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# On the Bay: Anne Arundel County has bought a bog



The purple pitcher plant is found in Maryland bogs and it slowly digests insects that slip into its leaves. Anne Arundel County has bought about 19 acres of scattered bog in Pasadena. (Meadowview Biological Research Station)



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**P**itcher plants liquefy and drink their crawling food.

Sundew catch bugs like flypaper, the leaves curling around stuck beetles.

Floating moss turns the water acidic, suitable for wild cranberries growing in the swampy margins of a Pasadena neighborhood — where Anne Arundel County has bought a bog.

The county paid about \$190,000 for the bog, some 19 acres scattered in Boulevard Park, said Dawn Thomas of the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Decades ago, Boulevard Park was built on the bog, but some wet lots remained undeveloped.

The county bought these lots in April and secured an easement to prevent more development, Thomas said.

The only native bamboo grows here. The giant cane reaches about 3-feet tall. There may be wild orchids, too, though biologist Sally Hornor hasn't ventured too deep in the old bog.

"Walk in there and footprints you leave will be there 100 years," said Hornor, a member of the Magothy River Land Trust.

The nonprofit group worked for years with county officials to find and preserve the lots.

"The Gray's Creek bog was somewhat unusual," said Earl Bradley, another member. The bog was subdivided in the 1940s, he said. "Individual lots were sold to property owners, but largely never developed because they were wetlands. We couldn't be sure they would stay that way."

Bogs are a distinct environment with standing water, wet soil, often covered by floating sphagnum moss. Few plants can survive the acidic water.

But some curious vegetation thrives: the carnivorous sundew and pitcher plants, the cranberries and white orchids.

"These really interesting chemistry things make it what it is, and why these plants can hold out there and not anywhere else," said Claudia Donegan with the state Department of Natural Resources. "It represents a totally different ecosystem."

Many bogs lie in the mountains of Western Maryland, but they're uncommon in the state's coastal plains. Here, Anne Arundel County has the most with 14 bogs, Thomas said.

They're believed to be old ice ponds built by colonists, Hornor said, or perhaps the handiwork of long-dead beavers.

"We don't really have good chronological data," she said. "The bogs themselves are lovely places ... that's really what we'd like to protect, this community of plants that make up this rare ecosystem."

Several bogs lie on the north shore of the Magothy River, including Eagle Hill, Shady Pond, Blackhole Creek and Cockey's Creek bogs.

The Magothy River Land Trust began working with county officials at least seven years ago to identify and buy the undeveloped lots in Boulevard Park, Thomas said. It was a slow process, she said, locating

and contacting owners of empty lots. The county is considering one final piece, an additional 2 acres.

Mostly, the land was bought cheaply. The soggy ground was often unsuitable for homes.

Officials with the Magothy River Land Trust and the Department of Recreation and Parks will celebrate the effort with a reception this afternoon.

Signs may be installed around the bog to identify the strange plants.

But don't expect any trails. It's not exactly a place to walk the dog.

On the Bay is an occasional roundup of environmental news from Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. Submit news to [tprudente@capgaznews.com](mailto:tprudente@capgaznews.com) or call 410-280-5939.

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