



NCRN Natural Resource Quarterly - Summer 2010

Bur-marigold (*Bidens laevis*)

I&M Forest Monitoring was Here...

Have you ever stumbled upon one of these in your forest? Those horizontal blue spraypaint marks aren't the work of an incompetent trail maker, or an oddball vandal, you've actually stumbled upon a forest monitoring plot.



Marks of the I&M forest vegetation monitoring program. At left, tree DBH markers. At right, an individual tree tag. Photos: NPS.

There are more than 400 forest vegetation monitoring plots scattered throughout NCR's forests, and the Inventory & Monitoring program has been seeing what's growing in them for the past four years. Each plot is a 30-meter

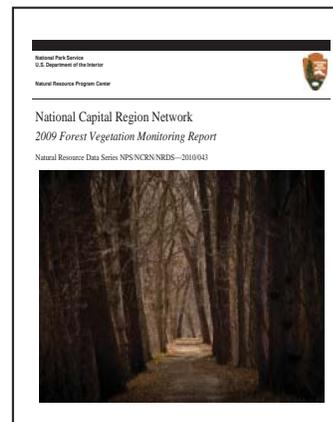
wide circle, the center point of which is marked on the ground by a medallion like the one pictured here.

Each tree in the plot has its own ID tag attached and has blue spraypaint marks that point towards the plot center-point and also show where to measure the tree's DBH (diameter at breast height). If you see any of these things, please leave them be.



A plot marker for I&M forest vegetation monitoring. Photo: NPS.

And what have we learned so far from all these plots? Funny you should ask, because the **2009 Forest Vegetation Monitoring Report has just been released. It's available online at http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/monitoring_products.cfm** (click on 2009 Annual Report). For more information contact John Schmit or John Parrish by email.



The 2009 Forest Vegetation Monitoring Report.

Coming to Your Park this Summer...

NCRN I&M water monitoring continues in all parks year round.

A forest bird monitoring team from the University of Delaware will be in the field in all parks from June through August.

The NCRN I&M forest vegetation monitoring team led by Botanist John Parrish will be doing field work in all parks through September, monitoring forest vegetation along with forest insect pests, invasive/exotic plants, and soils.

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A fish monitoring team from Versar, Inc. will be doing electrofishing from June through August in the lower third of the following streams: Youngs Branch in MANA*, Bush Creek and Visitor's Center Creek in MONO, and Big Hunting Creek, Whiskey Still Creek, and Owens Creek in CATO.

A team of plant ecologists will be out in all parks from now until September, conducting accuracy assessments for vegetation maps.

The NCR's Exotic Plant Management Team (EPMT) has a summer schedule that leaves virtually no exotic invasive plant untreated and no NCR park unvisited. For details contact EPMT Team Leader Frank Archuleta.

Bee-blitz at GWMP

When a bee, previously unknown to Virginia, turned up at Great Falls during the 2006 Potomac Gorge Bioblitz, park employees Brent Steury and Erik Oberg got curious. Could the globally rare riverside outcrop prairie where the bee was found be home to other rare bees? To find out, they joined up with Sam Droege from the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and set up bee bowl transects and captured bees in nets twice a month during the summer and fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008. In doing so they found three species new to the fauna of Virginia and observed rare associations between seven groups of bees and various plant genera. The complete scoop on the species found and their plant associations was published in the Virginia Natural History Society's journal *Banisteria* (Number 34, pages 17-24).



The bee *Coelioxys immaculata*, new to the fauna of Virginia, was discovered in GWMP. Specimen pictured is female. Photo: Smithsonian Institution, Entomology Department.

Wildflower Walks

A crowd of 17 park employees joined NCRN I&M Botanist John Parrish for a wildflower walk at CATO this past April 27. The group got off to a great start when CATO's Becky Loncosky spotted a long-bracted orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*)—officially listed as an endangered species in Maryland—along the parking lot's edge. The group explored the headwaters of Owens Creek along the Deerfield Nature Loop and observed many interesting plants including wood betony, showy orchid, jack in the pulpit, red elderberry, leatherwood, and of course morel mushrooms (see morel article that follows).



NCR park staff at a recent wildflower walk in Catoctin Mountain Park. Photo: NPS/Nortrup.

Parrish also led a smaller wildflower walk on April 14 at PRWI. The group, including retired NCR Natural Resources Chief Jim Sherald who contributed asides about plant diseases, explored the South Valley Trail along the South Fork of Quantico Creek. Wildflower walks are open to anyone interested in learning more about the flora of NCR's parks. Look for announcements about next year's wildflower walks in this newsletter or contact John Parrish by email.

Sharing Wildflower Photos

Please share your photos from the CATO or PRWI wildflower walks, or browse through those that have already been uploaded at the NCRN I&M Sharepoint: <http://imnetsharepoint/NCRN/NCRN%20Pictures/Forms/AllItems.aspx>. If you're uploading photos, please name them with the 4-letter park code (CATO or PRWI) and the year (2010) and add any tags or labels before you upload. (Picasa is an easy and free program with this capability.) Contact Megan Nortrup by email or at 202-342-1443 x214 if you have any questions.

Morel Harvesting Studies

Morel mushrooms certainly generate a lot of excitement among visitors and park staff at CHOH and CATO during the spring. Both parks allow visitors to harvest limited amounts of the tasty mushrooms, but some concerns have been raised about how humans are affecting morel populations.

A summary of oral histories with 41 morel harvesters at CATO and CHOH was recently completed by Elizabeth Barron, a geographer from Rutgers University. Her work was released as an NPS regional report called, "Protecting Resources: Assessing Visitor Harvesting of Wild Morel Mushrooms in Two National Capital Region Parks." The report aims to help better understand morel harvesting and to develop ideas for morel management. It is available on the Center for Urban Ecology publications webpage at: <http://www.nps.gov/cue/publications/index.htm> and hardcopies are also available by contacting Giselle Mora-Bourgeois by email.

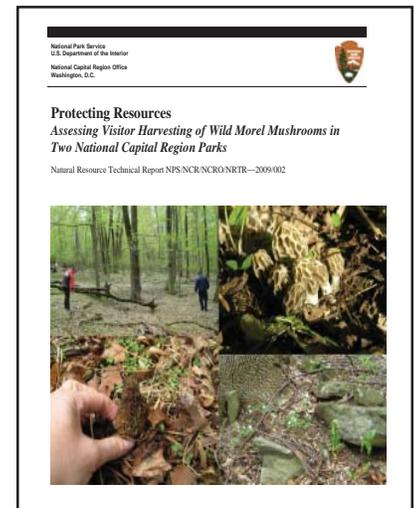


A young morel at Catoctin Mountain Park. Photo: NPS/Nortrup.

Additionally, the NCRN Inventory & Monitoring program is in its second year of preliminary work on morel populations. Quantitative Ecologist J.P. Schmit, who did his PhD work in mushroom ecology, is making targeted surveys for morels along two similar transects in CATO—one in an area heavily visited by morel hunters and the other vir-

tually unvisited. Morel populations are being compared between the two areas.

There are few precedents for this type of study and no results are yet available. In addition to harvesting by humans, morels may be affected by moisture levels, soil disturbance or compaction, and consumption by deer.



A newly available report on morel harvesting.

White-nose Syndrome and Bats in NCR

Earlier this year, white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fatal bat condition, was found in a cave near Cumberland, Maryland not far from CHOH. Due to concerns that CHOH's Indigo Tunnel, one of the state's largest hibernacula for wintering bats, might be affected, the tunnel was surveyed by Maryland state wildlife biologists on March 31, 2010. Fortunately no signs of WNS were found.

NPS is currently working with the State of Maryland's Department of Natural Resources to prevent the spread of the disease to bat habitat within CHOH and to install permanent bat gate closures on both of Indigo Tunnel's portals. NPS will also install "Area Closed" signage on the tunnel, write into the Superintendent's Compendium that the area is closed to visitors, and have NPS rangers patrol the area.

For additional information on WNS see the May *Park Science* article entitled, "White-nose syndrome in bats: A primer for resource managers" at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/ParkScience/index.cfm?ArticleID=395> or visit the Natural Resource Program Center webpage: http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/BRMD/Wildlife_Health_Management/Wildlife_Health/White_Nose_Syndrome.cfm. The NPS is also hosting a webinar on WNS on June 9. Details at http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/brmd/Wildlife_Health_Management/Wildlife_Health/WNS_Webinar.cfm.

Park Acronyms

ANTI = Antietam National Battlefield
 CATO = Catoctin Mountain Park
 CHOH = Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
 GWMP = George Washington Memorial Parkway
 HAFE = Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
 MANA = Manassas National Battlefield
 MONO = Monocacy National Battlefield
 NACE = National Capital Parks - East
 NAMA = National Mall and Memorial Parks
 PRWI = Prince William Forest Park
 ROCR = Rock Creek Park
 WOTR = Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts

Welcome Seasonal Employees!

Congratulations! You've endured the federal job application process, waited patiently through hiring, and passed security clearance. Now you're part of the ranks of the National Capital Region (NCR) staff as a biological technician (bio tech), a Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern or other type of intern, a member of the Youth Conservation Corps, or even as one of the Geologists in Parks (GIPs) sponsored by the Geological Society of America's GeoCorps program. As you learn the ropes of your new job, here are a few sites that may be helpful to you.

- **Inside NPS** (all the latest NPS news, incidents, and job announcements): <http://inside.nps.gov/index.cfm?handler=index>
- **NAT Sharepoint** (the Natural Resources Advisory Team's workspace): <http://inpnrcosp.nps.doi.net:8094/nat/default.aspx>
- **CUE Homepage** (the Center for Urban Ecology is home to regional science advisors and the NCR Inventory & Monitoring Program): <http://www.nps.gov/cue/>
- **NCRN I&M homepage** (The National Capital Region Inventory & Monitoring program does long-term monitoring of natural resources): <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/>
- **NPS Climate Change homepage**: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/climatechange/index.cfm>
- **Help with acronyms** (used by NPS and other federal agencies): <http://inside.nps.gov/regions/custompages.cfm?rgn=1189&id=7297&lv=3&pgid=2861>
- **DC Board of Tourism** (explore the city and its surroundings!): <http://washington.org/>

Calendar

June

9. Webinars on White-Nose Syndrome. http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/brmd/Wildlife_Health_Management/Wildlife_Health/WNS_Webinar.cfm.

14-17. DOI Safety and Occupational Health Training Conference. Baltimore, Maryland. <http://oneinterior.doi.net/oneinterior/News/upload/OHS-Flyer-for-2010-Training.pdf>.

22-24. National CESU (Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit) Conference. Washington, D.C. http://www.cesu.psu.edu/meetings_of_interest.htm.

July

22. NAT (Natural Resources Advisory Team) Meeting. GWMP.

Oct

21. NAT (Natural Resources Advisory Team) Meeting. President's Park.

National Capital Region Network Staff
Program Manager: Patrick Campbell
Botanist: John Parrish
Data Manager: Geoff Sanders
GIS Specialist: Mark Lehman
Hydrologic Technician: Jim Pieper
Hydrologic Technician: Tonya Watts
Quantitative Ecologist: John Paul Schmit
Science Communicator: Megan Nortrup
Visual Information Specialist: Thomas Paradis
Water Resources Specialist: Marian Norris

Visit NCRN I&M at:
<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/index.cfm>
<http://imnetsharepoint/NCRN/default.aspx>

NCRN Natural Resource Quarterly offers updates on the status of park natural resources and Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) "vital signs" for the NPS National Capital Region (NCR).

Questions or comments? Contact Megan Nortrup by email or at 202-342-1443 x214.