

New Beginnings News Winter 2010

Hello and welcome to another edition of the *New Beginnings: Woodlawn Wildlife Area* Newsletter. It has been a great year for *New Beginnings*; with many new and exciting projects taking place. We had four big events onsite, including Earth Day, National Pollinator Week, National Public Lands Day Event, and the 2nd Annual Native Plant Sale to benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Cecil County. In between those events, volunteers from local Girl and Boy Scout troops, local schools, youth groups, community members, Universities and others ventured to the site to combat invasive weeds, plant native plants, learn about biodiversity and enhance wildlife habitat on site.

Being my fourth season at New Beginnings, I am amazed at the amount of devotion and enthusiasm that the community shows as they continue to make New Beginnings a special place for wildlife. Apparently, efforts to restore the site are working, as we have added quite a few interesting new species to the growing list of organisms that call this place home.

As the weather gets cooler, I will still be on site 1-2 times per week managing the site for wildlife. There are even more exciting plans in the works for the site, I encourage everyone to visit New Beginnings and see what's new.

If you have questions, or would like to know about volunteer opportunities at *New Beginnings*, I can be reached anytime by emailing me at jpoppp@wildlifehc.org.

Wishing you a New Year filled with new hope, new joy and *New Beginnings*!

Jeff Popp
Land Restoration Manager
Wildlife Habitat Council



<http://wildlifehc.org/programs/council-managed-programs/new-beginnings/>

The Latest “dirt” and other happenings at New Beginnings: The Woodlawn Wildlife Area...

NO WEED LEFT BEHIND...

For the fourth consecutive year, activities at *New Beginnings* have been mainly to halt the further spread of invasive plant species and replace them with native ones. While there are many species of non-native plants in the area, control methods this past season were focused on the Japanese honey suckle (*Lonicera japonica*) mile-a-minute weed (*Polygonum perfoliatum*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*). These plants are quick to compete with native plants and can kill natives by shading them out. Native plants planted in places where invasive plants have been removed include foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), cinnamon fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*), hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctiloba*), wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), and wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*). In addition, oaks, maples, American holly, American elm, sassafras, sweetgum, dogwood, and other native trees have been planted as part of the sites restoration. Due to monitoring and removing invasive plants as they appeared, the amount of invasive species was significantly reduced this past growing season.

Natural control methods are always used if possible. Earlier this spring, the Water Witch Volunteer Fire Department assisted with a prescribed burn on the wildflower meadow. Prescribed burns return valuable nutrients to the soil, reduce invasive species, and allow dormant wildflower seeds to germinate when exposed to the elements. Burning is a natural occurrence that is usually caused by lightning strikes to dry ground. It is critical for preventing the natural succession of meadow habitat to forest. Working under a burn plan approved by both the county and the state of Maryland, the volunteers burned a total of three acres of the meadow in less than four hours. Within a week, signs of new growth were observed pushing from the soot covered earth. Within a month, very little signs of the prescribed burn remained as the warm season grasses and wildflowers thrived. The pictures below show the meadow before the burn, during the burn, one week after the burn, and two months after the bur. Thank you to Keith Williams and the [Water Witch Volunteer Fire Company](#) for their support and assistance.



1. Before the prescribed burn



2. During the prescribed burn



3. One week after the prescribed burn

4. Two months after the prescribed burn

MILE-A-MINUTE WEEVILS ARRIVE...

A new species has been observed at New Beginnings, the mile-a-minute weevil (*Rhynoncomimus latipes Korotyaev*). Native to China, this weevil naturally feeds on the stems and leaves of the invasive mile-a-minute weed (*Persicaria perfoliata*), an extremely invasive species of vine that thrives in disturbed sunny areas. Researchers have finally found a way to naturally decrease the persistence of the invasive vine by way of this weevil species. Without a natural predator, the vine can grow up to six inches per day. The vine quickly out-competes native plants, shrubs and even small trees, blocking needed sunlight and slowly killing them. As a result, natural ecosystems have been severely altered and destroyed as the range of the mile-a-minute vine grows each year.

After many years of studying the tiny insect, they have determined that the species is host specific to mile-a-minute weed, and cannot survive without it. Tests done to see if the weevil posed a threat to native species demonstrated that *P. perfoliata* is required for the weevil to complete its lifecycle. In 2004, permission was granted from the USDA to release weevils in several areas, including some in Maryland, to test their impact on reducing the non-native vines. They have been so successful at establishing themselves that they have now made their way to *New Beginnings*!

This spring, volunteers noticed young mile-a-minute plants with holes in the leaves. After some quick research and a few taps of the plants young vines, it was determined that New Beginnings has a healthy population of mile-a-minute weevils. The tiny insects can be observed on the tips of the plants leaves and terminal buds as they feast on the leaves and lay eggs in the stem. The larvae then feed from the inside of the stem as they develop, reducing the plants growth, allowing native species to flourish. University of Delaware Professor Judy Hough-Goldstein, one of the major researchers of the weevil, along with a group of students confirmed the weevil's presence when they visited the site in August.

According to Hough-Goldstein, the site was populated naturally from a release site almost six miles away, quite a journey for an insect the size of a pinhead.

While the weevil has already shown some impact to the mile-a-minute vine at New Beginnings, it is unlikely that the weevil will totally eradicate the vine from our landscape. However, the tiny insect does have the potential to reduce its growth to the point where native plant diversity can be maintained.



The tiny mile-a-minute weevil feeds on the vine from which it gets its common name.



The "shot holes" in the leaves of the invasive vine are a sure sign that weevils are present.

Photos by Jeff Popp, Wildlife Habitat Council

NEW BEGININGS 2ND ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

On Saturday May 15, 2010 New Beginnings held its second annual Native Plant Sale and Benefit. . Over 30 species of native plants, trees and shrubs were available for sale to benefit the [Boys and Girls Club of Cecil County, MD \(BGCCC\)](#). [Bridgestone](#) sponsored this event for the second year in a row, demonstrating their commitment to both the community and the environment. In 2009, proceeds from the Native Plant Sale provided scholarships for two students to attend the Boys and Girls Club Summer Camp.

In April, students from the Boys and Girls Club worked with biologists from the Wildlife Habitat Council to pot up starter plants for the sale. They were cared for and nurtured until the mid-May sale where they were sold to community members. Species available included cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), prairie coneflower (*Ratibita pinnata*), blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), New York aster (*Aster novae-belgii*), white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), American beauty-berry (*Callicarpa americana*), blackjack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), among others. A variety of native carnivorous plants were also available including pitcher plants, sundews, and Venus flytraps thanks to a donation made by the [CarnivorousPlantNursery](#).

In addition to Native Plants for sale, shoppers could visit one of many educational booths to learn more about activities going on in Cecil County. Live animals included an eastern box turtle, a western hognose snake displayed by [Fair Hill Nature Center](#), and even live chickens representing how fun it can be to participate in the county's [4H Club](#). Fresh ice-

cream, donated by [Kilby Cream](#), was the perfect treat to end a fun day. Thank you to all who made this event a success.

Over 300 plants were sold resulting in even more scholarship funds for the Boys and Girls Club of Cecil County. We hope to raise even more for the BGCCC in 2011, so start spreading the word! The 3rd Annual New Beginnings Native Plant Sale will be held on **Saturday May 7th, 2011!**



Native plants for sale at the New Beginnings Native Plant Sale and Benefit. Money raised from the sale benefits the Boys and Girls Club of Cecil County.

Photos by Jeff Popp, Wildlife Habitat Council

NEW BEGINNINGS' VERNAL POOL

Success!! That is one word to describe the vernal pool installed at New Beginning in the spring of 2008. The one habitat New Beginnings was really in need of was a wetland. A vernal pool is a seasonal wetland filled by melting snow and spring rains. They are full in the spring, and are usually dry by the hottest days of summer. Due to the fact that they do dry up, they are not suitable for fish or other organisms requiring larger more permanent bodies of water. However, for organisms that require aquatic environments for part of their natural lifecycle such as amphibians, they are just right. The site now has a temporary wetland that collects spring rains and provides a breeding area for many species of amphibians, insects, and plants. It was installed in the spring of 2008 using a Firestone Pond Liner and has no filter. The water stays primarily crystal clear due to the natural balance of plants, algae, and other organisms found in the pool.

In just two years, the vegetation around the vernal pool has established itself and looks like it has always been there. To date, five species of amphibians have used the vernal pool to breed including the American toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*), spring peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*), green frog (*Rana clamitans*), pickerel frog (*Rana palustris*), and gray tree frog (*Hyla versicolor*). Countless aquatic insects and insect larvae have been observed such as diving beetles, dragonfly larvae, water striders, and caddisfly larvae. However, this pool is also heavily used by birds, turtles, and other wildlife to drink clean water. While this project certainly provides a benefit to the wildlife at New Beginnings, it is a great project to try in your own backyard!



Vernal pools provide excellent places for amphibians and insects to breed. This American toad tadpole is almost ready to leave the temporary wetland and live the rest of its life on land.

Photo by Jeff Popp, Wildlife Habitat Council

SCOUT SHOUT-OUTS!

On July 20th, 2010, Girl Scout Troop 629 ventured out to New Beginnings to work on a project to help meet their environmental requirements. Working together, they designed and installed a garden for the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas phaeton*), Maryland's official state insect.

The checkerspot is a small butterfly that gets its name from the checker like patterns on its wings. It boasts the red, gold and black colors of the Maryland state flag, which is probably one of the reasons it was named an official symbol of Maryland in 1973. The checkerspot's population has rapidly been declining, probably due to the loss of habitat of its larval host plant- white turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*). The caterpillars of the Baltimore checkerspot require white turtlehead plants to develop, although they have been known to feed on square stemmed monkey-flower (*Mimulus ringens*). Both of these plants prefer wet and sunny areas to grow. Loss of wetlands has destroyed much of the natural habitat for these plants, and therefore the checkerspot has also declined. Girl Scout Troop 629 wanted to help.

Troop 629 gathered tools and plants to help create habitat for the small butterfly. Using the flooded area of the stormwater management pond on the landfill cap, they planted over 50 plants in only an hour! Although the caterpillars feed exclusively on white turtlehead and monkey-flower, the adult butterflies feed on the nectar of many other flowering plants. For that reason, the girls chose other species of plants that might attract the adult checkerspots as they search for food like swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*), and New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*). Once finished, the girls identified some naturalized swamp milkweed already growing in the wet areas, and other native plants were identified. They will monitor the new habitat created to see if Baltimore Checkerspots utilize it for breeding in the future.



Girl Scout Troop 629 after creating a habitat for the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly, the Maryland's official state insect.

Photos by Jeff Popp, Wildlife Habitat Council

Earlier this summer Joe Watson, a local Boy Scout began researching and developing a project to satisfy his Eagle Scout ranking, the highest rank attainable of the Boy Scouts of America. It is attained by completing a service project that demonstrates leadership of others while performing a project to benefit the local community. Joe plans to install educational and interpretive signage around New Beginnings to assist those walking the trails with the different habitats found there. Each sign will be made of sustainable materials, and will describe and identify facts about the habitat that it correlates to. In addition, each sign will have color photos, and questions for the reader that foster thought provoking observation. A total of six signs will be placed along the trails at New Beginnings. He is off to a great start and is almost ready to complete his project. When the signs do finally go up, please feel free to check them out. Great job to both the Girl and Boy Scouts for their hard work to improve the habitat at the New Beginnings Wildlife Area in 2010!

OTHER UPDATES

- *New Beginnings* was registered as a **Monarch Waystation** in 2008! This means that the area provides milkweed, nectar plants, and shelter for monarch butterflies throughout their annual migration. In 2010, volunteers tagged 20 monarchs on their way to Mexico. *New Beginnings* is Monarch Waystation #1541. To learn more about the monarch's annual migration and the Monarch Waystation Program, visit <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>.
- On Saturday September 25, 2010, local citizens came together to celebrate the sixth-annual [National Public Lands Day](#) at *New Beginnings*. They tagged monarch butterflies on their way to Mexico, planted native plants, and removed over 15 bags of invasive species from the forest floor. It was a great way to spend a day celebrating and enhancing the public lands we all enjoy.
- Volunteers are needed for the spring bird breeding season to help monitor bird boxes. This requires a commitment of about 2 hours per week during the months of March- August. Please email the Land Restoration Program Manager at jpoppp@wildlifehc.org if you or your organization is interested. .
- Plans are in the works for a Teacher Training Workshop to be held this spring for local teachers and educators. Various conservation-based curricula will be explored dealing with the environment, natural resources, and the importance of wildlife habitat. Specific dates will be announced this winter. Please let us know if there is a specific curricula that you would like to see featured during this program. Check back to the *New Beginnings* website for updates.

NEW SPECIES LIST

This is a list of **NEW** species found at the Woodlawn Wildlife Area since the last Newsletter. While they may have been seen before by visitors, they have now been officially documented and added to the growing list of Woodlawn wildlife. They are:

Birds

Great Horned Owl, (*Bubo virginianus*)

Wild turkey, (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

Insects

Brown marmorated stink bug, (*Halyomorpha halys*)

Caddisfly larvae, (*Pycnopsyche* sp.)

Mile-a-minute weevil, (*Rhinocominus latipes Korotyaev*)

Pigeon tremex, (*Tremex columba*)

Predaceous diving beetle, (*Hydrophilus* sp.)

Reptiles/Amphibians

Eastern ribbon snake, (*Thamnophis sauritus sauritus*)

Pickerel frog, (*Rana palustris*)

Plants

Bladder sedge, (*Carex intumescens*)

Blue flag iris, (*Iris versicolor*)

Canada wild rye, (*Elymus canadensis glaucifolius*)

Flame azalea, (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*)

Fringed sedge, (*Carex crinite*)

Great blue lobelia, (*Lobelia siphilitica*)

Monkey flower, (*Mimulus ringens*)

New York ironweed, (*Vernonia noveboracensis*)

Lizards tail, (*Saururus cernuus*)

Showy tick trefoil, (*Desmodium canadense*)

Tussock sedge, (*Carex stricta*)

Virginia knotweed, (*Polygonum virginianum*)

White turtlehead, (*Chelone glabra*)

White vervain, (*Verbena urticifolia*)

Yellow passionflower, (*Passiflora lutea*)

Future Events at Woodlawn

*Check back on the Woodlawn Website for specific dates and times as they progress

- Winter Bird Walk
- Earth Day
- Amphibian Call Surveys
- Spring Native Plant Sale
- Teacher Training



<http://wildlifehc.org/programs/council-managed-programs/new-beginnings/>

PLANT TRIVIA

The answer to the last plant trivia was Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). While this flower resembles Garden Phlox, it is actually a relative of the mustard family and is considered exotic but not invasive. Native to the Mediterranean region, this ornamental was introduced to this country in the 17th century, and has now become naturalized in some woodland edges.

Can you identify the species of plant below?
Look for the answer in the following newsletter!



Hint: Don't get too depressed if you don't know this one!
It can be found growing in the grassland area at the New Beginnings Wildlife Area.

Warm wishes for the New Year!