

# MARYLAND JOURNAL

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OUTDOOR AND NATURAL  
HISTORY OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

2007



VOLUME XV

## PREFACE TO VOLUME XV

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In 1993, I printed Volumes I and II of my *Maryland Journal* covering the years 1971-1992; in 1998, I produced Volumes III (1993), IV (1994), V (1995-1996), and VI (1997); in 2002, I produced Volumes VII (1998-1999) and VIII (2000); in 2004, I produced Volumes IX (2001) and X (2002); in 2005, I produced Volumes XI (2003) and XII (2004); in 2006, I produced Volume XIII (2005); in 2007, I produced Volume XIV (2006). I have now printed Volume XV (2007).

As was the case with the earlier Volumes, my main objective here is to assure that the additional anecdotal information and data about Maryland's outdoors and natural history (as well as the other geographic areas included) are not lost as the years pass, which is frequently the case with handwritten materials. Or, to again quote Loren Eiseley, "The years have a way of caring for things that do not seek the safety of print."<sup>1</sup> As I indicated in the earlier Volumes, I'm a firm believer in maintaining outdoor and natural history records and documenting observations. Moreover, I feel that such information is invaluable and that it should be published where appropriate, or otherwise archived in public institutions.<sup>2</sup> By recording and archiving this technical material, I am in essence setting some baselines against which future field workers can compare notes and document environmental and land-use changes. As with my past *Journal* Volumes, I am again including pertinent correspondence, particularly that relating to my field experiences. In Volumes IX-XII, I included substantially more correspondence, given my more frequent e-mail exchanges. When I produced the first two of these volumes in 2004, I debated at length whether to insert these e-mails in their entirety into the main text or place them in an appendix. A third option would have been to excerpt only the technical material into my daily entries. My ultimate decision was to add the e-mails to the main text to make my reporting as complete as possible. My rationale for this was that many decades in the future someone reading my *Journal* would likely be curious about the nature of the author

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Eiseley, an anthropologist and writer, was referring to the loss of one of his old field notebooks (*The Unexpected Universe*, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Complete sets of my *Journals* have now been placed in the Maryland State Archives, the Claude E. Phillips Herbarium (Delaware State University), and the herbarium at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland.

and his associates in terms of their styles, personalities, interests, and attitudes. Including the complete e-mails gives some insight into this. Besides, those not interested in this material could readily skip over it, since it is indented. Because of technical difficulties in copying e-mails to my *Journal*, this practice was substantially decreased in Volume XIII (2005). However, this problem has been rectified and pertinent e-mails are included in Volumes XIV (2006) and XV (2007). The indented passages that have been included are not placed within quotation marks, as was the case with some of my earlier *Journal* Volumes.

Volume XV follows essentially the same format found in the preceding Volumes, including the design of the cover with an illustration of the barred owl drawn by my son Mike. However, I have again included illustrations of the clapper rail and least bittern, which were originally prepared by a colleague, Tom Danielson, for my book *Days Afield: Exploring Wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay Region*, but were also used in Volumes VII-XIV of my *Journal*. Again, all of the original material in these Volumes is presented verbatim, except for some minor editing of grammar and spelling, which I considered necessary to improve its readability.

As with the earlier Volumes, Volume XV should not be viewed as a scholarly writing, since that was not my intent. And despite substantial reviews and editing on my part and a number of computer spell-checks, I am confident that a number of spelling and grammatical errors remain, given its length.

When I printed Volumes I and II of the *Maryland Journal* in 1993, I deemed it best not to include a number of entries that documented some interesting events that took place in 1982-1983 during the Reagan Administration. Despite my continuing goal to produce, to the extent practicable, an unexpurgated document, I again considered it prudent to reserve a few entries in Volume III when it was printed in 1998. Those entries refer to some activities that occurred at EPA in 1993 during the Bush Administration. At that time, however, I announced my likely intent to print the reserved material from Volumes I-III (19 typed pages) as an appendix (Appendix 2000) in Volume VII in the year 2000, given that I could have retired from the government as of fall of 1999. Since my retirement plans changed, this was not done when Volumes VII and VIII were eventually printed in the Spring of 2002. Appendix 2000 was eventually included in Volume IX, given that I retired from the government on February 28, 2003.

Unfortunately, a large part of my 2003 *Journal* (Volume X) is missing, due to an apparent virus or some sort of computer malfunction. I can not access the section of my original computer file after the April 27 *Journal* entry. I first discovered this on October 8, 2003. Therefore, I started a supplemental file at that time. Consequently, I can not print out my 2003 *Journal* entries after the April 27 entry and before the October 8 entry. If by chance this situation is rectified someday allowing me to retrieve these missing entries, I will print them as an appendix in a future volume.

Although many of the experiences documented in my *Journal* occurred while I was working for the government, the original handwritten *Journal*, as well as the typed version, were compiled entirely by me in my private capacity at home. No official support or endorsement by the Environmental Protection Agency or any other agency of the United States is intended or should be inferred. Therefore, the entries and any commentaries that follow are strictly my own opinion as a private citizen and writer. I feel that the commentaries, which are given in brackets, are not only very useful in explaining the significance of the data presented or the phenomena discussed, but also necessary in some instances to avoid confusion over what I meant when some passages were brief or cryptic. Brackets were also applied to some of the corrections and to add the common or scientific names of plants and animals as necessary. Specifically, if the common or scientific names of plants, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects and other invertebrates were not present in the original text of an entry, I always entered them in brackets. I somewhat arbitrarily decided not to do this for birds, since there is less chance for confusion with that group when only common names are used.

In all instances, I have tried to use the scientific nomenclature that was prevalent at the time the data were recorded, or at least that which occurred in the field guides or technical books I was using then. In the case of vascular plants, I generally used the nomenclature in the *National List of Scientific Plant Names* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1982), or cross-referenced the names I used to the names given in that document. Plant common names generally follow those given in one or more of the derivative regional lists of the *National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands: 1988 National Summary* (Porter B. Reed, Jr., 1988); otherwise, they follow *Plants: Alphabetical Listing of Scientific Names* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1994), or sometimes local field guides. The latter document is now regularly updated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service

as their PLANTS Database.

In using the information in this *Journal*, the reader should keep a few things in mind. First of all, unless otherwise indicated, all entries refer to Maryland. Second, a number of species, particularly certain plants and animals occurring in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, are assigned rarity statuses based upon Natural Heritage Program lists from the appropriate states. Unless otherwise indicated, I used the most recent official lists available to me at the time the entry was made (i.e., May 10, 2004 for Maryland plants; May 10, 2004 for Maryland animals; March 2003 for Delaware plants; April 1999 for Delaware animals; March 4, 2004 for Virginia plants; March 3, 2004 for Virginia animals). In this regard, the reader is forewarned that the status of what is considered endangered, threatened, and rare by State Natural Heritage Programs and individuals collecting distributional data may change due to new knowledge that results from herbaria research and particularly from new field investigations. Not uncommonly, no sooner is a rarity status published than additional data surfaces, such as a new county or state record, or another study concludes differently. Thus, in terms of rarity status, my *Journal* will soon be out of date, if it isn't already; for the latest official status of species listed, one should always check with the applicable State Natural Heritage Program.

Although I have had a broad array of outdoor and natural history interests over the years, I have not confined my leisure time to such pursuits. In particular, I have developed substantial interest in a variety of collectibles -- stamps, coins, sports cards, antique bottles, postcards, keys, can and bottle openers, natural history books, to name a few. These varying experiences, many of which I shared with my two sons, Mike and Sean, have been very rewarding, and I still dabble in them to this day. In this regard, much of my spare time was historically spent at yard sales, flea markets, book sales, and auctions, particularly Dixon's Auction on the Eastern Shore at Crumpton on Wednesdays, occasionally with Sean, or my friend and colleague, Joe DaVia. Although these hobbies have been very rewarding to me and my sons and we have accumulated some rather extensive collections over the years, they have taken a back seat to other activities -- country dancing and particularly my writing. The year 2001 saw a resurgence of my interest in two activities: bottle digging and searching for Indian artifacts. This found my son Mike and I in the field many times that year, as well as in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, which is reflected in numerous *Journal* entries. Both of us have assembled quite extensive collections mostly from searching shorelines and farm fields. One of our best discoveries was an apparent Indian

dog skull, which was donated to the Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum in 2004.

Year 2007 was another first for me. Using mostly cobble and gravel quartzite and quartz obtained along the Potomac and some of its tributary streams, I started flaking my own points, knives, scrappers, and axes. Except for the lack of a patina, one would be hard pressed to not call these implements authentic Indian artifacts. My main purpose here was to learn how the Indians made such implements, and by trial and error I have learned a lot in that regard. One thing I have yet to master, however, is deep notching of the arrow points.

The dancing started around 1995, and I have pursued it with fervor ever since. Thus, for the last twelve years or so, I've been regularly country dancing (line dances, east coast swing, west coast swing, pattern dances, two-steps, and waltzes), generally three to five times a week. While my fervor with the dancing has ebbed more and more with each passing year, I still dance at least two times per week. I'm still an ardent collector of old natural history books and an inveterate reader. In my *Journal*, therefore, I often make reference to the dancing, newly acquired books, reading, and writing. An obvious addition to Volume IX was a number of entries related to the terrorist-tragedy of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent War on Terrorism. Being a very patriotic person and someone who feels we should vigorously defend the freedom we have in this country, I followed those events quite closely, periodically documenting events and my thoughts in writing. I also became a proud grandfather (or Poppy as Britni calls me) and have been very involved with my granddaughter -- a future biologist, dancer, and journal keeper, perhaps. Britni, my daughter's Michele's child, will be eight years old this spring. She is my pride and joy, and I don't know what I would do without her. I have been working on her soccer skills for a few years and this year also her lacrosse and basketball skills, and she even has done the Two-step and Elpaso with me at some of our Friday night dances. I now also have two additional granddaughters, Sydney and Grace, via my oldest son Mike's marriage to Krystal in 2005. Hopefully, they too will be future athletes as well.

My teaching load for the government and private sector increased substantially in 2001. It was during one of these courses that I met Janet Earickson, who surfaces so much in the e-mails in Volumes IX-XII. Janet became a good friend and proved to be an excellent editor for *Journal* Volumes VII and VIII.

Because of my increased teaching responsibilities for the government (prior to my retirement on February 28, 2003) and some private institutions, I travel around the country a few times a year, which has resulted in some rather large *Journal* entries for other states. These trips have been great experiences and I find that I can botanically adjust almost anywhere in the country at this point in my career. In fact, I have now done field work in all but two states -- Nebraska and Hawaii. In 2003, I also taught my first regular college course, a graduate-level course (Wetland Identification, Conservation, and Delineation) at Towson University. I taught it again in 2005 and 2007.

Upon my retirement from the Federal government, I immediately started a sole proprietorship, W. S. Sipple Wetland & Environmental Training & Consulting. This business has been quite successful so far. Through it, I continue to teach, but mostly for the sundry institutions I variously taught for going back to 1972. Most of my work, however, has been on the consulting side, mainly wetland delineation, rare plant searches, and floristic surveys, subcontractually, for one company in particular, Wetland Studies & Solutions, Inc. (WSSI) in Gainesville, Virginia. In 2006 I also did substantial work, all rare plant searches and wetland delineations, for The Louis Berger Group, Inc. in Washington, DC, initially as a part-time employee and senior scientist.

It is also great to know my youngest son, Sean, is now working in the field. After working for various professors and others while going through college (something I highly encouraged), he took a contractual job with the Maryland Department of the Environment working mainly with macroinvertebrates, his main interest and expertise. In mid-2004, however, Sean obtained a great full-time position with benefits at WSSI. So now we even work together in the field at times.

With wildlife observations, I have continued in the spirit of John Burroughs and have followed the lead, in more modern times, of patient observers like Lawrence Kilham and Hope Ryden. I now sometimes simply sit by a stream or pond and wait.<sup>3</sup> It works; the wildlife comes to you, for sure.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, I lie in my portable hammock!

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the trip mentioned in my April 13, 1996 *Journal* entry, the

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highlight of which was a mink sighting along Severn Run.

What I have not done enough of over the years, however, is write. In the preface to Volumes III-VI, I lamented my paucity of writing, other than, of course, for my *Journal*. So in reflecting on Sigurd Olson's determination to write, I did just that during 1998-1999 by producing *Days Afield*.<sup>5</sup> And considering that *Days Afield* was privately published, I soon found myself heavily engrossed in promoting it.

As with my earlier Volumes, typing and editing Volume XV and adding the commentaries was no easy task. Much effort went into it, most of which occurred on my computer in my basement sanctum. My approach with Volumes IX-XV, however, has been to type *Journal* entries initially. Prior to Volume IX, I used to, for the most part, hand write my *Journal* entries, then type them, generally over winter. Given that my new approach involves almost daily typing, typically in shorter spurts, I no longer tally my hourly input.

Obviously, I was once again determined to see this effort through, given my firm belief in documenting and archiving outdoor and natural history experiences and data. Hopefully, my persistence has resulted in a document that will be found useful and interesting. Likewise, perhaps this effort will stimulate others to document their outdoor and natural history experiences and data in journals or field notebooks. I can't overemphasize the scientific utility of doing so, let alone the resultant personal satisfaction and eventual nostalgic rewards. As I advised an enthusiastic young colleague (Tom Danielson) a few years ago, "...but more importantly keep a journal of your field experiences, or at least detailed notes of some sort. You will find them invaluable later in life, not only for technical reasons, but also as a record of your activities for you and your family to enjoy. I've kept a journal now since 1955; so much would have been lost in my memories had I not. It takes substantial effort and willpower, but it's well worth it in the long run." In fact, I have now kept a journal for 52 years.

For me, the nostalgia has been there for some time, attributable somewhat to the editing of my *Jersey Journal*, which resulted in my first book, *Through the Eyes of a Young Naturalist* in 1991. And now, of course, I also have *Days Afield* -- another rewarding example of the output generated from similar useful

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<sup>5</sup> As Sigurd Olson once proclaimed after pondering his future during a long outdoor hike with his wife: "I must write." This comment was attributed to Olson by his wife (*The Collected Works of Sigurd F. Olson, The Early Writings: 1921-1934*, Mike Link, editor, 1988).

journal information and dogged persistence. Surely, I would not have produced these two books without the benefit of my *Journals*.