



# Wye Marsh Annual Report 2010

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February 2011

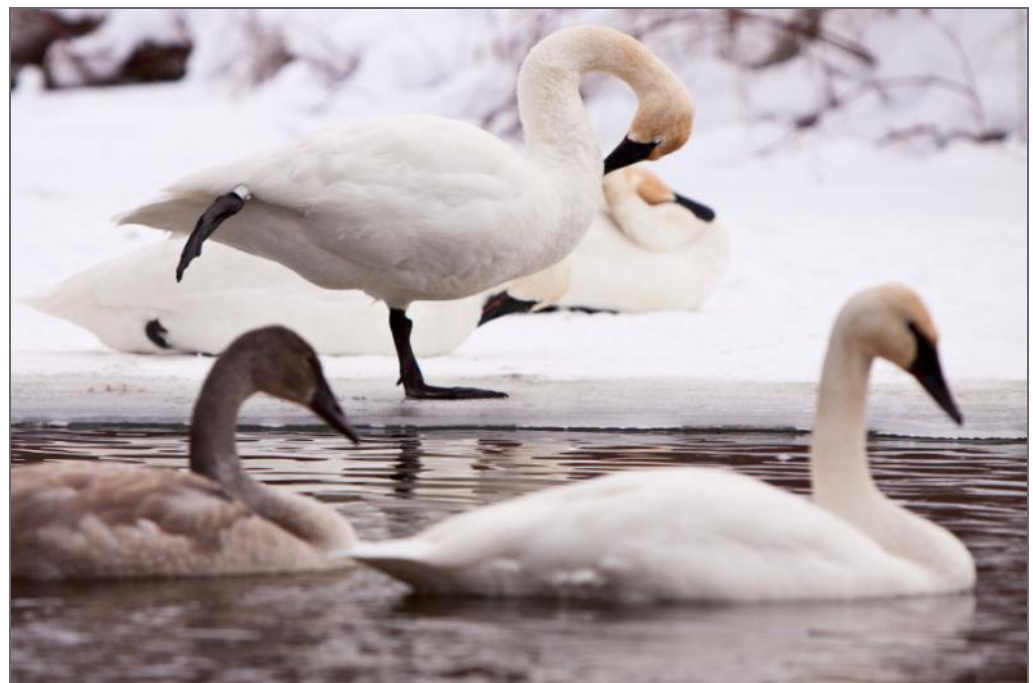
*Our Mission is  
"To spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodland and wildlife by creating educational opportunities in a natural setting."*

## Wye Marsh, Moving Forward

The Marsh has had a productive year; a new ski trail bridge; upgraded ski and snowshoe trails; the launch of the "Off the Grid" project; animal care partnerships; we are continuing to reach into our target market base both through formal education and tourism; and we are moving closer to our vision "to spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife by creating exciting learning

opportunities in a natural setting" with the addition of new programming and stewardship initiatives. We, like many other non-profits, continue to struggle to meet our economic goals in a climate of declining profit margins. Through the support of our local community, partnerships, and volunteers we continue to offer our visitors quality programming, recreation, and education.

A walk to the Swan Treatment Centre, where there are currently 45 Trumpeter Swans being fed by a volunteer, reminds us that there is a reward for the hard work of people such as Biologist-Harry Lumsden. With the support of our benefactors and community we will continue to move forward in our stewardship of Wye Marsh.



## Maintaining our Legacy

This past year in the maintenance department has been very productive with our new Maintenance Manager Paul Beauchamp who started late summer. The bridges and trails in need of repair got necessary attention in the fall and the Forget Loop ski trail was opened this winter (this trail has not been open for the past two years). Project highlights from the last year include Swan Treatment Centre project which was supported by the Shell Environment Fund. This project was completed

by Vern Cottrell in March and local officials were present on Earth Day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) to officially commission the Swan Treatment Centre to take it "off the grid."

The Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP) supported work to replace the red ski trail bridge. With the help of the Wye Marsh Woodcarvers Association, this project was completed in August and skiers are currently reaping the benefits. A new habitat for the two

captive Massasauga Rattlesnakes has been constructed and will be installed later this month.

Plans for the upcoming year include updates and repairs to boardwalks and bridges throughout the trails (specifically re-opening a section of the ID Trail boardwalk), new shingles for the Swan Treatment Centre, and repairing canoes and kayaks.



*Tay Township Mayor Scott Warnock, Chief of Staff to MP Bruce Stanton Marnie MacDougall, MPP Simcoe North Garfield Dunlop, Penetanguishene Mayor Anita Dubeau and Wye Marsh Board Member Vern Cottrell cut the ribbon for the Swan Treatment Centre.*



## Our Story

Wye Marsh, and its interpretive centre, sits on a 3,000-acre wildlife area situated in an environmentally endowed location in Southern Georgian Bay. Wye Marsh has stewardship responsibility for this property that is anchored by its interpretive centre. It is committed to connecting people to nature and promoting an understanding of the vital role wetlands play within the environment. The Friends of the Wye Marsh are committed to conserving the Wye Marsh and the natural heritage of the Wye Valley while providing low impact educational, recreational and research opportunities benefiting present and future generations.

This year-round facility provides educational programs and excursions, maintains a

30km trail system, and a multitude of canoe channels. It acts as protector for an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a breeding ground for Threatened and Endangered Species: including Blandings Turtles, Least Bittern, Black Terns and the famous Trumpeter Swans (the Wye Marsh was an important participant in the reintroduction program). Wye Marsh is also designated a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) and an Area of National Scientific Interest (ANSI).

The Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre was opened in 1969 as a nature reserve operated by Environment Canada. In 1985 the federal government withdrew and turned operations over to The Friends of the Wye Marsh. The Wye

Marsh Wildlife Centre has since been run as a registered non-profit.

In 1996, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) asked The Friends of Wye Marsh, to assume management responsibilities of the Wye Marsh Provincial Wildlife Area (PWA), which constitutes the majority of the land in the Wye Valley.



## Exploring Wye Marsh Stewardship

As I begin my third year at the Wye Marsh, I am very lucky to be funded in part by grants, and donations through the Adopt-an-Acre campaign. My continued employment here at the marsh is very rewarding. I look forward to each day: whether it's spending time paddling through the cattails, snowshoeing through the trees, peering through a pair of binoculars, or wrestling a swan. This year's stewardship activities have me astonished with what we have been able to accomplish on a limited budget.

I've had the opportunity to escape the visitor centre this past year with a number of monitoring and educational programs.

The Marsh Monitoring Program is a project we perform as part of the research organized by Bird Studies Canada. It provides long-term information about the marsh's dependent bird, frog, and toad species. This was my second year working with the Midland-Penetang Field Naturalists (MPFN) on their Christmas Bird Count by covering the Wye Marsh trails so that the volunteers can take care of the remote areas. MPFN take care of a circular area with a 15-mile radius. Wyebridge is the centre of their count circle, which encompasses the Wye and Tiny Marshes.

After having completed the Wood Duck Nest Box monitoring program last winter I was readily awaiting weather and ice conditions that would allow us to monitor the boxes again this season. I was very pleased to see that a box that we replaced last year had a successful nest in it! We were fortunate this year to receive funding from Walmart - Evergreen fund that allowed me to visit Tiny Beaches in order to provide the opportunity for local community mem-

bers to see first hand the invasive species that are invading their backyards.

There's been lots of opportunity for me to explore new territory/ideas.

We held our first ever Hummingbird Festival in August with thanks to the Jackman Foundation. The day was great, including excellent presentations, great information, and lots of fun! We had hummingbird feeders hung around the visitors centre all summer in preparation for the festival, and as a result hummingbird attendance at the festival was great!

We received funding that allowed us to build Salamander boards from J.B Bickell Foundation. This salamander monitoring project will allow the Friends of Wye Marsh to explore the world of amphibians and potentially gain a better understanding of the populations of salamander in the Wye Valley.

The best experience this past year was the trip down to Burlington, LaSalle Park with the swan volunteers. Harry Lumsden (biologist), Ray & Bev Kingdon, Kyna Intini, and Julie Kee are my idols when it comes to swan-tagging, and all were present when I decided to spend my birthday this year learning how to tag/band swans. The day was sunny and beautiful, all who attended had a great time and I await my banding permit in the mail. Once it arrives I can finally start trying to tag all the untagged swans visiting us here at the marsh (sometimes upwards to 40 on these snowy afternoons). Another favourite experience of mine this summer was an aerial survey that I participated in for Trumpeter Swans throughout the Georgian Bay area. Although it probably was not the most pleasant experience for me (as I was quite ill), I did really enjoy



circling over the marsh, seeing pairs of swans and looking at the land I love from a whole other perspective. We have plenty of things to be thankful for this year including funding from Walmart Evergreen, J.B Bickell Foundation, Jackman Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment, Adopt an Acre Donators, McLean Foundation and most recently the Helen McCrae Peacock Foundation. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize ALL of the fantastic people that I have met over my years here at the marsh. Everyday, I continue to be amazed by the support, and I sincerely thank every one of you!

Lastly, I would like to say that I am prepped and ready for another exciting year. With the Stewardship Plan in place we've applied for funding for a turtle inventory and habitat assessment which builds upon the strategic direction of the plan. Hopefully I'll see everyone out and about in the marsh this season; it truly is a place to escape, explore, and experience even for those of us who are fortunate enough to work here.

Sara Street, Stewardship

*Beverly and Ray Kingdon with staff member Sara Street and Biologist Harry Lumsden after a day of successful swan-tagging in Burlington, Ontario.*



*This Painted turtle will benefit if the marsh is successful in acquiring funding that was applied for in order to complete a turtle inventory and habitat assessment project. The project will help to fill gaps in the knowledge surrounding the populations of turtles within the Wye Valley and this project is only the beginning. With the guidance and direction of the Stewardship Plan future projects will be better connected and directed towards those areas which require the most concern for example Species at Risk."*

*"This is the first time we've brought our Grade 7 class to the Wye Marsh – what an amazing experience!*

*Our students were engaged in the learning and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Thanks so much".*

*Grade 7 Teacher  
Huron Park Public  
School*

## Learning through Experience

In *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, author Richard Louv explores the increasing divide between children and the natural world and examines how today's children understand and experience nature radically different than children who grew up only a couple of decades ago.

Our school programs aim to bridge this gap by providing hands-on experiential learning, increasing comprehension of curriculum-linked concepts and encouraging physical activity. Teachers of Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) are taking notice. The help of Wye Marsh Program staff was enlisted this past winter

and spring for the SCDSB Professional Development Training days. We were asked to provide training and expertise to elementary school teachers on the delivery of experiential environmental education. We engaged teacher participants in sessions that focused on how they could incorporate snowshoeing, vermicomposting and environmental-themed active games into their day-to-day programming.

One of our most popular programs – Ultimate Survival, where participants take on the role of a herbivore, omnivore or carnivore and are challenged to survive in the wilderness – has been improved care of a

grant funded through IBM. With the aid of new visual and tactile resources participants will now be more likely gain a thorough understanding of conceptual connections and meet curricular expectations.

Our team of professional and enthusiastic outdoor educators have continued to be committed to improve our programs through ongoing research and development of activities and resources that enhance the delivery of our mission - to spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife through creating exciting learning opportunities in a natural environment.



*National Geographic Photographer David Hemmings gives pointers to workshop participants as they focus in on J.J., the Spectacle Owl.*

## New Things to Explore

From hiking to skiing, dip netting to kayaking, petting a barn owl to feeding a chickadee, there truly is something for everyone at the Wye Marsh! In 2010, the program department was committed to providing active, entertaining, and educational programming to the over 60,000 patrons who visit the Wye Marsh annually. In the interest of attracting newcomers to the Marsh and enticing both members and returning visitors to the Marsh, we developed Sugar Shack Demonstrations and the Wye Nature Workshop Series.

Each weekend throughout the sweetwater harvest season, program staff were on hand to demonstrate the process of making maple syrup. Not only did they have the Sugar Shack up and running and could describe to visitors how maple syrup is made today, but they were also keen to describe how it was made by the Pioneers and discovered by the Natives. This new element to our public programming was well received by visitors. We are looking forward to continuing this successful addition to our

public programming for years to come.

The Wye Nature Workshops were held on the first Saturday of the month and facilitated by community experts. They included topics such as Wildflower Gardening, Nature Photography, Cattail Weaving, Winter Bird Feeding, and Winter Camping.

Further development of the workshop series is ongoing with the hope of introducing new workshops to the series as well as continuing to offer those particular workshops that experienced great success.

## Display Hall Animals—A Community of Caring

The 2010 adopt-a-herptile program was a success and these generous donations have allowed the Wye Marsh to make upgrades in essential equipment for the display hall. Additional upgrades to the hall were made possible by a grant from the Weber Foundation.

In November 2010, Andrew Lentini of the Toronto Zoo generously offered his time to complete a full examination of all the reptiles and amphibians. Joel Rumney, from North Simcoe Veterinary Services, has partnered with the Wye Marsh

to complete a biannual examination of all the display hall critters.

Other partnerships that have made the animal education programs a success include Backwater Tackle and Line and Global Pet Foods, both of whom play an important role in perpetuating the good health of the Wye Marsh animals through their generous donations of supplies.

The annual inspections completed by Canadian Wildlife Service Ontario Region Animal

Care Committee (NWRC) have indicated that we have maintained a good quality of care for all animals. The recommendations by the NWRC have been an important part of planning for enhancements in the quality of care for the Wye Marsh animals. Through workshops run by the Toronto Zoo, we now have a staff trained to handle the Massasauga Rattlesnakes.

We are grateful to our partners who help us maintain the continued well-being of our display hall animals.



*Veterinarian Joel Rumney and Toronto Zoo's Andrew Lentini examine the Snapping Turtle Sonic.*

## Birds of Prey—A Captivating Experience

The Birds of Prey program continues to enthrall our patrons. Matt, our Master Falconer, captivates audiences during live flying shows. Summer Birds of Prey shows keep Matt busy and he performs at three Muskoka resorts and weekly Sunday shows. He also manages two Birds of Prey Programs at the Wye Marsh.

The falconry workshops that run once a month during the summer season are very popular

and customer feedback from this experience is positive. We have also expanded the Educational portion of the program by teaching at Georgian and Northern Colleges.

The newest hit during the Birds of Prey Show is Alice, the Tawny Owl. When this Owl flies, the audience audibly gasps. This bird is quite a stunning flier. The fast flight and unique eyes on this bird make a striking comparison to the other

raptors.

Stanley, the Lanner Falcon, and JJ, the Spectacled Owl, have gone on outings to encourage visitors to come to the Wye Marsh. Linda Belcourt, our Falconer and Sales staff, has taken Birds of Prey from Midland to Toronto and as far as Niagara Falls to win the hearts of customers. The Birds of Prey Program continues to be a great tool for enticing visitors to the Wye Marsh.



*Alice, the Tawny Owl at 10-weeks old.*

## Exploring Local History

The Outdoor Environmental Leadership Program (OELP) is an integrated program at Penetanguishene Secondary School that offers students the opportunity to earn three credits at the Grade 11 and 12 levels while exploring an environmental theme.

For the second year in a row, the Wye Marsh is

thrilled to be partnering with the OELP. Students will be developing their skills by joining the Wye Marsh staff to complete stewardship projects and offer environmental education programs.

Last year the students exceeded expectations with their design of the Birds of Prey viewing area, which they also helped build.

This year's legacy is the research for and building of a new Wigwam. Sixteen students spent nine days constructing the traditional shelter used by the Wendat people of this area.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with OELP in 2011.



*OELP student preparing the framework for the new Wigwam.*



Thank you to the following who adopted acres of the Wye Marsh:

#### Friends of the Fens

Helen McCrea Peacock  
Foundation

Mike & Helen Riggin  
SCHOTT Gemtron Canada  
Tay Power Distribution  
Cheryl and Peter Webb

#### Friends of the Marshland

Susan Blue  
Ronan Grogan  
Nancy Hunter  
Ron and Joan Neville  
David Donald MacRae  
William & Joyce Oxford  
Rotary Club of  
Penetanguishene Bingo  
Barry G. Warner

#### Friends of the Forest

Robert & Theresa Bourgeois  
John Hanson  
In honour of Margaret  
Hagerty, Potsdam NY  
In honour of Alex Seaton &  
Paddy Hanlon  
Kate & John Shepherd

#### Campaign Contributors

Lois and Don Dowdell

In the fall of 2009 the Friends of the Wye Marsh installed a donor wall to recognize lifetime contributions of those who over the years have been inspired by the extraordinary beauty and benefit of the Wye Marsh. We would like to take this opportunity to once again acknowledge their dedication.

## The Future of the Wye Marsh Is In Your Hands

Wetlands are one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world and have an extraordinary impact on wildlife, plant life, and water quality. As a "classroom" wetlands teach about our natural heritage and our natural resources.

And yet 70% of Canada's wetlands have disappeared due to environmental stressors such as land development, upstream runoff, and invasive species.

This makes the Wye Marsh an ecological jewel to be conserved at all costs – for the quality of water in the Georgian Bay watershed; for the fourteen threatened and endangered species that

call the Wye Marsh home and; for the education of future generations.

We are working with provincial and local government and community partners to implement a new strategic action plan in a concerted effort to conserve the Wye Marsh.

#### ADOPT AN ACRE

Our day to day operational expenses are met through admissions and memberships. Projects on the scale required to steward the Marsh have been dependent on grants.

In an effort to raise the funding required to conduct stewardship projects on an

ongoing and timely basis the Adopt An Acre Campaign was conceived to appeal to our community, members, donors and volunteers for their help.

Donors names are placed on an acre map in our interpretive centre which represents the 2,802 acres of Wye Marsh.

To date this campaign has funded an environmental assessment in one area of the marsh, the development of the new strategic plan for the marsh and two environmental technicians who have identified areas of study and research for the next three years.

## Inspired to Give—Wye Marsh Donor Wall

#### Marsh Patrons \$5,000+

Amherst Wildlife Foundation  
Bunn's Kids Trust Fund  
Bob & Sheila Burk  
Canadian Tire Corporation, Midland  
Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP  
Compu Solve Technologies Inc.  
FS Partners  
Franke Kindred Industries Limited  
Volker Hahn  
Glen & Laura House  
Huronian Precision Plastics  
IBM Canada Ltd.  
Alex & Roberta Jarlette  
Kingsdale Shareholder Services Ltd.  
Hudson Leavens  
John & Donna Lister  
Midland-Penetanguishene Field  
Naturalist Club  
Port McNicoll Lions Club  
Rival Office Solutions Inc.  
Rotary Club of Penetanguishene  
SCHOTT Gemtron Canada  
Alfred Scott  
Telequip  
Town of Midland  
TD Friends of the Environment  
The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation  
The Strow Foundation  
Weber Manufacturing

#### Marsh Stewards \$10,000+

Canadian Wildlife Services  
Casino Rama  
Elcan Optical Technologies  
Evergreen  
F. K. Morrow Foundation  
Roderic & Frances Ferguson  
General Mills Canada Corporation  
Colin & Dorothy Harper  
Ed Hartley  
Garfield & Mary Lorrinan  
Helen McCrea Peacock Foundation  
HIVA Environmental Fund  
HudBay Minerals Inc.  
Natural Sciences & Engineering  
Research Council of Canada  
Nature Canada  
Page Graphics  
Right Track Cad Corp  
Ronald McDonald House Charities  
Rotary Club of Midland  
Huronian Communities Foundation  
Don McMaster  
Laurie Schutt  
Shell Canada Limited  
Carol Szarga  
The EJLB Foundation  
The Estate of Dursilla Herbert  
The Estate of Ms. Mildred Pereman  
The George Cedric Metcalf  
Charitable Foundation

The Kenneth M. Molson Foundation  
The McLean Foundation  
Township of Tay  
Robert & Valerie Thompson  
Harry Voortman  
Peter & Cheryl Webb

#### Marsh Builders \$25,000+

Canadian Custom Packaging Company  
Honda of Canada Manufacturing  
Midland Power Utility Corporation

#### Marsh Visionaries \$50,000+

Ducks Unlimited  
Robert Hartog  
Ron & Mary Hunt  
Ministry of Energy  
Ministry of Tourism & Recreation  
Robhar Investment Ltd.  
The Estate of Mr. Walter Haering  
Ministry of Energy  
The Ontario Trillium Foundation  
The Weber Foundation  
White Swan  
Reinhart & Alexandra Weber

## A brief snapshot of the 2010 events at Wye Marsh.....

- Wye Marsh hosted Garfield Dunlop's annual Pasta dinner which raised over \$2,500 for the Marsh. Simcoe North's MPP and his wife were on hand as well as the Mayors of Midland, Tay, and Penetang. Staff and volunteers worked to raise awareness and funds.
- The weather cooperated during the Sweetwater Harvest event in late March and this led to long line-ups at our admission booth. With the help of 102 volunteers we raised over \$16,000. Let's all hope for the sun to shine this year.
- The summer event "Art in the Park" lured the elusive "artistic" crowd with local crafts and music. A busy 3 days of exhibits were enjoyed by all in attendance.
- The annual fundraising dinner raised an impressive \$17,600 this year. Thank you to Restaurant Ste. Marie and the organizing committee. Dinner guests happily out-bid each other all night during the silent auction. Items donated for the auction were unprecedented. Again, many thanks to our supporters and volunteers.
- Workshops are held throughout the year targeting different interest groups and in November we tap into the Christmas theme with Wreath-making. It is held on a Saturday and Sunday in mid-November. With the help of a generous volunteer we hosted two fun and productive afternoons where all participants proudly went home with their handcrafted wreath. We can boast a \$3,200 profit this year.
- An Open House was offered this year to promote winter trail use and the Wye Marsh Gift Shop. The day generated \$662 in sales as well as lots of interest and awareness.
- Also in the Christmas theme, Wye Marsh's Gift Shop was able to set up a "satellite" location at the Mountainview Mall. This donated space enabled us to raise an impressive \$3,705 in product sales.
- Christmas Gift Wrapping held at Mountainview Mall and Canadian Tire saw proceeds of \$5,021. This year, 100 volunteers dug in to offer this service, spreading awareness for Wye Marsh along with a bit of Christmas good cheer. Many thanks to the sponsors and to all the incredible hard-working folks that helped make it happen.

## Friends of Wye Marsh Board of Directors

*For Year Ended October 31, 2010*

President	Michael Riggin
Vice President	Barry Bergey
Treasurer	Barry Bergey

### Directors:

Vern Cottrell  
Nadine Goman  
Colin Harper  
Maura Lendon  
Ron Neville  
Damian Rogers  
John Shepherd  
Cheryl Webb

We are happy to announce the addition of Nadine Goman and Maura Lendon to our board.

It is with regret that we announce the resignations of Peter Moody, Al MacDonald, and Pat Cowden.

## Increasing Wye Marsh Visibility

Wye Marsh staff, including JJ our Spectacled Owl, attended The Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA) Conference in Niagara Falls. OMCA is one of the largest travel and tourism-related associations in Canada. It is also the voice of private sector bus operators, inter-city bus lines, charter and coach tour companies in Ontario. It has been in operation for 81 years.

This conference reaches many customers in a short period of time at a relatively low return on investment. Every year attended is more valuable than the past as contacts are being established and re-affirmed. Our business has almost doubled in two years of attending this conference.

The current trend indicates that Educational Tours are dramatically increasing. Wye

Marsh staff concentrate on education through entertainment.

Our staff goal is to ensure the students and adults have an enjoyable time as well as educational. This goal comes in line with trends showing that adults and active seniors want an educational and active experience.

**“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”**

**Unknown**

## Experience the Difference: 12,240 Volunteer Hours

In a world where environmental issues have taken a back burner to the struggling of world economies, our community continues to vote for the Wye Marsh.

Despite this challenge, hundreds of volunteers stepped forward to assist us in our mission, “To spark a com-

mitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife by providing educational opportunities in a natural setting.”

Whether it’s guiding our interpretive walks, building a new section of walkway, feeding the swans, teaching the ecosystems program, or

gift wrapping, every volunteer makes their mark.

We are grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who give their time and talent to the Wye Marsh. Without them we could not provide the stewardship, education, and recreation of our natural heritage and resources.



*Volunteer Bob Forbes, aka Santa, with Loretta Hamilton at the Open House on December 4.*



*Sara Street, Suzanne McDonald, Amy Maitland, Linda Belcourt, Volunteer Beryl Loxley, Junior Naturalists Chantelle Adams, Sonya Stemerding, and Andreia DaSilva celebrate a summer day at the marsh.*

## Wye Marsh Staff

Suzanne McDonald,  
Fundraising/Executive Director

Linda Belcourt,  
Reservations/Sales/Falconer

Paul Beauchamp,  
Maintenance

Andreia DaSilva,  
Program/Animal Care

Karen Donaldson,  
Bookkeeping

Loretta Hamilton,  
Human Resources/Volunteers/Retail

Pamela Higgins,  
Marketing /Communications Volunteer

Cathy Lewis,  
Visitor Services

Matt Lieberknecht,  
Master Falconer/Birds of Prey

Trevor Stanford,  
Program/Maintenance

Sonya Stemerding,  
Education/Program Leader

Sara Street\*,  
Stewardship/Animal Care

\* Funded in whole or in part through grants.

## WYE MARSH



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