

Kerry's Nature Program Guide



Bio: Kerry Wixted is a Maryland naturalist with over 15 years' experience studying flora and fauna of Maryland. She has previously worked for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and has taught classes for Nature Forward's Natural History Field Studies Program. Kerry holds a B.S. degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Management from Frostburg State University, and a M.S. degree in Biology from West Virginia University. [LinkedIn Profile](#)

Availability: I love to volunteer to share nature with others. I often am available on evenings and weekends to provide talks, guided hikes, and/or workshops to community groups, clubs, Master Naturalists, and more.

I am available for programs in Maryland, mostly around the Baltimore-Annapolis area but can travel with advance notice. I often am able to provide programs for free, but also ask folks to consider donating to the [Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education](#) or the [Maryland Envirothon](#) program. Some programs may require materials to be provided or reimbursement for supplies, and programs that can be done virtual are labeled as such.

Interested in a program? Please contact: Kwixted0@gmail.com



Student Programs

All student programs are 45-60 min in length, but times may be adaptable depending on the program. Preferred max class size is 25 students. In order to offer free programs, certain equipment may need to be provided by the host organization.

Bee at Home ([Wild at Schools](#))

- Grade 3-8
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, room to run a relay race

Discover how bees find food and survive and model bee nest building to learn about their lifecycle. Using knowledge of habitat needs, students will investigate if their schoolyard would provide a good home for a bee. Optional: add a craft to design the “perfect” pollinator

Beneficial Bats

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, projector & screen if inside

Bats are amazing creatures that are often misunderstood. Learn about the diversity of bat species around the world and in Maryland and ways that we can work together to help local bats. Optional: if scheduled in the evening, can pair with a bat walk with a bat detector.

Build the Best Nest- STEM ([Wild at Schools](#))

- Grade 3-8
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, “nesting” materials, and an area to get messy

Learn why, where, when and how birds build nests and participate in a STEM challenge where student teams build the best nest they can.

Insects & Spiders, Oh My!

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, projector & screen

Learn about the differences between insects and spiders as well as some cool species found in Maryland. After we go through some slides, we’ll head outside to look for different critters.

Lunch for a Bear ([Wild at Schools](#))

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, projector & screen if inside

Discover the wonderful world of black bears in Maryland. Learn what bears in Maryland eat, how they are adapted to survive winter and their habitat requirements. Simulate what its like to be a hungry bear looking for different types of food and learn why they sometimes come in conflict with people and how to minimize those problems.

Owlsome Owls

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors, Outdoors, Virtual
- Equipment needed: tables, projector, screen & speakers if inside, owl pellets & dissection materials, printouts

Owls are amazing creatures with unique adaptations that help them hunt and survive. Explore the world of owls, their adaptations, and different species found in Maryland. We'll also talk about the importance of owls for food webs and then will dissect an owl pellet to learn about what they eat.

Physics of Flight- STEM

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors, Outdoors, Virtual
- Equipment needed: tables, projector & screen if inside

Explore the physics of flight with a particular focus on how bats and birds fly. Learn about bird migration and adaptations that make it possible then design your own "bird" to see how far it can fly.

Super Salamanders

- Grade 3-8
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, projector, screen & speakers if inside

Do you know the difference between reptiles and amphibians? Explore the world of amphibians in Maryland and participate in a migration simulation to see if you have what it takes to survive as a migrating marbled salamander.

Turtle Troubles ([Wild at Schools](#))

- Grade 3-8
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables

Examine the largest and smallest turtles found in Maryland and the threats they face. Compare the life cycle of a land and a sea turtle, then explore different scenarios turtles face to survive through hands on activities before students suggest actions to take to help turtles.

Who Pooped in the Woods?

- Grade 3-12
- Indoors, Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, “poop” candy (Raisonets, cocoa puffs, etc), projector & screen if inside

Scat is the fancy science term for poop, and that’s what this session is all about! Learn how to tell the difference between bird, mammal, and reptile poop and how to identify animals based on their poop. We’ll test your knowledge with a ‘Who Dung It?’ quiz. *Optional*: make your own “edible” scat (or salt dough scat).

Adult Programs

Preferred max class size is 25 students. In order to offer free programs, certain equipment may need to be provided by the host organization. All programs are suitable for Master Naturalists and other groups.

Gardening for Pollinators

- 2-4 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, projector & screen, printed materials

Pollinators around the world and in Maryland are in decline, but you can help! Learn about the basics behind pollination, who does it, and what to plant/do in your backyard to support pollinators.

Growing Up WILD

- 3 hrs; MSDE Early Childhood Credit may be available
- Indoors & Outdoors; Virtual
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, craft supplies (depending on activities selected)

Learn how to connect children aged 3-7 to nature and wildlife through the Growing Up WILD professional development program. Throughout the session, we’ll model different activities and talk about ways to adapt for students of all abilities. Everyone who participates in the full session is eligible to receive a Growing Up WILD guide.

Happenin’ Herps

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, craft supplies (depending on activities selected), projector & screen

Learn about the world of reptiles and amphibians (herps) and how to teach students about these awesome creatures. We’ll start off with some basic reptile and amphibian knowledge and then will jump into modeling activities to teach about local reptiles and amphibians. If time/weather permits, we’ll head outside to look for local herps.

Intro to Plant Identification

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen, flowers to dissect

Learn the basics of plant identification. We'll cover general information on leaf arrangement, leaf shape, leaf margins, twig anatomy, and flower anatomy. After dissecting flowers, we'll jump into some of the common groups of plants found in Maryland and then will head outside to practice what we have learned. Class is best scheduled in spring- early fall when leaves are accessible.

Intro to Mammals

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors; Virtual
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen

Dive into the world of mammals. We'll cover basic mammal characteristics and will focus on common mammal tracks, scat, and sign. We'll then will jump into different Orders and Families of mammals found in Maryland. Optional: We can have an additional outdoor session on mammal tracks, scat, and sign and/or a session on how to identify mammal skulls.

Reading the Woods

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen

The woods hold many clues as to what lives within them, but not everyone is able to read those signs. Learn how to 'read the woods' by looking for tracks, scat, and other sign left behind by local wildlife.

Skull Detectives

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen,

Have you ever found a mammal skull in the woods and wondered what the heck it might be? If so, join naturalist, Kerry Wixted, to learn how to be a skull detective. We'll go over parts of a skull and what they tell you about that animal as well as how to use dichotomous keys to identify common skulls.

Teaching About Invertebrates/ Intro to Invertebrates

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen, insect nets

Insects, spiders, and other invertebrates are often overlooked but are all around us. Learn the basics of what differentiates groups of invertebrates as well as common species you might find in Maryland. After an indoor session, we'll head outside to look for what we can find! This session can be focused on basic invertebrate identification and exploration or can be focused on how to teach about invertebrates to students through an assortment of engaging activities.

Winter Botany

- 3- 6 hrs
- Indoors & Outdoors
- Equipment needed: tables, printed materials, projector & screen,

Winter is the best time of year to get outside and learn how to identify woody plants using twigs, bark, and more for clues. We'll start inside learning about winter ID characteristics for woody plants and then will head outside to apply what we have learned.

Professional Talks

Most talks are geared toward adult audiences, but some may be altered to work for family-level programs. All talks can be delivered in person or virtual.

- **Bees, Bats, and Snakes, Oh My!** Learn about some of Maryland's misunderstood wildlife that play important roles in our ecosystems. From pollinating bees to predatory wasps, many misunderstood species play crucial roles behind the scenes in our lives.
- **Beneficial Bats in Your Belfry.** Learn about the amazing qualities of bats as well as a few local species and how to attract them to your yard.
- **Bird-Friendly Backyards** Learn how to make the ultimate bird friendly habitat by enticing bugs, selecting the right seed, providing nest boxes, and more.
- **Charismatic Carnivorous Plants** Carnivorous plants seem like something from folklore, but did you know we have almost 20 species growing in Maryland? Learn about carnivorous plant adaptations and species that exist around the world and in Maryland.
- **Fleeting Moments of Spring- Maryland's Ephemeral Wildflowers** Spring is filled with magic, particularly as ephemeral wildflowers bloom across Maryland's forest floors. Learn about local ephemeral wildflowers and their unique relationships with their habitat, pollinators, and seed dispersers.
- **For Goodness' Snakes.** Snakes are fascinating yet highly misunderstood creatures. Learn the basics about snake biology, why we should care about snakes, and information on several of the species that call Maryland home. From the secretive and colorful rainbow snake to the social timber rattlesnake, Maryland's snake species are highly diverse.
- **From Mountains to Sea: Maryland's Natural Areas.** From the ancient peatlands in the western part of the State to globally rare serpentine savanna at Soldier's Delight, Maryland is a small state with a lot to offer. Learn about 31 unique natural areas open to the public.
- **Gardening for Pollinators.** Pollinators in Maryland and across the globe are in decline. Learn about common groups of Maryland's bees, what plants provide good nectar, what plants are good host plants for butterflies, and about different types of nest boxes for pollinators.
- **Itsy Bitsy Spider.** Spiders are amazing predators with a bad rap. Learn about unique spiders around the world and their local cousins as well as information on why we should all love spiders! From spiders that "sing" and dance to those that rob others: the world of spiders is rich in natural interactions.

- **Making Spiders Sexy: How to Message About Misunderstood Wildlife.** Spiders, snakes, wasps, and more are all harmed by poor messaging. Learn how to turn those ‘ewws’ and ‘icks’ to ‘ohhhs’ and ‘ahhhs’.
- **Maryland’s Black Bears**
- **Meet the Good Guys: Beneficial bugs in the Garden.** As E.O. Wilson states, “It’s the little things that run the world.” Learn about insects that function as pollinator, predators, and seed dispersers in your backyard garden.
- **On the Brink: Maryland's Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species.** Over 1,200 species have been listed as rare, threatened or endangered in Maryland. Learn about a few of these rarities as well as ways we can help save them.
- **Owl-some Owls of Maryland.** Owls are magnificent birds with specialized adaptation. Explore the wonderful world of owls including their adaptations, species you can find in Maryland, and how to support them in the landscape.
- **Rockin’ Rodentia** Rodents comprise the largest order of mammals worldwide, but what exactly makes a rodent a rodent? Learn about the basics of rodent biology and explore the world of rodents, particularly those found in Maryland. From the industrious beaver to the tiny jumping mouse, rodents are diverse and important components of the ecosystem.
- **Trouble on the Half Shell.** Turtles serve many roles in our ecosystems and cultures, but many species are in decline. Learn some basic turtle biology as well as information about a few species found in Maryland, their reasons for decline, and how you can help turtles thrive in the wild.
- **Weird, Wild and Wonderful: Exploring MD's Biodiversity.** Learn about carnivorous plants, giant salamanders and other cool creatures that call Maryland home.
- **Wild Sex: How Nature Does ‘It’.** Nature is WILD and, sometimes, competition for reproduction is fierce. From the birds to the bees (and even the orchids!), join naturalist Kerry Wixted to learn how different plants and animals procreate in odd, interesting, and sometimes deadly ways.
- **Wild, Wacky, and Wonderful Wasps** Learn about the wonderful world of wasps from the pollinators to the predators. The talk will focus on the biology of wasps and fascinating wasp species found in Maryland including the giant ichneumon with her drill-tipped ovipositor, the industrious potter wasps, clepto-parasitic cuckoo wasps, the gall-forming wasps, the gentle giant cicada killer, and more.
- **Wild-scaping Your Backyard.** Are you new to gardening for wildlife? Learn the basics of creating a wildlife friendly landscape in your backyard- no matter the size!
- **Winter Feeding Wild Birds** Learn how to attract and support wild birds in your backyard through native plant landscaping and designing habitat features.
- **Woody Plants for Wildlife.** Woody plants are an integral part of our ecosystem. Did you know that an oak tree can support over 500 species of butterflies and moths? Learn about the importance of native trees, shrubs, and vines for local wildlife species and how to select plants for your landscape that support wildlife.