



www.paxriverkeeper.org

July/August 2006
Semi-Monthly Update
Patuxent Riverkeeper
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Riverkeeper Launches Paddle Tours
Stresses on Sustainability, Scenery and Health

The Patuxent Riverkeeper has begun to offer paddle tours of our watershed—and in some cases on some of the other local waterways that also have waterkeepers. Besides good exercise and stunning scenery, our



Well wishers greet paddlers at the dock during a recent tour on the West Rhode River.

tours will offer a focus on sustainability. To Riverkeepers, sustainable practices are those that protect the ecosystem and allow consumers to make rational and pro-environmental choices about the products that they use in everyday life. While nearly all agree that we need to clean up our watersheds, the aim of altering human habits and behavior to reduce pollution and degradation is the essence of what we call “sustainability”. Sustainable food for example, is grown using agricultural and/or production practices that are good for the environment and healthy f or the people who consume the food. Generally it is

food that lacks needless chemicals, hormones or that have been grown in unwholesome mass produced conditions. Practitioners of sustainability encourage people in our technological world to get closer to nature, reduce their intake of harmful chemicals and of poorly made foods and to support those businesses and industries that work in harmony with the environment, reduce pollution and seek to conduct business in a manner consistent with these aims. The purpose of spreading information about sustainability is to broaden the range of choices available to us to help protect at least our portion of our world. Most market economies tend to reduce choice because it serves the profit aims of the dominant merchants. Our sustainability tours help make people more aware of the wide range of choices available so each of us can determine how we can best protect ourselves, our families and our environment. We live in an enterprise system often intent on making profits today and leaving the environmental and health problems to someone else. We can do better! Our tours often feature picnic meals prepared sustainably by local growers and food service establishments. Meanwhile kayaking is great fun and good exercise offering an intimate view of the natural world from a firsthand perspective. Our aim is to help people make hearty lifestyle choices that are also good for the environment.

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2006 Bernie Fowler Wade-In

The second Sunday in June marked the 21st Annual Fowler Wade-in at Broomes Island. This year's festivities were marked with a spirit of optimism and excitement as elected officials and others forecasted great things for the Patuxent in the aftermath of efforts in the Maryland Senate to put caps on nitrogen in the river.

Activists seek new legislative commitments from the state to enact aggressive efforts to improve wastewater plants and other nutrient sources. Wade-In attendees included Mayor Martin O'Malley (Baltimore City); County Executive Doug Duncan (Montgomery County); Congressman Steny Hoyer, Delegate Sue Kullen (Calvert County), Delegate John Bohanan (Calvert County), County Commissioner Allan Smith (Charles County) and Senator Mike Miller. Senator Miller vowed to introduce new legislation in the next session and to help to restore

the Patuxent. Performing artists Deana Dove and Tom Wisner lead the waders in song, baby terrapins were released on the beach to go forth and multiply and the fried chicken and trimmings were as good as ever. This year perhaps more than in recent times, there was an energy and an optimism on the Patuxent as people crossed partisan and ideological lines to hold hands, wade in the surf and stand up for clean water—if ever there was and is an equalizer among us all, it is the waters we have in common. The Wade-in proves it. The tradition has migrated to other waterways steadily but none has the spirit and energy of the original and the genuine Fowler Wade-in which is a Patuxent original, as American and Maryland in nature as the Maryland Crab. If you haven't attended one yet, you missed the party. See you next year?



Walking into the Patuxent River during the 2006 Bernie Fowler Wade-in.

2006 Patuxent River Sojourn

The 2006 Patuxent Sojourn was extremely well attended. Some 75 paddlers from all over the region and beyond made the five-day trek down some of the wide and deeper sections of the Patuxent on a voyage of



*photo by Paul Warren
Paddles up on the Patuxent River.*

discovery. Highlights included a dinner event hosted by the good citizens of Eagle Harbor, concerts by local bands Rockfish and Fair Warning, as well as tours and discussions of Patuxent River sites, history, ecology, and present status.

Retired State Senator Bernie Fowler, State Senator Roy Dyson, and Chairman of the Patuxent River Commission Allan Smith joined the Sojourners on the final night for the Spirit of the Sojourn Award. The winner of the Spirit of the Sojourn award was Liz Vanden Heuvel for

her behind the scenes work on the Patuxent River with the Sierra Club and the Sojourn Planning Committee. The Group Award was presented to the Friends of Jug Bay for their tireless work to protect and preserve Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary.

Patuxent Riverkeeper Files Lawsuit Notice on Mirant

Patuxent Riverkeeper, along with three other environmental organizations, has filed a Clean Water Act Notice of Intent to sue that alleges some 14,000 separate air quality violations by the Mirant Power electrical plant located at Chalk Point in Southern Prince George's County. Built originally by Pepco and sold by that company to Mirant a few years ago, the Chalk Point Plant is an older (1960's vintage) and somewhat out of date plant that uses burners fired by fuel oil and coal now faces more stringent emission standards under the recently enacted Healthy Air Act in Maryland. Coal emissions from these plants add harmful mercury to our waters. Under Federal laws, citizens can file a suit of this nature after first notifying the government authorities of their intentions and giving the regulatory authorities the chance to act. The controversial violations are culled from Mirant's own governmental filings. The Mirant Corporation has



Mirant Power Electrical Plant located at ChalkPoint on the Patuxent River.

already filed its initial responses that argue that liability for some of the listed violations were discharged during their former bankruptcy proceedings. Mirant lawyers have also suggested they may attempt to counter sue the environmental groups. In addition to Patuxent Riverkeeper, the other "plaintiff" groups include the Environmental Integrity Project, Chesapeake Climate Action and Environment Maryland.

Patuxent Summit Plans Underway

The Calvert Marine Museum is expanding the Annual Patuxent River Appreciation Days (PRAD) celebration to revitalize and refocus it on protection of the River and Chesapeake Bay. This year will be the 29th PRAD Celebration, which is held each year on Columbus Day weekend in Solomons, Maryland. For the first time, there will be a "State of the River Summit" on the Friday afternoon preceding PRAD weekend. Designed as a public forum on the measures that must be taken to protect and restore the Patuxent River, the summit is open to the general public, elected officials, County and watershed planners, policy leaders, citizen advocates, students, the business community, and especially those businesses whose interests are directly affected by the quality of water in the river such as watermen. Participants in the 2006 Patuxent Summit include the State of Maryland's Patuxent River Commission, Chesapeake Biological Lab, Morgan State Estuarine Research Laboratory, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and others. Invited panels and presenters include many luminaries in the Patuxent River preservation community. The Patuxent River Appreciation Days 2006 Summit could be the most influential and comprehensive gathering of people and information about the Patuxent River assembled in over 30 years.

The weekend festival also features crafts, regional food, musical entertainment, free boat rides, toy boat building, a concert by "Magpie" (internationally known for their musical work in the environmental movement) on Saturday, and the traditional parade on Sunday. Environmental and educational exhibits and demonstrations that celebrate the region's deep cultural, historic, social and economic connection to the Patuxent River will be ongoing throughout the weekend. Senator Bernie Fowler, the undisputed champion of the River, is the chairman and Grand Marshal.

For more information contact: Melissa McCormick at the Calvert Marine Museum, 410-326-2042 ext. 41, or check the web at www.pradinc.org.

Patuxent Roughneck Crew Roughs it up!

The new Roughnecks team has begun running work trips on the Patuxent with the aim of restoring free flowing qualities to areas that are impaired for fish passage and paddle navigation. The vision of a free flowing Patuxent River is not easily achieved; and in fact some of the blockages in our river are ideological ones. More than a few have lost sight of the river as unified resource. Others have artificially blockaded sections arguing that some parts are now off limits and governmental (usually untrue); other parts are private and unreachable (almost never true) and as a result the river has become a loosely connected string of local neighborhoods and fiefdoms without an overarching plan for preservation. The value of a river system that is connected and treated holistically is inestimable. Our vision allows the river to be treated consistently and cooperatively instead of in privatized sections. This can restore navigability for tourism, cultural and historical purposes, and it reconnects communities that would stand together on issues of common concern for the future of the watershed. We seek to restore the river as an economic and cultural resource and also preserve the needs of the marine life that depend on a free flowing river in order to remain viable.

Attaining the vision of a free flowing river is the mission of the volunteer Roughnecks who remove snags, fish blockages, and other impediments to the river. The Roughnecks are careful to preserve habitat, prevent



The Riverkeeper uses a bow saw to cut a downed log as Dave Puth keeps an eye on the situation.



A major blockage on the Patuxent River to be tackled during the next Roughneck work day.

erosion and use minimalist tactics to reduce our impact while keeping the river flowing. Roughnecks get to see some of the most pristine and isolated portions of the watershed and a work trip often seems more like a Safari than anything else. Lately the group has been working in the middle sections of the Patuxent, adjacent to Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties. Recent flooding has washed huge logjams into the channel, debris fields, trash belts and other pile ups dot the river. Some of these are natural and good for the watershed ecology. Some are not. Inch by inch, mile by mile the Roughnecks are creating the nuts and bolts of a water trail through forgotten and neglected sections of river and giving relief to the finfish that have to traverse these choked off sections of waterway.

The next Roughneck work day will be on July 29, 2006 at 9am. We will be meeting at the Patuxent Riverkeeper office. The itinerary for the workday is to paddle to and attack the major blockage seen above. For more information or to RSVP contact Lauren Webster at 301-249-8200 x6 or Lauren@paxriverkeeper.org.

Upcoming Riverkeeper Events

Roughneck Work Day

July 29, 2006 9am

Patuxent Riverkeeper Office

August 4 -6

Calvert Marine Museum/ Cradle of Invasion Weekend

A tribute to the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines that trained at the United States Naval Amphibious Training Base at Solomons, plus the present and future impact of the military on Southern Maryland:

www.cradleofinvasion.org

Riverkeeper Kayak Tours:

August 5, SERC-Rhode River w/sustainable lunch

**August 12, Broome Island/St. Leonard Creek w/
*Blue Wind Gourmet lunch & Good Earth Natural
Food Snacks***

**August 20, Patuxent 4-H , Mt. Calvert to
Pax River Park**

**August 26, Broome Island/St. Leonard Creek w/
*So Good Southern Maryland Lunch and Good
Earth Natural Foods Snacks***

Wild and Scenic Screening

“Voices of the River,” a 20 minute film produced by **American Rivers** features discussions with landowners, farmers, and others living and working on federally-designated rivers. Patuxent Riverkeeper is hosting a screening of the film at two locations in Southern Maryland.

*July 24, 2006 7pm **Lexington Park Branch**

Library, St. Mary’s County

*September 5, 2006 6:30 pm **Prince Frederick**

Branch Library, Calvert County

Extra DVD copies of the film will be available for a modest fee. For more information about this outreach initiative contact the Riverkeeper at: info@paxriverkeeper.org

Wanted: Volunteer Maryland Coordinator

Patuxent Riverkeeper has a job opening for an individual to help us with recruiting and coordinating volunteers for our clean-ups, monitoring activities and other work on behalf of the river. This is an AmeriCorps position in partnership with Volunteer Maryland. For more information contact Lauren Webster at 301-249-8200 x6 or Lauren@paxriverkeeper.org

River Currents

Flood Gates Released at T. Howard Duckett Dam

Record rainfall during the last week of June led the Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission (WSSC) to open six of seven gates on the Howard Duckett Dam during the evening of June 26, 2006. The excessive rainfall filled the dam which was low from drought conditions. As a precaution WSSC contacted Laurel authorities prior to releasing the flood gates who in turn issued voluntary evacuations of residents along the Patuxent River. Observers compared record flooding to conditions during the 1970’s hurricane Agnes. Storm and flood events of this magnitude are a periodic wake-up call for people and places along the river that the Patuxent is not always a sleepy waterway. Sometimes she bites!

Queen Anne Bridge Closed

Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) has closed Queen Anne Bridge due to structural concerns. Recent flooding has left questions as to the safety of the bridge for fishermen and others recreating in the area. The bridge has been a historic landmark for decades and there are hopes that it might eventually be restored for foot and cycling traffic.

We Need to Redefine Stewardship for Our River

An editorial by Patuxent Riverkeeper, Fred Tutman

THE PROBLEM: The notion of stewardship for nature has many shades and colors to it, mostly in the eye of the beholder. Environmental stewardship typically expresses the notion of personal responsibility or a moral imperative to cherish and protect nature. Yet, increasingly, there are indications that people use short sighted gain and profit motives to justify waste, devastation and conversion of the best facets of our planet for profit and individual gain. Native Americans have generally considered that humans do not own nature but inhabit it for a short time with an obligation not to interfere with its natural rhythms and to observe its rules. Other cultures share this ethic. Americans perhaps more than any other culture stress the ownership of property and entitlements as a principle that transcends stewardship. For this cultural reason, more than a few of us tend to gauge stewardship in relation to our ownership stake. The angler seeks to protect the fish, but not all the fish—just the ones he likes to catch. Or, like a property owner in my watershed who seeks to protect not the whole river but just the cove where his “McMansion”

sits. In fact, there are so many stakes related to the river that we can readily see a direct relationship between the magnitude of the stake and the level of the local stewardship. It’s a paradigm that readily explains why those who live far inland and away from the Chesapeake Bay often have a lesser sense of connection to the Bay, and meanwhile the vast numbers of urbanites have yet to cultivate a strong sense of stewardship at all. For these and other flawed rationales, a large number of us have merged our sense of environmental stewardship with our economic or personal self-interest.



A dragonfly perched on a gloved finger.



Two swans and their brood of signets enjoy the calm Patuxent River.

THE REASONS: In particular, the notion of owning land and natural resources in their totality has encouraged the perception that nature is subservient to mankind. Nature has a peculiar way of correcting this myth and pride goeth before the fall. On the other hand we are not subservient to nature either—we are actually part of it and therefore subject always to the same forces that influence the wind, the trees, the forests and the waterways. Forgetting this, too many people have become alienated from their connection to nature. Notably, we trade vast expanses of open and irreplaceable lands for tot lots and ball fields. We fall for the myth that we must wipe out nature to accomodate population growth and while overlooking the profit motives that often

compel such actions. Surely economic motivations have clouded our societal sense of stewardship, but, a world without clean air, water and devoid of open space has far less intrinsic value to everyone. We need to fight much harder to reform a system that rewards polluting with great profits. Carving out a nation of concrete without clear moral, legal and policy basis for protecting the public value of having a clean environment is a large scale catastrophe in the making. Global warming is only one sign. Our sense of stewardship is ill and our planet is sick.

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THE SOLUTIONS: The societal culture of America has stripped away concept of a community and replaced it with subdivided lots and the social ethic that we are responsible only for the parts of the planet



An osprey perched on his nest above the Patuxent River.

we own and not the connected parts. Meanwhile, thinking globally and acting locally only works if everybody else is doing it too. Many of us accept the myth that if we interfere with our neighbor's outrageous environmental practices on his own land, that we are somehow violating his rights. Yet, it is possible to own land, and use it for maximum enjoyment and return while still leaving its core resources intact for future inhabitants of this world. The ownership of land does not confer on any of us the right to use land, air, water or any other aspect of the natural world in a way that ruins it for future inhabitants. Technology broadens our options for living in balance with nature, yet it is often used to pollute it. Hybrid cars, solar and wind power and many other technological achievements

demonstrate how we can co-exist with nature without upsetting the balance of things around us. Some technology is plainly far better than others and we must choose. Many religious doctrines hold up reverence for nature and the out-of-doors as basic values. The ideal of purification of mind, body and spirit through nature is a fundamental part of many religious systems. Nonetheless, many of us have lost this basic connection to the forces around us that invariably came before us and to some extent might be around long after we are gone. Basically, putting profits before environmental stewardship (failing to balance the two) is demonstrably anti-social. While everyone is entitled to an opinion, certain opinions are bad for the survival of the planet. Knowingly taking actions that ruin the world for posterity, is tantamount to criminal negligence.



A water lily floating amongst its leaves.

Sometimes really smart people are ignorant on this point and need to be enlightened. Stewardship of our river and the complex web of connected resources is the only sane and moral course that can put each of us in grace and in harmony with nature while protecting us all. So, how's your relationship with your river? Think about it.

Patrol Jon Boat Takes to the River



The Patuxent Riverkeeper jon boat has begun patrolling the river. The boat was first launched for the 2006 Bernie Fowler Wade-In and has since taken part in the Patuxent River Sojourn and has been on numerous patrols in the areas between Jug Bay and Benedict. The unusual pink flamingo mounted on the boat is a good luck mascot that also gives the boat a unique and more visible profile. Watch for it! The Riverkeeper deeper water boat will be launched later in the summer and will patrol the sections of the river from Benedict to the Bay.

International Waterkeeper Conference

The Annual Waterkeeper Conference was held in San Francisco this year and hosted by the San Francisco Baykeeper. Your Patuxent Riverkeeper attended. While in San Francisco, the Waterkeeper Board of Directors licensed three new programs in the Chesapeake Bay region:

The Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, Eliza Steinmeyer 310-367-3638

The Choptank Riverkeeper, Dick Tettlebaum 443-786-4799

The Shenandoah Riverkeeper, Jeff Kelble 540-837-1478

Only at a Waterkeeper conference could you find such a vast collection of people from many cultures and many walks of life, all convened to celebrate their common connection and love of clean water. It was utterly fantastic and inspiring to meet people who have devoted their lives and made great sacrifices in order to stand up for clean water in their hometowns from all over the world. Waterkeepers from the Czech Republic, Australia, Africa, India and many other parts of the globe assembled to share knowledge, strength and celebrate the growth of a unique movement that is growing into an influential force in the struggle to save what remains of the earth's most precious life giving commodity (clean water).

Take for example, Riverkeeper Earl Hatley from the Grand River in Oklahoma, who has been fighting to protect his waterways from huge torrents of pig excrement flowing from commercial farmers in his watershed. To prevent enforcing of clean water laws, legislators in his state recently passed a law making it illegal for citizens to photograph the massive, smelly rivers of brown poison that flow from these animal operations to pollute the water. So, Earl risks arrest and imprisonment as he patrols his river and attempts to gather evidence that would halt the theft of a public resource for private gain. Recently, vandals blew holes in the Grand Riverkeeper patrol boat using shotguns in order to slow down his crusade. According to Earl, the local police have declined to investigate the crime. Undaunted, Earl retorts: "Nobody shoots my boat (and gets away with it)".

Then there is Mbecke Seck the new Hann Baykeeper who struggles to save the fishing areas near his village on the rocky coast of Senegal, West Africa from the harmful effects of an American Petroleum exploration company in his country. The American company has in effect seized the lifeblood and sustenance of this poor fishing village in order to pump fuel into thirsty American automobiles. Earl and Mbecke are representative of Waterkeepers all over the world fighting against tremendous odds to right wrongs that often are sanctioned by the very governments charged with protecting the public. While outnumbered, Riverkeepers win important battles and make a vital contribution to an environmental movement that needs new blood, new ideas and new tactics within the law. This is often a courageous testament to the power of each and every citizen to make a difference. Collectively, Waterkeepers the world over seek to embody the spirit of advocacy to correct injustice, to take a moral stand for those values (clean water) that can never be compromised, and to empower their communities to protect their water from polluters. Get involved and spread the word!



International Waterkeepers Mbecke Seck (Hann Baykeeper), Deb Self (San Francisco Baykeeper staff), and others.

Riverkeeper Advocacy Update

Big Box, Big deal

Patuxent Riverkeeper has invested considerable time in looking for ways to challenge the scope and location of a big Box Wal-Mart store planned for Crofton, MD. The Patuxent Riverkeeper's concerns have everything to do with location, location, location. The proposed site will likely have deleterious effects on the flood plain of the Patuxent River and on the Greenway of the Patuxent just south of the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge. Undoubtedly, a former gravel pit near a major state highway is an ideal pad site for business reasons but the local planning jurisdictions have given little if any attention to the environmental impacts ranging from stormwater, sedimentation, loss of habitat and other consequences. The conditions on this site warrant minimum impact. Similarly, further south on the Patuxent in Lothian, MD; a Target Store is proposed just upstream of the Jug Bay Wetland Sanctuary. The tract includes the headwaters of Galloway Creek which flows into the nearby Wetlands Sanctuary. Again, soil conditions, and other features on site imply that minimum disturbance approaches should be used to protect water quality, the ecosystem and other uses downstream. There are several local groups working hard to advance reasonable and responsible ways to accommodate retail growth without stripping value from the citizens of Anne Arundel County and zapping the watershed too. One of them has a legal war chest in preparation to fight the battles to which the public agencies have been slow to respond. More information? Try Crofton First (re: Walmart) : www.croftonfirst.com; and the other group working on the Target proposal is the Lothian Civic Association at (410) 741-1644 or (301) 802-4673.

Politics as Usual? Let's hope not...

Patuxent Riverkeeper is a non profit 501 c (3) and therefore does not participate in candidate endorsements. We do however support a variety of regulatory changes in a non-partisan way that would result in helping to save our waterways. In an election year, the quality of the dialogue about the environmental specifics tends to be quite high. Obviously, everybody supports a clean environment in principle, but the specific details of what they are willing to do about the problems are key. Patuxent Riverkeeper has participated in several candidate forums and interview panels to become familiar with the credentials of those running for state, county and federal office in the fall elections. We encourage our readers and members to do the same. Ask hard questions about the specifics and where possible, extract promises of specific legislative plans and programs that will make things better for the environment and better for society. Also, we suggest you check out the web sites provided by several groups that work to get voters better informed on the issues and the candidates. For starters, try: The League of Maryland Conservation Voters: www.mdldcv.org/

Riverkeeper defends an Oasis?

Oasis Farms is a modest cattle farm located near Bowie and run by the Mills family who have been in the area for generations. Until recently the farm benefited from a stream which is a sub tributary of the Patuxent River and provided water for the cattle and kept the pasture green. When Rouse-Fairwood Development Company began building large lot homes across the road, the stream went dry. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers gave the developer a permit to divert the stream to make a stormwater management pond for their multi-home housing development. An adjacent wetlands was also deprived of water which caused mass mayhem for wildlife inhabitants who fled across a busy county road and became road-kill. The developer wants to build and sell houses, the farmer needs and wants his water supply back. The critters from the wetlands are regrettably out of luck. Patuxent Riverkeeper has been assisting the parties to find an equitable closure and trying to determine whether the wetlands can or will be restored. The parties are understandably tense and Federal authorities have been disinterested in helping to resolve the farmer's problem. This is an environmental justice problem framed by a clash between land use planning, property rights, water rights and big business interests against the little guy. Stay tuned.

New Membership Packages

The Patuxent Riverkeeper has developed new membership packages that are designed, not only to provide support for the environment, but to create an environmental community of like-minded people. Are you interested in meeting environmentally-active folks who live in your community? If so, by joining one of the memberships listed below, you can know that your funds are supporting a good cause and you are going to have many opportunities to meet others who, like you, care about the environment. Already a member? You may want to consider upgrading to a membership that gives you the level of involvement that reflects your environmental interests.

Membership Levels and Benefits

Red-winged Blackbird

\$35

- Become part of Patuxent Riverkeeper environmental community
- Vote on activities and policies of your Riverkeeper and elect officers
- Receive newsletters and email bulletins
- Get invited to special Riverkeeper events
- Receive a Patuxent Riverkeeper sports bottle

Green-winged Teal

\$75

- Red-winged Blackbird membership benefits plus:
- Receive a Patuxent Riverkeeper T-shirt
- 20% discount on all Patuxent Riverkeeper tours

Osprey

\$125

- Green-winged Teal membership benefits plus:
- A complimentary subscription to Waterkeeper Magazine

Great Blue Heron

\$250

- Osprey membership benefits plus:
- A complimentary Patuxent Riverkeeper kayak or boat tour for two
- An exclusive Patuxent Riverkeeper license plate

Bald Eagle

\$500

- Great Blue Heron membership benefits plus:
- Free unlimited use of our kayaks and canoe (call to check for availability and to make reservations)

Whooping Crane

\$1000

- Bald Eagle membership plus:
- An exclusive luncheon with your Riverkeeper so that you can discuss the river issues that are most important to you

Please complete the form below and send it, along with a check, to:

Patuxent Riverkeeper
18600 Queen Anne Rd
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

T-Shirt size: S M L XL

Current Member? Yes No

Membership Level:

Red-winged Blackbird

Great Blue Heron

Green-winged Teal

Bald Eagle

Osprey

Whooping Crane