

Echoes Of Nature

A Wildlife Discovery Center



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Who We Are	6
What Makes Us Unique	8
Echoes Of Nature Guiding Principles	10
Education	12
Conservation	14
Health	16
Outreach	18
Enrichment	20
Stewardship	22
Wildlife Discovery Center	24

Introduction



Echoes Of Nature (EON) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to environmental education to help people of all ages better understand, appreciate, and care for Maryland's wildlife and natural environment. Through multisensory teaching techniques, EON aims to connect communities to nature and to give individuals of all ages the information and skills needed to become better stewards of Maryland's natural resources.

With a core mission of promoting environmental stewardship, EON is committed to establishing a wildlife discovery center to host interactive programs and exhibits that provide enjoyable, active, hands-on learning opportunities. The purpose of this booklet is to outline EON's guiding principles, long-term goals, and organizational needs in order to start a successful marketing and fund-raising campaign for a new facility and endowment fund.

Connecting Nature to our Communities



“Bringing nature to the community to teach about wildlife and the environment in a manner that brings multiple senses into play thus making a lasting impression to instill a sense of wonder and stewardship.”

– EON Partners



Who We Are



Dr. Michael Uzzo and Echo Uzzo co-founded Echoes Of Nature (EON) in 2002. With a combined 30+ years of experience, Michael and Echo have designed and provided educational programs that focus on growing awareness for Maryland wildlife and habitats. With part-time staff, they have committed themselves to caring for a wide range of animal species, with a special focus on those native to Maryland's diverse natural habitats. Currently, over 65 animal 'ambassadors' (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates) are an integral part of EON's efforts to connect

Marylanders to nature. In 2013 alone, EON engaged over 20,775 people through their educational programs.

Where We Are Going

With a growing assembly of animal ambassadors and audience size, EON is motivated to raise funding for a new wildlife discovery center that will feature indoor and outdoor exhibits, staff offices, classrooms, and trails that will run through a variety of habitats and open spaces.

Along with the potential for future physical expansion, EON hopes to employ more full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff who are dedicated professionals with diverse backgrounds. These professionals will have extensive experience in environmental education and will understand the benefits of an interactive learning environment. The new wildlife center will also offer opportunities for volunteers to serve their community by providing support for educational programming, animal care, wildlife center maintenance, administration, and fundraising.

Through memberships; private donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations; sponsorships; and special events, EON is committed to accomplishing these goals and establishing a unique wildlife nature center experience that enriches the Maryland community.



“We hope to create a place for schools and families to experience the rich wonders of Maryland wildlife.”

– Echo Uzzo

What Makes Us Unique

Echoes Of Nature distinguishes itself through its concentration on native species, focus on public education and engagement, flexibility, and our goal to establish a wildlife discovery center that will teach and inspire for generations to come.

Unique to our area is the Chesapeake Bay and the expansive watershed spanning multiple states and varying environments. EON promotes awareness of the diverse species and the natural processes contributing to this delicate ecosystem, ranging from plants and wildlife of the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. Humans also play a significant role in the stability and well-being of our greater environment, further emphasizing the need for awareness and understanding.

At the heart of EON is the desire to educate and engage the public, providing a learning environment to better understand our connection with nature. Instructors and animal ambassadors provide a special opportunity for children and adults to gain understanding through informative and tactile interactions. In addition, EON's programs are tailored to encourage critical thinking and promote the elements of science, math, literature, and art inspired from nature.

In an effort to reach out, EON distinguishes itself through flexibility with program themes, various audiences, animal species, and the ability to travel. EON brings the learning to the public through the physical presence of the animal ambassadors in our programs at early childhood centers, schools, retirement homes, and an array of special events. We are dedicated to providing opportunities for people to learn from nature at our facility or from the comfort of their own location.

Ultimately, EON seeks to leave people with a lasting impression, understanding the critical role of nature in shaping our environment.



“Our goal is to establish a wildlife discovery center that will teach and inspire for generations to come.”

– Michael Uzzo



Herbert Bateman Educational and Administrative Center, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Echoes Of Nature Guiding Principles



Echoes Of Nature is dedicated to providing a variety of programs and experiences in a comfortable learning atmosphere to educate a wide-range of audiences on the importance of Maryland's wildlife and the conservation of its environment. In order to establish a successful wildlife discovery center that fosters a sense of commitment to the greater community of Maryland, EON has defined a set of guiding principles that will influence the initiatives of the organization. These guiding principles are identified as "ECHOES" which stands for:

- E**ducation — *Inspire the awareness and understanding of people's personal connection to nature.*
- C**onservation — *Preserving, guarding, and protecting Maryland's wildlife and natural habitat.*
- H**ealth — *Inspiring communities and people of all ages to become more active by exploring the outdoors.*
- O**utreach — *Engage members of the Maryland community by visiting schools, daycare centers, senior communities, and local events.*
- E**nrichment — *Improve the awareness and understanding of people's connection to nature.*
- S**tewardship — *Provide ongoing support and promote advocacy to sustain natural resources and the environment for future generations.*



“Echoes Of Nature’s programs are unique, engaging, and fun! They customize their programs for your group’s age range and interests. The most memorable part is seeing all the great animal ambassadors and learning what we can do to help them!”

– Jeni



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Education

The school age programs are designed to support the Maryland State Curriculum, the Common Core and the NAAEE (North American Association for Environmental Education) Standards. Through the animal ambassadors the students are exposed to the subject matter in a complimentary, fun and unique manner that reinforces the lessons. Different topics and themes are designed for each grade level so that they can have new experiences over several years. Maryland now includes environmental components in the curriculums starting at the elementary grade levels. By taking these environmental literacy requirements into consideration EON has enabled its programs to be seamlessly folded into the classrooms.



“The animals are used to help educate and give kids a chance to see certain animals really close and to learn they don’t have to be afraid of them.”

– Echo Uzzo





Conservation

Most of the animals in our care come from rescues and shelters. This gives the animals the opportunity to serve as ambassadors for their species to the public. After the new facility is fully established the next two goals are to become Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited and become active members of the species survival program. By including these animal ambassadors in the programs and future exhibits, a connection is forged between people and their wildlife neighbors. Therefore, they feel a connection to the animals and their habitats. Conservation messages are heard and felt more through this connection. When people have an emotional attachment to wildlife they will want to protect and support it. The strongest of these bonds are formed through personal experiences which includes as many senses as possible.



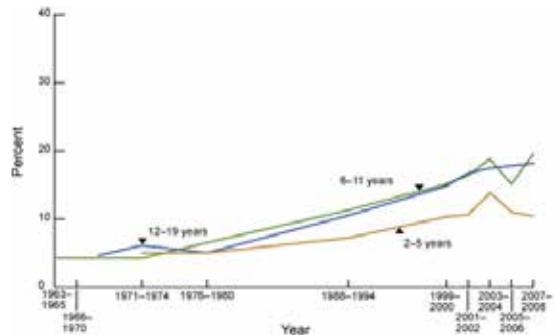


The first of our ambassadors is an Eastern Box Turtle whom Echo adopted almost twenty years ago. At that time she was working at a veterinary clinic in Virginia when a family brought in their pet, land turtle they no longer wanted. The children had found a hatchling near some water and thought it was a water turtle. They raised it in an aquarium. However growing up in an aquatic environment for about fifteen years caused his shell to grow malformed. He has a curvature of the spine and cannot get fully into his shell for protection. Now he teaches about wild box turtles and the responsibilities of pet ownership.

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Health

People are spending more time sitting down inside buildings than previous generations. This includes working, attending school, and leisure time. The result is an increase in the national average weight across the board in the last three decades. Our goal is to inspire people to get back out into the natural world of the parks and refuges by showing them the rich diversity of wildlife and environments that are out there. By inspiring people to make the time in their busy schedules to just go outside and take a walk, we are promoting the first steps to a healthier life style.



According to the figure above, released by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 6 children (16.9%) between the ages of 2-19 are considered obese. It is a trend that has continued to rise for over 30 years.



“Animals are the bridge between the children’s world and the outside- EON’s animal ambassadors are the bridges for their wild cousins”

– Echo Uzzo

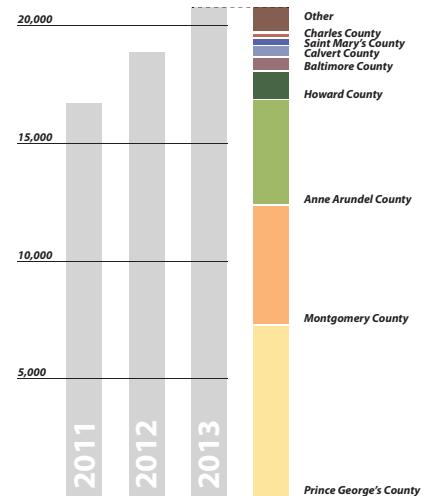


Outreach

Since 2002 EON has provided programs at schools, daycare centers, adult centers, and community events throughout much of Maryland. Because we believe so strongly in our mission of bringing the wonders of nature to the public we keep the cost of our programs as low as possible. The goal is to reach people from all demographics in as wide a portion of the state as possible. Everyone can benefit from a closer relationship to the natural world and certainly the natural world can benefit from a more concerned population.



Program Audience <i>(Students Ages 2 through 8th Grade)</i>	2013 <i>(Estimates)</i>
Public, Private, and Home Schools	9205
Special Events	7,085
Seniors	3,602
Birthday Parties	455
After School Nature Clubs	406
Other	22
Total	20,775



For 2012 the estimated audience size was 18,865 and for 2011 it was 16,709

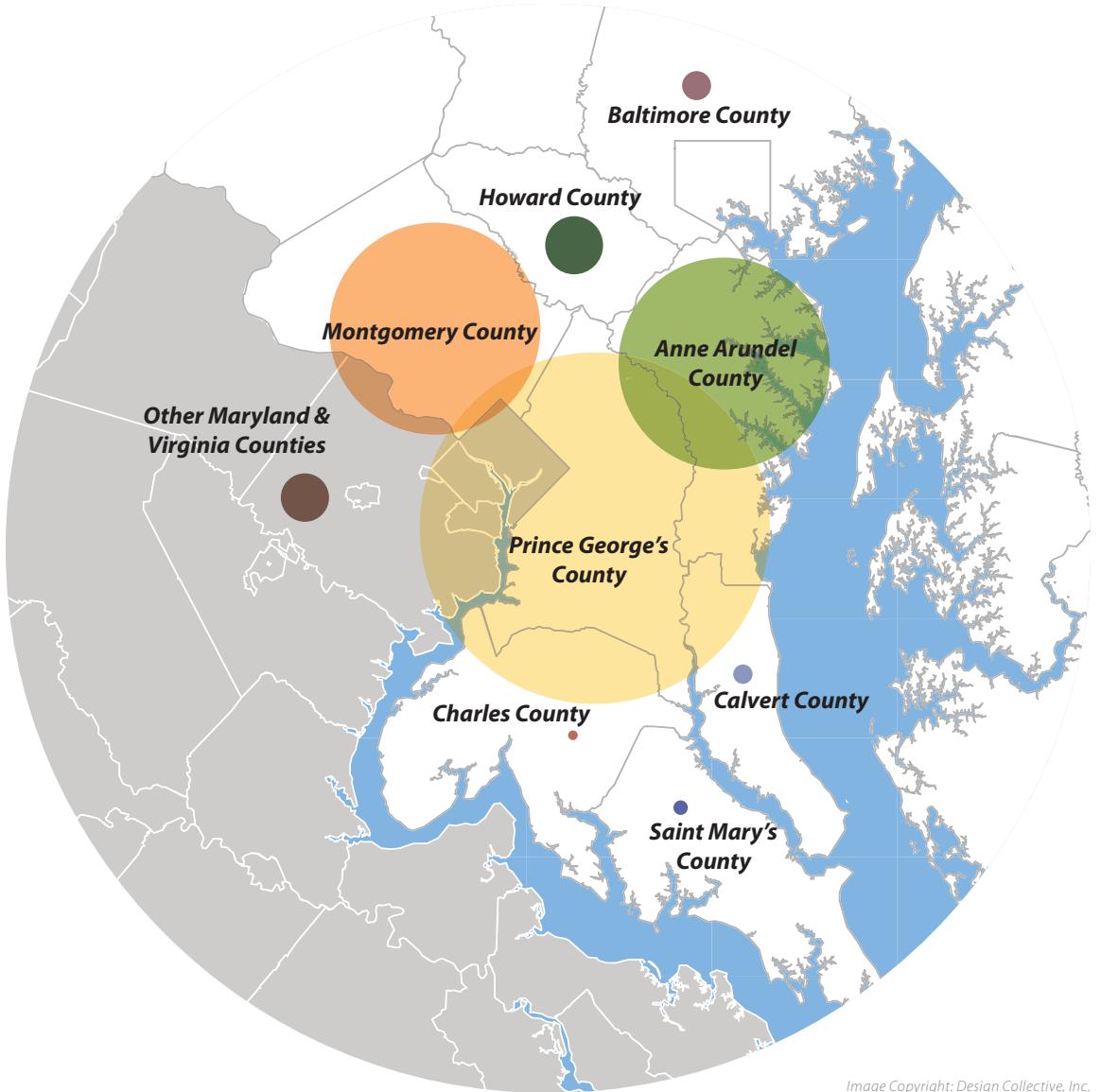


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Enrichment

In today's ever more technologically based society, people are spending more time "plugged in". For most people their only exposure to wildlife and the non-manicured natural world is through electronic media. This cannot compare to the real thing. A special connection is formed when people, particularly children, encounter a live animal in person that touches them deep inside. A sense of wonder and excitement occurs that they take with them for the rest of their lives. It is this phenomenon that will spur people to want to learn about, explore, and protect the natural world. That is why having such a facility is so important, particularly here next to the nation's capital.





“Residents are still talking about the program a month later and that’s saying something for a memory care facility.”

– Heart Homes at Bay Ridge



Stewardship

The news is full of environmental adversities occurring around the world. Now more than ever it is important to instill a sense of stewardship (i.e. responsibility) for the environment. The goal of introducing the various species and environments found here in Maryland is to show they are special, important and fragile. This is the first stage of environmental stewardship because people will only protect and care for what they treasure. People who care about the health of their own “neighborhood” are more likely to be concerned about the health of the whole planet. The health of the planet thus impacts the health of all living creatures, including people, which live on this fragile blue orb.



“I can’t be the only grown kid who’s ever experienced the sheer and utter wonderment that comes with exposure to other living things in the way only Echoes Of Nature offers.”

– Rai



STEWARDSHIP



ENRICHMENT



EDUCATION

ECHOES





Wildlife Discovery Center

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- » Wildlife Center
- » Animal housing
- » Staff offices
- » Indoor and outdoor classrooms
- » Exhibit hall
 - › Live animal exhibits
 - › Interactive exhibits
 - › Touch tank
 - › Critter encounters
- » Gift shop
- » Walking trails

EXHIBIT THEME EXAMPLES

- » From Mountains to the Bay
- » World of Darkness

SITE REQUIREMENTS

- » 10 acres (minimum)
- » Non-residential zoning
- » Prince George's County (preferred location)
- » Long-term lease or ownership
- » Room for expansion
- » Accessible to major roadways



Echoes Of Nature

<http://www.Echoesofnature.org/>

