“Leaf Lace” by Martha Johnston, Submitted to the 2016 Maryland DNR Photo Contest.

“In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.”
- Albert Camus

Happy winter, Habichatters!

This season’s collection is about persistence, fortitude, and the things that do unseen work in our lives. Our native plant profile this month focuses on Maryland’s oaks – all of them! We admire the tenacity of this tremendous tree and want to share it with you. Our native animal profile contemplates the unseen and unheard world of the shrew, a truly undervalued group of modest mammals who have some surprising secrets. While we shine light on the unseen things, let us also contemplate the bright winter lantern of the moon, and how it connects to Maryland’s wildlife (and check in for how to grow your own moon garden). As all this quiet activity is happening, wildlife biologists are hard at work too; read about how the Natural Heritage Program wades through winter waters to track torpid wood turtles.

And for you reptile fans who have been eagerly awaiting our new herps poster series, they are now available online!

Team Habichat

In This Issue:

Learn how the full moons receive their nicknames, and maybe consider creating our own. This modern folklore gives us an excellent opportunity to learn more about both the night sky and Maryland's wildlife!

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Natural Heritage Program Spotlight, Winter Work: Wood Turtles

A wildlife biologist's work is never done, even in cold winter temperatures. Some species studied by our herpetology team lend themselves to tasks best completed in fall, winter, and early spring. Among them is the wood turtle, Glyptemys insculpta, perhaps one of the most charismatic of Maryland's turtle species. Wood turtles are also one of the most rare – ranked as imperiled at the state and global levels and currently a candidate for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Moon Mythology and Maryland Wildlife: Winter Moons

HabiChat article By Katy Gorsuch

Morning view of Full Moon setting by Lori Crisler, submitted to the 2023 Maryland DNR Photo Contest. Taken in early March, this was the Worm Moon.

Given the flair with which the Moon circles the Earth, it's not at all strange that both humans and animals would become fascinated with it. In the past hundred years, certain folk names for the full moons have popped up in modern American culture, although many of them go back centuries. Recorded in English as far back as 1779 (and possibly even further back in French), Indigenous peoples of the Americas have named the full moons, often in alignment with animals responding to the changing seasons, or locally important events.

Full moon names varied widely depending on geographic location and language family amongst Native Americans, as wildlife responds differently depending on the length of the day i.e. there is less sunlight in Massachusetts in October than in Maryland on the same day. For example, in some locations one full moon might be named "Goose Moon," while in another location the same time period could be the "Cold Moon." The practice of naming moons this way doesn't seem to have been historically universal, and in the centuries since it was first recorded by colonists, misinformation has proliferated. For our purposes, using supposed Algonquian full moon names as a starting point provides a wonderful opportunity for us to explore Maryland's unique wildlife, and how the seasons change!

Winter Moons:

January_____

This moon is sometimes called the **Wolf Moon**, which may have European colonial origins.

Gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) were hunted to extinction in Maryland centuries ago; the closest wild canine today is the coyote (*Canis latrans*). Present in Maryland since 1972, Coyotes moved into new areas of North America following both the extirpation of the gray wolf as well as the thinning of deciduous forests across the East Coast. Prior to this, they were largely confined to western prairie, likely to avoid competition with wolves, who are noticeably larger. Coyotes in Maryland are larger than western coyotes, averaging about 30-40 pounds – about the size of a border collie.

Coyotes are closely related to the gray wolf, and occasionally hybridize with gray wolf subspecies. Observations of hybridizing go back to the 1930s and 1940s in the Great Lakes area, where coyotes colonizing former wolf ranges interbred with remaining wolf populations.

Coyotes running through the snow in West Virginia. Photo by ForestWander.com, CC BY-SA 3.0 US, via Wikimedia Commons

The species is highly adaptable, with urban coyotes in densely populated areas actually living longer than urban coyotes with more “natural” spaces, while still managing to avoid human contact.

Coyotes generally avoid humans, even when living in urban areas, but sometimes people will report being followed by a coyote, especially while walking their dogs. This behavior is called "escorting" and is most common when pups are growing; it is thought that this is parents checking up on potential threats to their young in their territory.

Midwinter finds coyote family packs forming. Coyotes may construct dens or clean out old dens of other species. They line their dens with dried grasses, and or the soft fur of the parents. It takes about 63 days for a litter to gestate, at which point an average of six pups are born. Unlike other canines, eastern coyote pups fight before they play; doing this is thought to help the pups establish an internal hierarchy, allowing them to relax into a more recreational environment.

Coyotes in the wetlands of Hart-Miller Island, photo by Cory Byrne.

Perhaps we should call January's Moon the **Coyote Moon**!

Suggested Coyote Moon Activities: make a den with couch pillows, chairs, blankets, and other soft materials. Try to see how well you can conceal the entrance to the "den."

Practice coyote greetings! Coyotes are talkative! They have a wide range of different vocalizations, and the new year is always a good time to learn a new language.

Read more about Maryland's Coyotes on the DNR website!

February_____

Writing in 1779, explorer Jonathan Carver cites this time period as the **Snow Moon**, for obvious reasons! Another name that may be Algonquian is **Groundhog Moon**.

Groundhog family holding a meeting by Abubakar Ringim, DNR Photo Contest 2023

Groundhogs, also called woodchucks, whistlepigs, marmots, and land beavers, (the list goes on) are the largest member of the squirrel family that lives in Maryland. Their species name "monax" comes from one of their Algonquian names, which translates to "digger." Another Algonquian name, "wejack," is likely where the name "woodchuck" originates. The name "whistlepig" comes from this sound groundhogs occasionally make as an alarm call.

You may notice that the Groundhog Moon, being in February, also generally coincides with Groundhog Day. This tradition was brought to America from Europe, except there it was a badger:

“The badger peeps out of his hole on Candlemas Day (February 2), and, if he finds snow, walks abroad; but if he sees the sun shining he draws back into his hole.” This was written in the diary of Baltimore farmer Dickinson Gorsuch III in 1861, to whom the author of this article is almost certainly related.

Adult groundhogs eat up to a pound of vegetation a day, which can sometimes lead to unwanted interactions with gardeners. While we are used to watching bears fatten in the fall, groundhogs begin fattening up for winter in June, eating as much as they can to produce fat deposits they can use through hibernation. They are mostly herbivorous, occasionally eating insects, with the rare addition of bird eggs.

Suggested Groundhog Moon Activities: Make up a new tongue-twister for one of the other names of the groundhog! Many of us are familiar with the classic “How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?” but the same attention hasn’t been given to the names whistlepig or groundhog! Coming up with a new one is a great way to pass some time and dig up some giggles.

Prepare a groundhog salad, using lettuce and raspberries to mimic their diet in the wild. Noodle-style croutons can easily substitute for grubs.

Learn more about groundhogs from the University of Maryland Extension website.

March_____

March has been referred to as either the **Worm Moon** or **Goose Moon**.

While in modern times people have come to associate this usage of the word “worm” with earthworms, historical texts point towards caterpillars and other larvae rather than earthworms.

Caterpillars serve as a food source for countless Maryland species; many of those that don’t become lunch instead become beautiful and interesting butterflies and moths as adults.

Yard Monster by Allan Nopfel, DNR Photo Contest 2013

Efforts have surged in recent years to support monarch butterflies in Maryland by planting native milkweeds, and in supporting native plants, we do the same for all the wildlife that calls our small but mighty state our home.

Suggested Worm Moon Activities: Plant or plan a Moon Garden!

Moon gardens are gardens with night-blooming flowers, or flowers that stay open all the time. When you use native plants in a moon garden, you provide important habitat for lesser-thought-of pollinators like moths, and have the added benefit of supporting Maryland's native bats! Whippoorwills and other nightjars are also fans of moths as a prey source, and by planting host plants for native moths, you support these unique and beautiful nocturnal birds!If you'd like to turn your space into much-needed habitat, check out our Wild Acres resources.

Native Plant Profile: Maryland's Oaks

Habichat article By Katy Gorsuch

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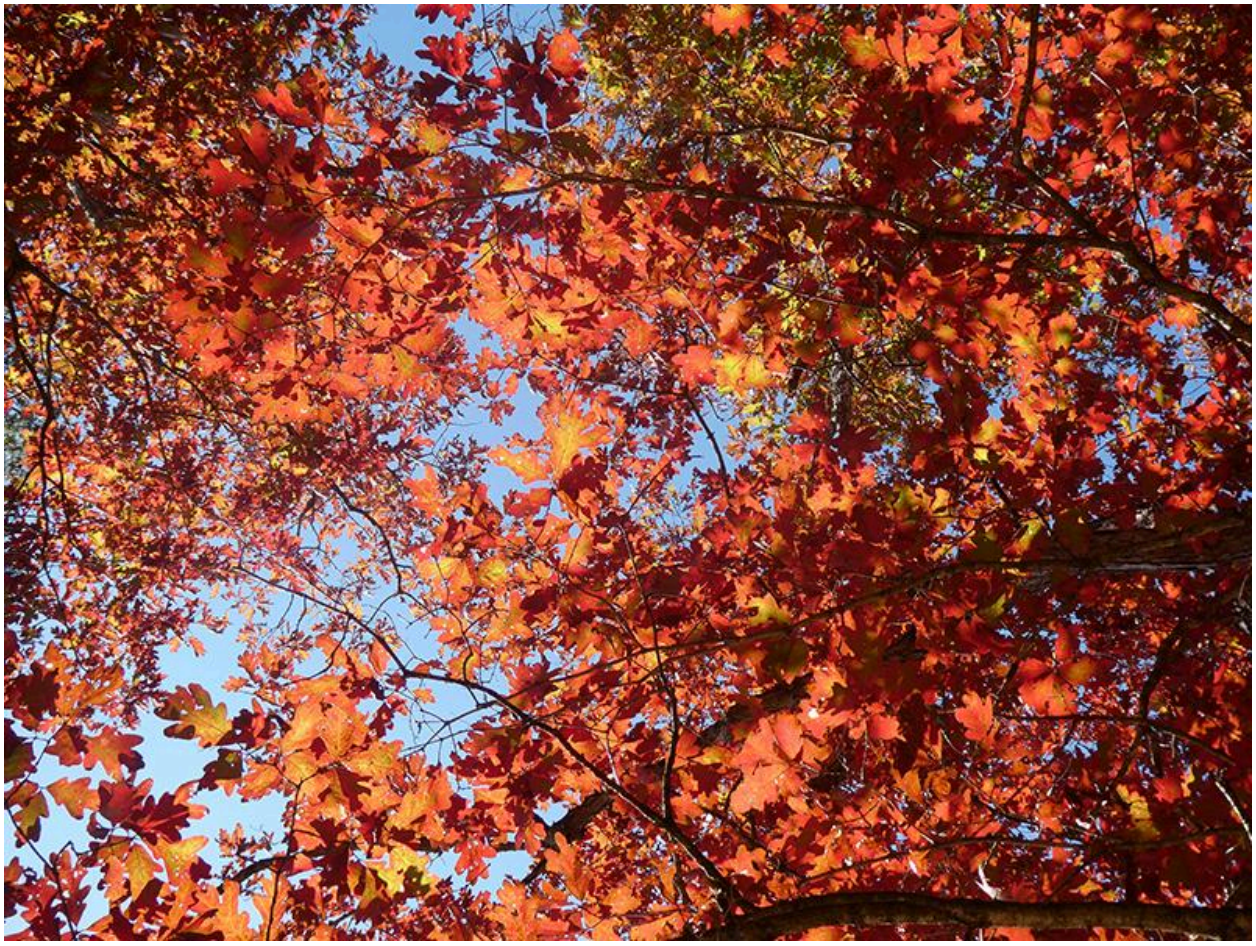

Quercus alba by Robert Severynse, submitted to 2021 Maryland DNR Photo Contest[/caption]

What's your favorite tree? If you're any of Maryland's thousands of native animals, your answer may be an oak!

Maryland boasts 22 species in the oak genus (*Quercus*), 21 of which are native. Maryland's state tree is the white oak (*Quercus alba*), and from 1940 until 2002 an individual white oak tree known as the Wye Oak was the largest white oak in the country. The Wye Oak was declared the representative of the species in the state, serving in the position as a kind of mascot from 1939 until it fell due to old age and damage from a summer storm.

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The Wye Oak in April 1977, taken by Maryland DNR Staff[/caption]

The Wye Oak lived to be 500 years old, and that's not unusual for an oak, which can have centuries long lifespans in the right circumstances. The Wye Oak's reign was preceded by the death of the Mingo Oak, a white oak in West Virginia, who until 1938 was both the oldest and largest white oak in the world. The Mingo Oak's age, verified by the Smithsonian Institution, was estimated to be roughly 580 years at the time of its death (a kind of obituary even appeared in The New York Times). Even this is not the longest living oak, as a handful of thousand-year-old oaks are still standing tall in Europe. In fact, clonal colonies of oaks may even live for thousands of years, as is the case for the Jurupa Oak in California, whose age is estimated at 13,000 years!

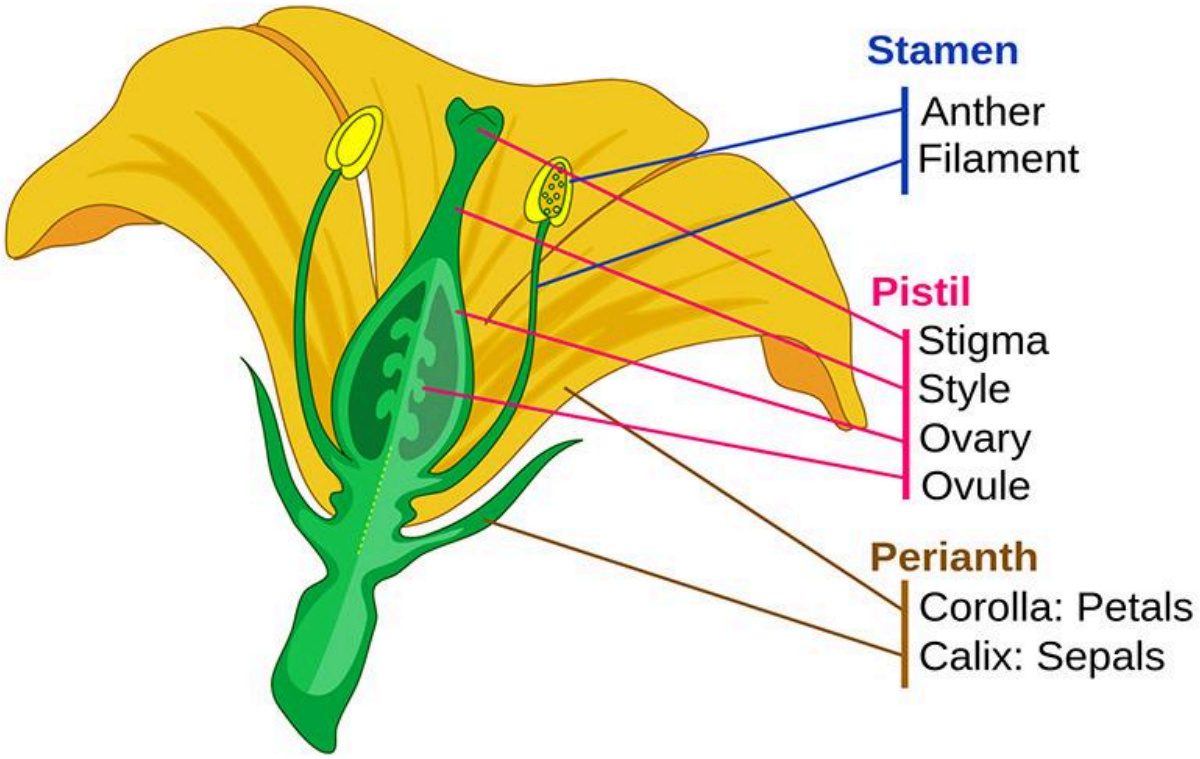
Oaks are diverse, with 500 global species in the same genus, and readily hybridize, meaning it can be difficult to identify an individual tree in areas where several species are present. Oaks are split into several groups for more easy categorization; red oaks (sometimes called black oaks) and white oaks are the most known groups, named after the color of the "heartwood." The alternative

name for red oaks comes from the generally darker color of the bark. The broad rule for telling the difference between these groups when bark-penetrating glasses are unavailable (always) is to look at the leaves; leaves with spiky ends tend to be in the red oak category, while rounded ends tend to be in the white oak category. White oak acorns tend to be wildlife's preferred acorns, and they move on to red oak acorns if they aren't available.

White Oak Catkins in Baltimore Co., Maryland (c) laurabankey, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC). by laurabankey via iNaturalist, featured on Maryland Biodiversity Project. Photo cropped from original.

Northern red oak female flowers, Laval University, CC BY-SA 4.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

Flowers of oaks don't take a form we traditionally recognize. When an oak blooms, it actually produces both "male" and "female" flowers. The "male" flowers are stamens that develop in clusters called catkins, from which pollen is distributed, while the "female" flowers are small pistils. In what we may think of as a garden flower (see diagram), these elements are typically included in the same location.



LadyofHats, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

Oaks are wind-pollinated, and acorns develop from the pollinated flowers over varying lengths of time. An oak may self-pollinate, but female flowers are located higher in the tree to allow for more cross-pollination with other trees, and thus greater genetic diversity. Many oak species don't produce acorns every year, and development can last anywhere from six months to two years in the case of red oaks. Most oaks don't begin to produce acorns at all until about 20 years old, and northern red oaks may wait as long as 40 years. This feels like a long time on a human scale until you consider that humans mature similarly. Unlike humans, their overall lifespan is much longer, and an oak's peak production doesn't slow until 80 years or so of age! Even then, oaks continue to produce acorns, and the Wye Oak itself produced acorns into its old age and was even bearing a crop of acorns when it died at nearly 500 years old!

Many a small child (and inquisitive adult) has wondered why we as a species don't make more use of these nuts, and the primary reason is the tannic acid they contain. Tannic acid is a tannin (although not all tannins are tannic acid), and is toxic to humans. Many animals possess the ability to process tannic acid,

although cattle and horses do not and ingestion can be lethal. While tannic acid can be removed from acorns by leaching processes (and has been a common food in many cultures and places, including among European Neanderthals), other nuts may be preferable when available, since other food sources don't require the same amount of work to eat. In North America, Eastern Woodland peoples used acorns as a staple food, along with other native nuts. For European colonists and their descendants, who didn't have a tradition of acorn usage, a historically more available food source would have been the American chestnut, which until the early 1900s produced vast amounts of food (in 1914, the Virginia Dept of Agriculture estimated the year's crop to be equivalent to approximately 2 million pounds of nuts). Interestingly, American chestnuts are actually cousins to oaks, as members of the Fagaceae family.

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Oak Leaves and Acorns by Marta Fiscus, submitted to 2022 Maryland DNR Photo Contest[/caption]

Acorns serve as a major food source for countless native animals, including wood ducks, rabbits, black bears, and even foxes! “Mast” is the term for fruit and nuts produced by wild plants, usually used in reference to animals eating them. One study found that 83% of an oak’s yearly crop is eaten by wildlife, with another 10% being unproductive or inert, and 6% being consumed by insects. This leaves less than 1% of an oak’s acorns to sprout! This may be why the genus has evolved to be so long lived, and why a large oak may produce up to 10,000 acorns some years.

Interestingly, oaks seem to have a plan to ensure some of their long-lived progeny make it past the hungry hoards; a “mast year” is a year when several species of oak drop acorns at the same time! It’s unclear how the trees in the area coordinate such an event, but plant communication is a diverse area of study and perhaps time will allow us to understand it. The benefit of mast years for the oak trees is that in the chaos of so much food, some acorns will make it through the season to nestle under the leaf litter, or be stored for later by a satisfied (but forgetful) squirrel or bird. If the trees were to drop a regular number of acorns every year, it may be harder for them to sprout, as local animals would come to rely on a certain amount of food being available for upcoming hibernation. Mast years generally occur every 2-5 years depending on the region; 2025 was a mast year in many areas of Maryland, potentially leading to a lower bear harvest than in previous years, as bears don’t roam as widely for food if acorns are available.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about oaks is their role as keystone species in their communities. Native oaks support 950 caterpillar species nationwide, which themselves serve as the base of spring bird feeding, especially of baby birds! 96% of terrestrial bird species in North America feed insects to their young; growing is serious business, and baby birds need the protein provided by insects to grow as quickly as they do. Beyond that, moths and butterflies are notable pollinators, and serve as food for other animals, including bats!

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Possibly a Banded Tussock Moth caterpillar (*Halysidota tessellaris*) on white oak leaf, by Melissa Nash, DNR Staff. Their hosts include black oaks, northern red oaks, bur oaks, scarlet oaks, and white oaks, all native Maryland species.[/caption]

With their fortitude, longevity, and adaptability, it's no wonder that oaks have made their way into folklore around the world. We've mentioned before ancient Greek divination by listening to the rustling of the leaves of a sacred oak, but that's just scratching the surface of their deep mythological roots. Historically, oaks have often been associated with thunder gods like Thor and Zeus, and a glimpse into natural history may show us why: oaks may be the tree most hit by lightning! While this isn't conclusive, where this happens it's likely due to their comparative height, although other factors that may play a role are the resin content of the tree, and bark texture. Trees are more conductive than the air, but

certain trees (like conifers) have greater resistance to the flow of electricity, and so might suffer more immediate and visible damage.

This spring, if you have the space, plant a native oak to support your local ecological community! DNR's Forestry Service's nursery offers saplings of five native oak species for order (all but the sawtooth oaks), in increments of 25. If that number seems too big, consider splitting them with neighbors, friends, or coworkers to distribute saplings to spaces that need wildlife habitat!

Remember: community takes cooperation, and as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "the creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."

Visit the Maryland DNR website for more about creating a wild backyard with native Maryland trees and ha recommended tree list.

If you'd like to read more about oaks' role as the base of many ecosystems, The Nature of Oaks by Doug Tallamy is a great resource, as is the USDA Field Guide to Native Oak Species.

Native Animal Profile: Shrews!

Sorex cinereus at Billings National Historical Park, Woodstock, Vermont; photo is licensed under MPF, CC BY 4.0 , via Wikimedia Commons)[/caption]

When was the last time you thought about shrews? Many a gardener has been known to shriek as they see a small, brown, furry thing scampering through their garden, provoked by weeding or a shovel in the soil. Often the thing has dashed away so quickly, we can't see it well enough to understand what it was. In Maryland gardens, while there is no shortage of mice, the most common culprits are voles, moles, and shrews. Voles are perhaps the most troublesome, feeding on grasses, bulbs, and other valued garden contents – while moles and shrews often get wrongfully blamed for the damage they cause. Moles and shrews can be guilty of leaving irregularities in lawns, but both are beneficial insect predators, aerators of the soil, and otherwise helpful garden partners. Maryland is fortunate to have excellent habitat for eight different species of shrew.

Shrews (family Soricidae) are a little-known family of insectivore, with a fascinating variety of complex natural histories and adaptations. They are generally quite small, 3-5 inches long, and weighing less than four U.S. quarters (0.8 ounce), with long, pointed noses and small ears. Their bodies are perfectly adapted for life underground, with a sleek skull for

burrowing and tiny eyes for low light levels. Their teeth are quite sharp and spiky, unlike a rodent's flattened incisors, for capturing and consuming insect prey. One species of shrew, the short-tailed shrew, has the unique adaptation of toxic saliva, allowing it to paralyze larger prey like frogs and small rodents for later snacking.

Speaking of snacks, the shrew is a professional eater, munching meals nearly constantly to keep up with its speedy metabolism; even a few hours without food can mean death for a shrew. Short-tailed shrews emit a series of ultrasonic clicks to navigate and find food, similar to echolocation in bats. They prefer to be solitary, with males especially spending a lot of time and effort marking their large territories or on3 acre or more with scent glands on their flanks. Naturally, you won't find a large population of shrews in your backyard. They are known to forage outside their tunnels at times and can emit a powerful stink from another scent gland on the belly (similar to a skunk) to ward off predators if needed. Many anecdotal observations of shrews are from those found dead in a yard or driveway, likely captured by a predator that later changed its mind.

As a group, shrews are common in the American landscape, though individual species are facing threats in our State due to habitat loss. For example, southern water shrews are globally rare and listed as endangered here in Maryland. Due to their reclusive habits and the challenges of keeping a near-constant eater in captivity, shrews are not as well understood by scientists as many other small mammals. Still, some of their amazing abilities have potential applications in biomedical fields, such as the neurotoxic properties of the short-tailed shrew's venom. Recent studies in 2024 and 2025 have confirmed that shrews actually significantly, seasonally shrink their body *and brain* size by losing water for the winter. Genetics have added even more interest to the study of shrews, with 14 new species found in Indonesia in 2021, and another new species just discovered in Ethiopia in 2025. Some shrews have even become internet famous, such as the case of the "caravan" behavior seen in this Chinese shrew, also sometimes observed in other species. Because babies are nearly blind, young will latch on to each other and their mothers in a shrew conga line, following mama shrew as she finds them a new home!

Want to attract shrews to your backyard habitat? The best way is to provide a wide diversity of native plants, as they will attract a buffet of insect delicacies for a feasting shrew. Hot off the presses, check out the new Maryland Native Plant Guide for the Piedmont Region!

Many thanks to our Master Naturalist volunteer, Megan McCabe, for her contribution to these new shrew fact sheets!

Masked shrew, *Sorex cinereus*
Southeastern shrew, *Sorex longirostris*
Southern Water shrew, *Sorex palustris punctulatus*
Smoky shrew, *Sorex fumeus*
Long-tailed shrew, *Sorex dispar*
Southern pygmy shrew, *Sorex hoyiwinnemana*
Northern short-tailed shrew, *Blarina brevicauda*
Least shrew, *Cryptotis parva*

Natural Heritage Program Spotlight, Winter Work: Wood Turtles

A wildlife biologist's work is never done, even in cold winter temperatures. Some species studied by our herpetology team lend themselves to tasks best completed in fall, winter, and early spring. Among them is the wood turtle, Glyptemys insculpta, perhaps one of the most charismatic of Maryland's turtle species. Wood turtles are also one of the most rare – ranked as imperiled at the state and global levels and currently a candidate for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Wood turtles have a fascinating natural history as one of few reptiles that can thrive in seasonally cold aquatic environments. Young children who listened closely to Olaf from Frozen can already tell you: "turtles can breathe through their butts!" While this statement isn't perfectly accurate, wood turtles do use cloacal respiration, a process where oxygen is absorbed and carbon dioxide released through diffusion in the animal's cloaca - a multipurpose opening at the rear end of a turtle for both waste and reproduction.

This sort of superpower comes in handy as a creature that spends the cold months in a sleepy state, called brumation, underwater. Wood turtles overwinter in flowing freshwater streams, usually tucked under snags, in the root balls in undercut banks, or buried in the silty or leaf-packed stream bottom. Their internal body processes slow down drastically to allow them to survive in these conditions, roughly operating at 5% their summer activity level. From a metabolic standpoint, 130 days in winter burns the same amount of energy as around one summer week. That said, while they usually remain inactive, it's not unheard of to sometimes see them scuttling under the ice of a frozen stream.

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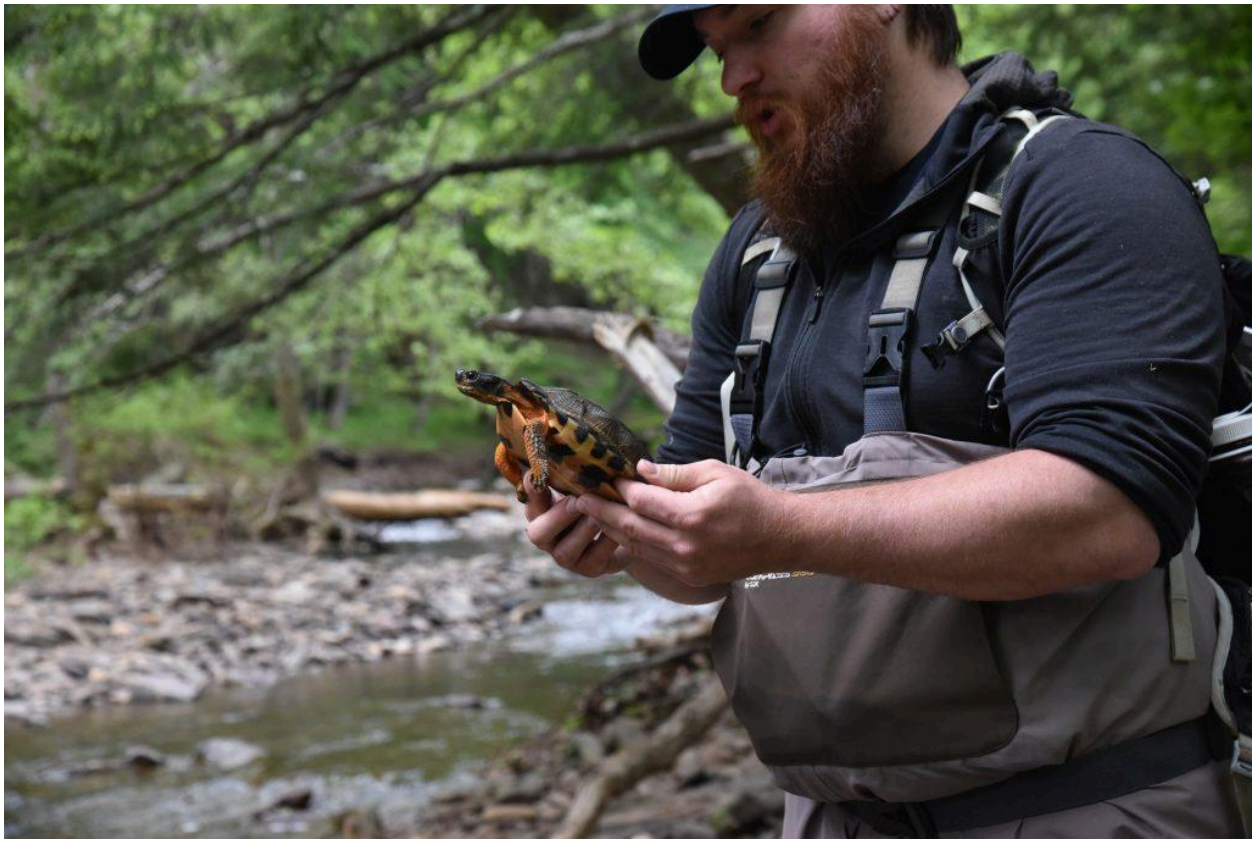

A wildlife biologist and wood turtle. Credit: Maryland DNR[/caption]

Maryland's Natural Heritage Program herpetologists and other staff spend time in the colder weather surveying Maryland streams to help understand the status of wood turtle populations. Suited up in waders and often bundled in multiple layers for warmth, staff members from the Heritage Program and partner organizations walk slowly in an upstream direction, poking and prodding leafpack and hidey-holes where wood turtles may be out of sight. Once we find them, they are carefully marked (so we know if we've found them before) in a way that doesn't leave them vulnerable to infection or predation. We measure and weigh their bodies, check basic health parameters, denote sex and age, and mark their location. Photos are taken and notes taken about the habitat and any behaviors we observed. All this goes into a database that now houses 30 years of valuable monitoring information; this data helps professionals make decisions about how to prioritize conservation efforts through efforts like the State Wildlife Action Plan.

While habitat loss and water quality issues are certainly to blame for declines in wood turtle populations, as with many turtles, illegal collection remains a major concern. Wood turtles emerge from aquatic brumation sites in March and move to upland forested areas, foraging for their preferred food items (like worms, slugs, mushrooms, and

berries) and looking for nesting spots to lay their eggs. While their shell protects them from most animal predators, they aren't quick or dangerous, so are easy prey for human poachers. Illegal collection of wild turtles for sale in the pet trade has been, and continues to be, a significant threat to their survival in Maryland. Reptile poachers are hard to catch. Coordinating efforts around wild animal confiscations is part of the year-round reptile work undertaken by our staff.

So, what happens when animals are confiscated by law enforcement, having been illegally taken from the wild? The first question that has to be answered is immediate placement and care. Even if they have the facilities, zoos are not a good option to take animals that have not been disease tested due to the risk of transmission to their own resident animals. Government agencies like the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) often do not have the capacity or facilities to house wild animals. Wildlife rehabilitators and animal rescue groups are treasured partners in these efforts, but they are often full to capacity already.

Confiscated animals have often endured poor standards of care in crowded conditions and are found to be malnourished, with multiple illnesses and injuries that need to be addressed. Not only is veterinary care of wild animals challenging, but none of it is free. Even if an animal is healthy enough to survive captivity, being able to thrive in the wild requires excellent fitness. Long-term placement is often required to nurse them slowly back to health; in cases where they can never be released for health reasons, someone must be willing and able to care for an animal that can often live 50 to 100 years!

Let's say we have a strong and healthy turtle — why can't we just release it? The question of whether an animal (particularly a rare one) can be released begins with where the animal came from, and that information is hard to come by when an animal has been collected illegally. Releasing an animal too far from their original habitat can result in long periods of confusion and wasted energy as the animal is faced with challenging terrain, different food and water sources, and other unfamiliar stressors. Then, there is the welfare of the existing wild population to consider. If a captive turtle has any disease that doesn't already exist in that ecosystem, it could potentially introduce something that devastates an entire population (just look at some past examples, like white-nose syndrome in bats and numerous diseases in reptiles and amphibians!) Disease testing has to be done on both the captive turtles and the wild population, which means finding them. These are all things that also cost money and take significant time.

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Wildlife biologists. Credit: Maryland DNR[/caption]

In the best case scenario, if a turtle has been deemed disease-free and we know its origin, there is still the question of where to release it. The home range of a wood turtle can be as large as hundreds of acres! Finding a spot with enough good habitat to support additional turtles is a challenge, sometimes taking years of field work to access and understand the current population. Nature exists in a delicate balance, so consideration for other species in that area must also be taken when tackling a reintroduction. Once an animal has been released, responsible stewards should also take the time to follow up and see how they fare after a year, 5 years, or even 20 years in a long-lived species like a turtle. Also, there is always the question of whether a suitable habitat will be preserved in the long-term future. This all means more staff time, and more money spent in an industry that just doesn't have those things to spare.

Faced with this lengthy list of considerations and hurdles, what can we do, as people who care about the welfare of wild - and illegally captured - animals? Here are a few suggestions from our staff:

- Leave wild animals in the wild, and support stronger regulations that legally protect Maryland's most vulnerable species from poaching.
- Create habitat in your backyard! Check out Wild Acres pages for all you need to know.
- Support clean water initiatives. Donate to the Maryland Natural Heritage Program and the Chesapeake Bay Trust via the tax-checkoff program.
- Teach others about turtles. Check out fact sheets from DNR and Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation on wood turtles. Interested in a poster of all Maryland's turtles? New 2026 versions of our herpetology poster series are available online.

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habiChat Winter 2026 Banner[/caption]