

MD DNR Fisheries Service Feature Story

2001 NATIONAL BOY SCOUT JAMBOREE

By Keith Lockwood

The profound look on the teenagers face caught my attention immediately as another group of Scouts entered the exhibit. Although I would see several thousand faces a day entering the exhibit, the level of energy in the air, makes it impossible to be complacent. I greeted the group of Idaho Scouts, but my attention was focused on this one particular young man. He stood in front of the touch tank with his jaw hanging. "I never thought I would see a live horseshoe crab in my lifetime". As his story unfolded, I was to find out he was a part time paleontologist and had interned at a State Museum, working on Horseshoe Crab fossils. A half hour later his friends were finally able to extricate him from the Fisheries Service exhibit to continue their travels on the Conservation Trail. In his hands he carried a dried specimen of a horseshoe crab as if it were a priceless treasure. To him it was, and I'm sure it made it's way back to Idaho.

This kind of story was common and unfolded throughout the days of a very uncommon event; the fifteenth National Boy Scout Jamboree held at Fort A.P. Hill near Fredericksburg Virginia. I am involved with Outreach and education for the Fisheries Service. I often do exhibits at Sportsman's shows and other such events; but the National Boy Scout Jamboree is the granddaddy of them all. Held every four years, it is a personal high water mark for teaching fisheries Conservation and stewardship to an eager audience.

This would be our second Jamboree as exhibitors. In 1997 our exhibit promoted the same theme with live fish and other aquatic species on display. Additionally there was a major focus on Catch and Release ethics. Many a scout returned home with new knowledge on Catch and Release and a personally handcrafted fish dehooker. The Maryland Fisheries Service centers it's Jamboree focus at a place aptly named, the Conservation Trail. The



Conservation Trail has twenty- one state and federal agencies exhibiting on key environmental issues. These exhibits ranged from Water Conservation to other resource conservation issues, with all having a little fun thrown in

As one of the premier events for individual Scouts at the Jamboree it was a very busy area. Each Scout who completed at least ten of the activities offered in the conservation area in the eight days of operation, could earn the Conservation Area patch. Getting this patch or any other Jamboree Souvenir was a real priority for attending Scouts.

Approximately 40, 000 scouts and leaders will camp for ten days living the ideals of Scouting with fellow Scouts for what will be a once in a life time experience. The Scouts who attend the National Jamboree are usually fourteen to seventeen years old and could be considered at the top of their class in regards to their peers. They represent what's best in America for their generation. In addition to the Scouts who camp at the Jamboree, thousands of Scouts and families arrive from surrounding states to visit and experience the Jamboree as day visitors.

The planning for the Jamboree begins in earnest two years before the event and the layers of structure and the enormous undertaking is staggering. Approximately two months before the event, tent cites of large army tents and huge event tents begin to appear; fueling the sense that something great is about to occur.

The many activities at the Jamboree are basically divided into two programs. The four action centers all offer activities such as air-rifle shooting, archery, bikathalon, buckskin games (muzzle loading rifles, bullwhips,

tomahawk and knife throwing), Confidence course, motocross, pioneering, Rappelling towers and trapshooting. The Outback areas include the Conservation Trail, Fishhook Lake, Aquatics (scuba diving, snorkeling, canoes, kayaks, rowing), the Arts and Science Expo, Brownsea Island, Stage Shows, National exhibits, the Army experience and the Merit Badge mid-way where Scouts could earn merit badges in all fields of study. The programs at each one of these activities were inspiring. A lot of planning and support from industry partnerships and an army of trained staff made it work.

One Outback activity area of particular interest to the author was Fish Hook Lake. Sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. and an army of volunteers, an opportunity to fish for more than twenty thousand stocked fish. Scouts could receive instruction, select spinning or fly-casting outfits, catch a fish, and wind up with a meal all in one stop. Volunteers were present to clean and prepare the scouts catch or the scouts could do it themselves. It was a sight to see novices catching their first fish and others working on the fishing merit badge or just having fun fishing.

Fly fishing was well represented with the introduction of a new B.S.A. (Boy Scouts of America) fly fishing merit badge and an official B.S.A. five weight and fly tying kit sponsored by manufacturers. There was even a fly tying classroom where boys could learn to tie a fly to take home.

The Fisheries Service partnered with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to present an exhibit titled "Saving the Bay Together". The focus was on understanding the issues of non-point source pollution, water conservation, fisheries conservation and stewardship. Add a "hands on" experience with two touch tanks fill of bay creatures, a "fun house" type storm drain adventure and we had a recipe for learning and fun.



A week before the Scouts arrive things really start to hop. The large tanks of saltwater that will house the animals that will provide the "hands on" experience are the first to go up. Stan Tomaszewski and his crew from the Piney Point Oyster Hatchery can always be counted on for this arduous task. The aquatic animals arrive, the displays go up and it really starts to look like something. The energy and excitement builds each day as opening day approaches.



Heather Hetzeck and Becky Feters represented the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Their energy, and fresh ideas coupled with supportive resources really made the exhibit come together. When they arrived with their storm drain fun house on a big trailer and set it up we knew we were almost there. The day before the Scouts were to arrive it was complete. Minor adjustments were made, we were ready to go.

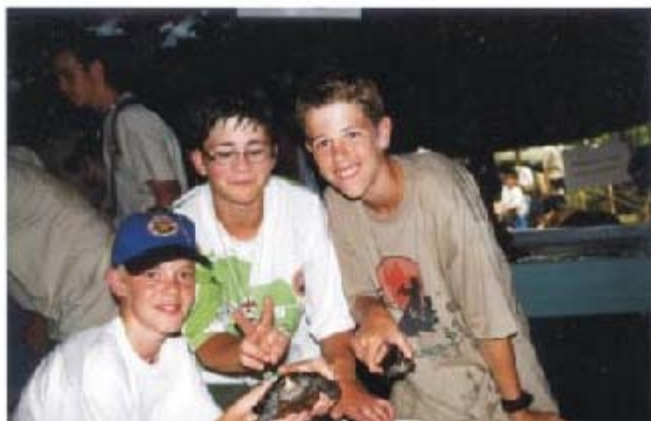
The next morning as the gray of morning began to appear a very special and electric thing began to occur. The Scouts began to arrive. Many who have traveled from great distances had been visiting the Nations

Capital for the last few days. Others clogged all the area airports, and could be seen everywhere in the D.C. area. Today within four to six hours they all arrived by charter buses, followed by tractor-trailer trucks loaded with camping gear. There was activity everywhere as they hurriedly set up their camps, and gateways soon becoming tent cities.

The Jamboree starts off with a big opening ceremony followed by thunderous cannon fire signaling the start of things. The Scouts are scheduled to visit activity areas usually by region, so it's always a treat to see what region of the United States or foreign country would be visiting us on any given day.

The Conservation Trail was buzzing with activity as exhibitors made last minute adjustments and daily staff began to arrive from offices and agencies far and wide. Our volunteer staff came from many different divisions within DNR, anyone who answered the email call for help, and had a yearning for adventure. The DNR people who came to help each day all have their own stories of adventures with military police, detours caused by parade events or just getting overwhelmed with the immense size of the event. Gisela Peace who works for fisheries at the Tawes building gets the award for one of the more enduring stories. It all started with check in at the main gate to see if this actually was the Fort A.P. Hill she was looking for. Gisela was directed into the wrong parking area and wound up hiking several miles in the summer heat, to reach our area. Gisela had many interesting stories of Scouts and leaders she met in route and enjoyed her travels for what they were.

Our staff was in place; all was ready as the first groups of Scouts began to arrive. Within a few hours we were operation at full capacity with a line waiting to enter. The Scouts or day visitors first learned about watersheds and then were engaged in a discussion about runoff and things they might have seen floating in a stream or washed down a storm drain. Now it was time to actually enter a storm drain, down into a dark maze of passages complete with sounds and debris. The adventurers would exit down a ramp, wide eyed and grinning from ear to ear. As they exited and gathered themselves together they entered the large tent where they could experience some aspects of the Chesapeake Bay.



The big draw in this area of the exhibit was the touch tanks. An eight-foot tank filled with friendly Diamond-Back Terrapins and a slightly smaller tank containing Horseshoe crabs and Blue crabs greeted those who entered. All visitors enjoyed the hands of learning experience. Cameras clicked and smiles abounded, eight hours a day for eight days.

Anyone who attends a gathering like this soon realizes that because this is a once in a lifetime experience for these boys, souvenirs are of major importance. Scout patch trading and any other kind of memento trading are widespread and becomes a refined art. Rumors and small talk are constant about

the value of souvenir items or patches on ebay.

Our group did not have the budget of the larger exhibiting agencies that were giving out hatpins or other items, as the Scouts exited their exhibits. What we did have though was a spirit of for fun.

While setting up exhibits during the Sportsman show season, I was able to do a bit of "dumpster diving" outside the show arenas. I managed to accumulate about fifty pounds of plastic crayfish and worms commonly used for largemouth bass fishing. Using a garment t-bar tagging gun, we attached the crayfish and worms to the Scouts hats. It did not take but a day before they began to reach folklore status. The word spread throughout the Jamboree of phenomena called the "Clan of the Crawdad". We were overwhelmed with Scouts and adult leaders coming to our exhibit looking for the silly crayfish hat ornaments.

Some groups went so far as to develop a song and by-laws, all in the spirit of silly fun. At the close of the Jamboree we had given out close to fifteen thousand crawdads and worms. This certainly gave credence to that old saying, "one mans trash is another's treasure".

The days seemed to drift along; each day was filled with new crowds of visitors from far and wide. There were quite a large number of Boy Scout troops and families from Maryland and it was easy to see they took great pride in our being there. Each day a new batch of volunteers from the Annapolis office would arrive, and it was refreshing to see them caught up in the excitement the Jamboree generates.

There were flyovers of jets and every manner of airplane or helicopter, sky diving teams, celebrities and arena

shows there always seemed to be something going on.

The big closing arena show was the most spectacular of all. Due to a whopper of a rainstorm it was postponed for a day and the scouts missed seeing president Bush. He did send a video address, which was quite inspiring, and the entertainment was great. The fireworks spectacular was just that. They started off with being choreographed to Louis Armstrong, god bless America etc, built up to twelve rounds every second for three and a half minutes and finished off with over two thousand five hundred rounds for the finale. Only the famous Zambelli family could pull something like that off. It left everyone speechless.



I was sleeping on my cot when I awoke to an uneasy feeling of a distant low vibration and a rumbling that seemed to just hang in the air. It was a sound that could be felt; the ground was shaking. A drowsy glance at the clock nearby revealed that it was four am. For a moment I imagined being a Plains Indian waking in his teepee to a half million buffalo hooves as the migrations approached. In this case though it was not pounding buffalo hooves, it was nine hundred and twenty charter buses and an equal number of tractor-trailer trucks. It was time for the Scouts to move out. I decided to start to do the same, since sleep was out of the question as the buses and trucks now roared by at close range headed to nearby sub-camps.

In the pre-dawn darkness I set about packing up and changing a flat tire on the tank truck. Morning light began to filter through the trees as a strange quiet settled over the area. The buses and trucks were gone and so were the boys. This added to the melancholy atmosphere of realizing the Jamboree was over. Stan and his crew arrived from piney point to pick up their equipment, and as they left so did I. The Jamboree radio station was still broadcasting till noon and as I approached the Potomac River, the signal began to fade. Our memories of the Jamboree will not fade and certainly the Scouts and adults will not forget their experience at "Saving the Bay Together".