



Scott Stewart

Ponderings at Piney Run

March 2012

Greetings Piney Run Park patrons! Daylight savings time has passed and spring is well on its way here at Piney Run Park and Nature Center. We are excited to take advantage of the longer days and warmer temperatures as the seasons change; whether it's hiking the scenic trails, paddling on the lake, birding in the forest or fishing off the boat-dock, we will be here to help you enjoy spring at the park!

As the park Naturalist and a kayaking enthusiast, the best thing about spring is that the animals will be coming out of their dens and that Piney Run Lake will be re-opening for paddling! I have five paddles scheduled before the summer-sun brings the impenetrable line of lily-pads to the shore of the lake so hurry up and sign-up! I am particularly excited about teaching, "*Are the Beaver and Muskrat Friends?*" planned for Saturday, May 19. So far this season, the beaver and muskrat activity has been great, with tons of evidence like fresh beaver-chews to help us find our buck-toothed, furry-friends. I will also review the basic technical skills needed to navigate your boat safely and efficiently.

I am also attempting to get a hiking-club reintroduced at Piney Run Park. The hiking-club will not only discover the natural wonders at Piney Run Park, but will also enjoy other natural areas that Maryland has to offer. We will hike on the world-famous Appalachian Trail for an inspiring view of the Blue Ridge Mountains at Annapolis Rocks, scramble up the lichen covered boulders to marvel at the picturesque waterfalls at Cunningham Falls State Park and explore the endangered ecosystem of "serpentine barrens" at Soldiers Delight State Park. I will be teaching the natural history of each of these areas, about the wildlife and fauna that call these environments home, and about what we can do to help protect and preserve these natural places. This club is meant to encourage hiking as a hobby, an activity that is both physically and mentally stimulating and healthy. Best of all, hiking is a very cheap activity that anyone can enjoy; all you need is your feet! If you are interested in joining me for one of these hikes and becoming a member of the Piney Run Park Hiking Club, please call the Nature Center.

Remember to mark your calendars for the 2nd annual *March for Parks 5K Run/Walk* scheduled on Saturday, April 21. The race will navigate through 5 kilometers of Piney Run Park's beautiful trail system and will end at the boathouse with an award ceremony. The fastest runners will be honored with a free Piney Run Park Vehicle Pass so get out on the trails and start your training routine today! We have also planned the *Just for Fun Pet Show* for Saturday, May 5, to celebrate the spring at the park. The pet-show is an event that has taken place many times throughout the history of Piney Run Nature Center and has been brought-back by popular demand. Don't miss your chance to show-off your pet, whether furry, feathered, four legged or no legged, animal-friends of all kinds are welcome!

Summer vacation will be here before we know it so don't forget to enroll your kids in Piney Run Park Summer Nature Camp. Campers will enjoy learning all about nature while having a blast with their friends. Daily activities include hiking, kayaking, fishing, arts and crafts, and

educational naturalist-led programs. Sign your kids up for nature camp and I promise they will have so much fun they will fall asleep on the car-ride home!

We have also made some amazing improvements at the Nature Center, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Piney Run Park staff, Piney Run Park Council, and park-volunteers. Come check-out the newly improved “children’s-room” where there is an awesome critter display for viewing native turtles, tree frogs and a black tarantula. There is also a beautiful new walk-way in front of the Nature Center. The old raptor mews have also been torn down gaining a clearer view of the lake and a better view of the birds of prey. We are also doing tons of birthday parties in the Yurt so don’t forget about Piney Run Nature Center when you are thinking about loved one’s birthday this year. Our parties are very affordable and we keep the kids busy with various activities and a naturalist-led animal-program.

Happy spring! Hope to see you at the park!