinical signs of chronic wasting disease. Clinical symptoms include weight loss, stumbling, and increased drinking/urination/salivation.
Samples should be sent to the Colorado State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Fort Collins through WASO- Wildlife Health Branch . There is no charge and results are sent back within 10 days. For more information contact Scott Bates by NPS email or at 202-339-8326.

Searching for Vulnerable Plants in Harpers Ferry

[Photo:Wild petunia (*Ruellia humilis*), a Maryland state rare plant. Credit: Brosi]

When the weather is extreme, it's good to check in on your neighbors and make sure they're okay. All the more so if your neighbor happens to be a rare plant, "You still there? Everything alright?"

That's just the kind of good deed a small group of students, led by Frostburg State University's Dr. Sunshine Brosi has started this summer at Harpers Ferry. They're revisiting spots where rare, threatened, and endangered plants have been recorded before, to see if the plants are still around and in what numbers, and to document conditions at the site. It's a project happening through an agreement between the park and Frostburg through the Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CW CESU).

These vulnerable plants can be tricky to find of course. They may not appear every year, and some tend to grow in out-of-the-way habitats like limestone-red cedar glades and limestone-dolomite barrens. So the team is going to be searching over the next three years in short stints during spring, summer, and fall.

Already this summer, the team has confirmed finding a population of the small flowering plant called wild petunia (*Ruellia humilis*), a state rare species in Maryland. This low-growing, purple-flowered plant occurs in open woods, glades, prairies, and fields and could potentially be easy to overlook.

The Maryland state threatened Shumard oak (*Quercus shumardii*), which can't hide nearly as well as Ruellia, is also on the search list, but is not yet confirmed. The Shumard oak is a southern species that comes up into Maryland along the C&O Canal and thrives in uncommon areas of rich, limestone bottom-land. Shumard oak looks similar to the more common scarlet oak. (It is also one of several host plants for moths and butterflies including the Maryland state endangered Edwards' Hairstreak (*Satyrium edwardsii*).)

So the Frostburg team certainly has their work cut out for them. In addition to tracking down these plants in their old haunts, the search team will look for other similar habitats within the park to try and find any new populations.

And the upshot of all this? Knowing where rare, threatened, and endangered plants are and what's going on around them will make it easier to protect them from invasive or encroaching plants and pests, or even landscape-level threats like high deer populations or the absence of naturally occurring fir es. If no one checks on them, they could disappear and leave us wondering, could we have done something to help?

This project is facilitated by the Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CW CESU). The CW CESU promotes stewardship and integrated ecosystem management of natural and cultural resources in the Chesapeake Watershed through collaborative research, technical assistance, and education. To do research with CW CESU, please contact Danny Filer at 301-689-7108.

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

CHESAPEAKE WATERSHED COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNIT

Tracking Forest Regeneration in NCR

Each year, the Inventory & Monitoring program looks at vegetation data from around the region to assess the condition of National Capital Region forests and see what kind of futures might be possible for our most abundant and conspicuous landcover.

Tree seedlings and small saplings remain in short supply in NCR parks even while management of overabundant deer populations is helping out. It's a slow-motion cliff hanger since forest change is best measured in decades. The most recent assessment is available as an online Resource Brief .

[Photos: The same Rock Creek forest monitoring plot in 2012 (above) and 2016 (below) showing seedling and understory regrowth. Credit: NPS]

Animal Care and Use Committee

Reminder to all park resource staff that proposals of vertebrate animal research, teaching, or training must be reviewed by the NPS Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (NPSIACUC).

Researchers must complete the NPSIACUC general submission form if the project has not been reviewed by their institutional or regional IACUC. If a project has been reviewed by an outside IACUC, the researcher must provide a copy of that IACUC's approval notice, a copy of proposed study plan that was approved by the IACUC, and the NPSIACUC concurrence form. For more information please contact Scott Bates or visit the NPSIACUC website.

[Photo: a meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*) at Monocacy NB. Credit: NPS]

NCR's Information Sharing Specialist

by Megan Nortrup, NCR Information Sharing Specialist

Like most government job titles, Information Sharing Specialist is not entirely self-explanatory. But when an NPS friend asked me, "so who do you work for now and what exactly are you doing?" I realized a re-introduction was probably in order.

This spring, the National Capital Region, Resource Stewardship and Science (RESS) directorate brought aboard Megan Nortrup as Information Sharing Specialist for natural and cultural resources. RESS provides scientific and scholarly research in natural and cultural resources, as well as technical assistance, analysis, and evaluation of resource management issues.

A 10 year veteran of the National Park Service, with over 15 years of experience in publishing and communications, Ms. Nortrup most recently served as Science Communications Specialist with the NCR Inventory & Monitoring Network while also providing support to RESS more broadly.

She now works equally with regional cultural and natural resource staff (including the team at the Museum Resource Center) to help make their work more accessible, transparent, and digestible for parks and the public. This includes providing support for housing RESS reports digitally in the NPS Data Store, and arranging for hard copy printing of reports and the accessibility of regional publications for those with disabilities (per Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act). She also helps highlight stories and messages from RESS research and analysis in resource briefs, web content, newsletters, social media, and other formats for use by park and regional staff.

Ms. Nortrup works closely with the NCR Communications Division. If you have a question about natural or cultural resources in the NCR, please don't hesitate to contact her at 202-339-8314.

[Photo: Megan Nortrup Credit: NPS]

Inventory & Monitoring Field Work in Your Park

During fall (September - November), I&M field work continues for stream water quality and forest vegetation.

For details of specific locations to be visited , consult the I&M weekly field updates emailed out every Friday to your park's Chief of Resources.

Forest Vegetation - runs till the end of September at all I&M parks in NCR.

Stream Water Quality - continues on a bi-monthly basis at all I&M parks in NCR except C&O Canal.

[Photo: Water monitoring at Rock Creek Park. Credit: NPS]

Calendar

2019
SEPTEMBER
10. Forest Monitoring and Regeneration Meeting. Mather Training Center at Harpers Ferry. 9:30 am to 2:00 pm. Contact Megan Nortrup for details.

OCTOBER
17. Natural Resource Advisory Team (NAT) Meeting: Tentative date. Mather Training Center at Harpers Ferry. 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

2020 - The 20th Anniversary of NPS Exotic Plant Management Teams!

MARCH
26. 2020 Spotlight on National Park Resources in the National Capital Region.

JUNE
5. Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CW CESU) Annual Meeting. National Conservation Training Center (NCTC).

Submit your ideas for the next Natural Resource Quarterly newsletter.

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