



# Natural Resource Quarterly | Fall 2021

Newsletter of Natural Resources in the National Capital Area



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## Biocontrols in the National Capital Area

By Dorothy Borowy, National Capital Area Ecologist and Integrated Pest Management Coordinator and James Pieper, Servicewide Integrated Pest Management Coordinator

The NPS recently approved plans to use an insect (knotweed psyllid, *Aphalara itadori*) as a biological control against the highly invasive plant Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) at the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. So, what exactly is biological control and why don't we hear more about this method of management?



### Biocontrol Agents

Biological control (biocontrol) is a pest management strategy that involves introducing a natural enemy (biocontrol agent) to an area to suppress and control a non-native pest. Biological control agents can include predators, parasites, parasitoids (i.e., insects that are parasitic in their larval stage and free-living as adults), and pathogens (bacteria, protists, fungi, and viruses). [Read More at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/biocontrols-in-nca.htm>]

[Photo: Invasive Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). Credit: Tom Potterfield, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0]

## Pollinators in Manassas Grasslands

### Improved Habitat and Biodiversity

Over the past 20 years, Manassas National Battlefield Park has converted and upgraded about 1,000 acres of grasslands from non-native to native grasses. (That's pretty impressive for a park of roughly 4,400 acres!) These planted native grasslands may not look

much different to human eyes, but they can make a huge difference for wildlife, including pollinators. This is especially important as grassland habitat nationwide is lost to forest succession or land development, and as many pollinator populations—most notably native bees—are in decline. That's why Manassas is currently working with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) to survey bees, butterflies, skippers, and moths in its grasslands. The project titled, "Has diversity increased? An inventory of Lepidoptera and bees," is made possible through an agreement with the Chesapeake Watershed Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit. [Read More at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/prospering-pollinators-and-manassas.htm>]



[Photo: Bumblebee moth (*Heramis diffinis*).  
Credit: NPS/Bryan Gorsira]

## Autumn Amphibian Activity

by Charlie Shafer, Biological Science Technician with the U.S. Geological Survey and [amphibian monitoring collaborator with National Capital Region Network Inventory & Monitoring](#) (NCRN I&M)

Most amphibians lay their eggs in spring. But as hot summer temperatures subside and cooler fall weather moves into the region, a few amphibian species get a headstart on this timeline and begin breeding in the fall months.



### Marbled Salamanders

One such species is the marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*). It's the only amphibian species in the National Capital Area (NCA) to breed primarily in the fall. These short, stout salamanders feature a black body with white bands across their backs. Marbled salamanders emerge from the soil to lay eggs in the fall after wetlands have drawn down from hot summer temperatures and reduced rainfall. Even though the larvae that hatch will be aquatic and require gills to breathe, the eggs are actually laid outside of the water on the slope of the wetland basin. The eggs then develop outside the water, but larvae don't emerge until the fall and winter rains refill the wetlands and fully submerge the eggs.

In the NCA, it is not uncommon to see newly hatched marbled salamander larvae in mid-to-late November. However, they are not documented until March or April, when NCRN I&M amphibian monitoring restarts in the parks. [Read More at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/autumn-amphibians.htm>]

[Photo: Marbled salamander. Credit: NPS]

**Reminder: Past articles on Spotted Lanternfly**  
are available at the links below.

**[Spotted Lanternfly 101](#)** (Winter 2019)

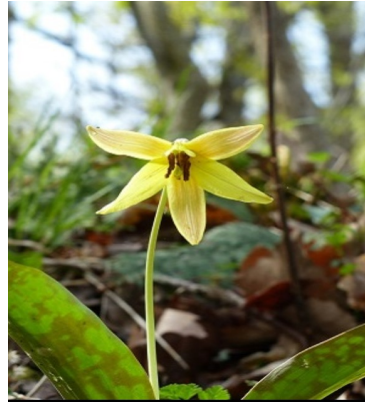
**[Spotted Lanternfly in Perspective](#)** (Winter 2020)



## NCA Nature Photographs on NP Gallery

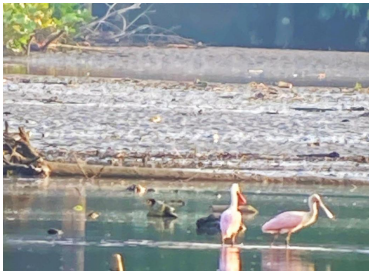
A trove of fantastic nature photographs of plants and animals common to National Capital Area parks are now available through [NPGallery](#). The highlighted collection titled, "[Eastern Plant Communities](#)" was created using 977 images that were previously gathered for the NCA's "Explore Natural Communities" project.

[Photo: Yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) Credit: Milo Pyne, CC BY-NC 4.0]



Eastern Plant Communities

## Visit by Roseate Spoonbills



On July 28, a pair of roseate spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) made an appearance at [Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve](#) (part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway). Spoonbills typically nest along the Gulf Coast and are not seen this far north, so this appearance marked a first official park record.

[A recent article by the American Birding Association](#) reported that large numbers of "vagrant" spoonbills and wood storks (*Mycteria americana*) are being sighted north of their native habitats this year, and that most are juveniles that may be responding to rising water levels in their normal habitat.

Spoonbills were also [sighted on August 1 at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens](#) (part of National Capital Parks - East) by Twitter user Jim Harvard.

[Photo: Roseate spoonbills at Dyke Marsh. Credit: Joan Mashburn]

## Weed Wrangle® on September 25!

A series of Weed Wrangles in DC-area parks are planned for September 25 to coincide with National Public Lands Day. A Weed Wrangle®, is a one-day, area-wide, volunteer effort to help rescue public parks and green spaces from non-native invasive species through hands-on removal of especially harmful trees, vines, and flowering plants.

This month's events are sponsored by the

region's Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management ([NCR-PRISM](#)), and will be held at Rock Creek Park, National Capital Parks - East, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, and other public lands.

Supervised by an expert in invasive weed management, Weed Wrangle volunteers will learn, practice, and begin a habit of maintaining an area free of non-native invasive plants. By engaging our neighbors and challenging them to take action in their own spaces, we hope to create a movement that will have the greatest impact on the invasive plant population.

For details and registration visit:  
<https://rockcreekconservancy.org/what-we-do/upcoming-events/weed-wrangle>



[Photo: An NCA Invasive Plant Management Team member celebrates removal of an invasive woody shrub. Credit: NPS]

## Nature News Roundup: ICYMI

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI), here's a roundup of nature news and resources from the last quarter that may be of interest to those working with natural resources in the National Capital Area. This includes articles from InsideNPS and the NCA Informer (NPS-only access), NPS press releases, and new NPS web and social media content.

[Congratulations NCA Director's Award Winners!](#) (InsideNPS: 8/18/2021)

[Connect With Communities Through Collaborative Science as Part of Thriving Earth Exchange Fellowship Program](#) (InsideNPS: 8/11/2021)

[2020 Regional Freeman Tilden Awards Announced](#) (InsideNPS: 7/26/2021)

[Park Science Magazine Issues 2021 Call for Submissions](#) (InsideNPS: 7/2021)

[Sustainability Project Requests Due August 6, 2021](#) (InsideNPS: 7/2021)

[The May/June 2021 Geospatial Insights Newsletter has been Released!](#) (InsideNPS: 7/22/2021)

[Everyone Is Invited to Celebrate Latino Conservation Week July 17—25!](#) (InsideNPS: 7/15/2021)

[National Capital Parks - East welcomes Lara Hannon as Natural Resources and Environmental Compliance Manager](#) (InsideNPS: 7/8/2021)

[Community Science Fellow Program](#) (InsideNPS: 6/30/2021)

[National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Doherty Named Champion of the Chesapeake](#) (Chesapeake Conservancy website: 6/29/2021)

[Pollinator Week](#) (InsideNPS: 6/23/2021)

[First successful peregrine falcon fledging at Harpers Ferry in almost 70 years](#) (NPS news release: 6/22/2021)

[George Liffert named superintendent of Prince William Forest Park](#) (NPS news release:

(And in the category of never-too-late if it's interesting...)

Coming Together: Stewardship and the Climbing Community in the Midst of COVID-19 graffiti removal work (Mid-Atlantic Climbers website: 10/30/2020)

## Photos: Bat Surveys and Fire Training



Bat surveys of threatened and endangered species post white-nose syndrome are ongoing in various NCA parks. This Rock Creek Park bat was caught in a mist net during July surveys by Chesapeake Watershed CESU partners from Virginia Tech and the U.S. Geological Survey. Credit: NPS/Fowler.

NCA natural resource staffers took wildland fire training this summer. From left to right: Dorothy Borowy, Lindsay Ashley, and Amy Fowler peep out from under their emergency fire shelters. Credit: NPS/Fowler.



## NRS Field Work in Your Park

During fall (September – November), programs from the office of Natural Resources and Science (NRS) continue field work and monitoring in parks.

For details of specific I&M locations to be visited, consult the I&M weekly field updates emailed out every Friday to your park's Chief of Resources.

**Invasive Plant Management Team** (IPMT) continues to control non-native invasive plants in NCA parks through November 18.

On September 25, IPMT will assist National Capital Parks - East and Chesapeake & Ohio Canal with the region's first Weed Wrangle (see article above). To learn more about upcoming events, please contact Alex Voznitza by NPS email.

**I&M Forest Vegetation Monitoring** runs through September at all I&M parks in NCRN. Plot maintenance will occur September – October.

**I&M Marsh Elevation (SET) Monitoring** runs November – December at National Capital Parks - East.

**I&M Stream Water Monitoring** continues on a bi-monthly basis at all NCRN I&M parks except C&O Canal.

[Photo: Fish monitoring using electrofishing gear in Prince William Forest Park's Taylor Run. Credit: NPS]



## Calendar

2021

**September 25. Weed Wrangle!** Volunteer to help parks in the greater DC region remove

non-native invasive plants on National Public Lands Day. Events will be held throughout the region. For details and registration visit: <https://rockcreekconservancy.org/what-we-do/upcoming-events/weed-wrangle>

**October 13. Chesapeake Watershed CESU Annual Partners Meeting.** 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. [Registration link](#). See [CW CESU website](#) for details.

**October 28. National Capital Region Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) Update Webinar.** 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm. Will feature results from 15 years of amphibian monitoring in NCA parks, as well as updates on grassland bird analyses. Teams invite sent to NPS staff. All others please contact Elizabeth Matthews by NPS email to attend.

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**Submit your ideas for an upcoming Natural Resource Quarterly newsletter**

The Natural Resource Quarterly provides updates on the status of natural resources and science in the parks of Interior Region 1 - National Capital Area.

[NCA Natural Resources](#) | [Previous Issues](#) | [NCR Inventory & Monitoring](#)

**RESS website**

**RESS Roundup (NPS only)**

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