



Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area

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Just north of Oakland, at the southern end of Roman Nose Mountain is this 1863 acre tract. Though it is mostly comprised of upland hardwoods, what makes Mt. Nebo WMA one of the most unique wetlands in Maryland is the presence of its red spruce bogs. These locally rare bogs are more commonly found in the forests of northern states and Canada.

“With nearly 3,000 feet of elevation, the Maryland mountaintop is home to a handful of these special areas,” says WMA Manager Mike Fazenbaker.

More than 18,000 years in the making, these meadows, bogs and forests – along with two beaver ponds and a stream called Millers Run – are home to an incredible variety of rare and endangered plants as well as deer, fowl and small mammals. A casual stroll or lengthy hike through the alder thickets and sedge meadows might produce glimpses of newly re-introduced river otters playing and swimming along the bank or a red tail hawk swooping down into a meadow after its prey. Birdwatchers might catch the



drumming sound of the male ruffed grouse or the gobble of the male turkey as they try to woo perspective mates, or perhaps the uniquely humorous call of the alder fly catcher as it seems to be announcing “free beer.”

Mt. Nebo in the fall is also a haven for hunters, where small game like rabbits, squirrels and turkeys are plentiful and white-tailed deer season is extremely popular. There’s even a Youth Hunter Day for hunters 16 years of age and under sponsored by the DNR. “Accompanied by non-hunting

mentors, youngsters may pursue deer and turkeys before the traditional first day of hunting season,” adds Fazenbaker.

Mt. Nebo is also known for its excellent ruffed grouse and woodcock hunting. Catkins from the alder plant and the tender buds of the big-toothed aspen are a natural food source for them and are part of the habitat most extensively managed by the DNR. Such management might include anything from clear-cutting an area and making brush piles for escape cover for small game – also a good brood



habitat for rabbits and wild turkeys – to the planting of grasses, clovers and small grains for food and vegetative cover, all of which provide a good base for raptors like owls and hawks. Recent management efforts have focused on providing early successional stage habitats that benefit a wide variety of species. Over the last decade or so, mini-orchards have also been established that will one day replace the larger apple trees found throughout the area.



A man-made pond, or impoundment, provides a reproductive and brood habitat for a variety of migrating water fowl, such as mallards, Canada geese, wood and black ducks and blue-wing and green-wing teal.



“The ability to raise and lower the water level allows us the flexibility to maximize available habitat year-round,” adds Fazenbaker.



Such meticulous attention and constant monitoring is just part of the job for the WMA staff, whose funding comes almost entirely from the sale of hunting licenses and a federal excise tax on sport hunting devices and ammunition. And with more public lands available for hunting than any other county in Maryland, that makes the approximately \$24.50 investment quite a sweet deal for Garrett County hunters...almost as sweet as a tender bud off a big-toothed aspen.

