



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

February 2016

Annual GCNC Pot Luck Dinner and Film Screening

6:00 pm Pot Luck Dinner

7:00 pm GCNC Night at The Movies Presents-*BAG IT!*

Thursday, February 11, 2016 at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ

(directions below)

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

Please note the dinner begins at 6:00 P.M.



POTLUCK DINNER

Our February meeting will again be preceded by the traditional annual winter Pot Luck Dinner. It is always a highlight of the year and a great opportunity to gather together with fellow club members and share a wonderful meal on a cold winter's night in the warmth of good company. As always, please bring either an entrée or dessert and a plate and utensils for yourself.

Our after dinner entertainment will be the screening of the documentary film,
Bag it- is your life too plastic?.

A reviewer on IMDB has this to say about ***Bag it:***

"Our story follows Jeb Berrier, an average American guy who is admittedly not a "tree hugger," who makes a pledge to stop using plastic bags. His girlfriend, Anne, joins him in the challenge to decrease their use of plastic at home. This small action gets Jeb thinking about plastic, not just about plastic bags, but other kinds of plastic. "What is plastic made of? Is it recyclable? Does it decompose when it ends up in the landfill? Does plastic have negative health effects?" Jeb wants to learn more, so he embarks on a global tour to unravel the complexities of our plastic world.



While ***Bag it*** is a film that deals with a serious subject, the film's tone and mood is kept light to keep audiences engaged and entertained. ***Bag it*** will draw in a broad range of people to the film, not just environmentalists. While many environmental films leave viewers disheartened and feeling helpless, ***Bag it*** will leave viewers feeling empowered, informed, and excited to create change starting today!"

This 2010 film received the Best of Festival Award from the Blue Oceans Film Festival, an Audience Choice Award from the Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival, the Best Documentary Audience Award from the Ashland Independent Film Festival, the Audience Choice Award from Mountainfilm in Telluride, and second place Audience Award at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival.

Directions: The Holy Nativity Lutheran Church is located just off Rt 553 (Woodbury-Glassboro Rd.) immediately south of the traffic light at Mantua Ave. The church parking lot can be accessed by entrances on either Woodbury-Glassboro Road or Lenape Trail (first left off of Mantua Ave).

Field Trip - Family Fun Walk at Palmyra Cove Nature Park

Sunday, February 28th, 2016 at Noon

Trip Leader: Maria Keefe (cell/text: 609-315-4759 or mariakeefe19@comcast.net)

Join us on **Sunday, February 28 at Noon, at Palmyra Cove Nature Park** as we explore what this beautiful park has to offer. We will meet in the parking area and take a walk on the trails. After the walk you are welcome to go into the Nature Center on your own.

All ages are welcome. These walks are for anyone that enjoys seeing the wonder of the natural world through a child's eye. You don't need children to join these walks with active, excitable, and enthusiastic children... Bring a baby in a backpack, a toddler in tow, grade schoolers, parents, or grandparents along for a walk. We will stop to look at anything interesting we find. The walk will last an hour or so. Dress in layers according to the weather and bring water and snacks as needed. Bring your sense of adventure and join us for a fun walk outdoors.

Directions: There are the detailed directions below on the Palmyra Cove website (www.palmyracove.org) as well as Google Maps directions. Option 1 is easier, but flea market traffic through the jug-handle might be backed up at times.

Option 1: Travel on Route 73 north towards the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. Take the jug-handle at the FC Kerbeck car dealership; cross over Route 73; on the right (wooden gates) enter Park Drive to the Palmyra Cove Nature Park Environmental Discovery Center parking lot.

Option 2: Travel on Route 73 north towards the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. Make a right at the last light before the bridge at Souder Street (Dunkin Donuts); follow to the stop sign (Temple Boulevard), make a left; just before the Toll Plaza, make a right into the driveway, follow the roadway behind the Toll Building and under the bridge, the Palmyra Cove Nature Park (Environmental Discovery Center) is just through the wooden gates under the bridge.

Field Trip Report – Delaware Valley Floral Group: January 8, 2016

Every space was filled for our very special tour of Delaware Valley Floral Group's facilities in Mantua. We were welcomed with a sign in the lobby and we proceeded to listen to an introductory presentation by our gracious and extremely knowledgeable host, Frank Soucek. Frank explained the floral wholesale business and DVFG's growth from a small, local supplier to a major regional player serving florists from northwestern New York state and New England south to Virginia. We learned the importance of refrigeration and control of bacterial growth are to consumers receiving a quality floral product and how the floral industry has evolved into an international, sustainable and socially progressive business. While we followed the process the flowers go through from receipt from growers in the US and other countries to packing to fill local florists' orders we saw so many ooh and ahh producing, gorgeous flowers. Topping our visit off Frank had two additional treats for our group – seeing Matsui Nursery's greenhouses full of exotic orchids and a bunch of lovely fresh tulips for everyone!



Field Trip Report - Birding at John Heinz at Tinicum National Wildlife Refuge: January 9, 2016

Seven people, including trip leader Dan Ceravolo set out to explore this wildlife oasis that is surrounded by highways, an airport, and neighborhoods. We initially crossed the 145 acre impoundment on a boardwalk, and then walked around the eastern end of the impoundment. Despite part of the impoundment being iced over, we saw a number of different species of waterfowl including American Widgeon, Gadwall, and Hooded Merganser. Also observed were a Black Duck x Mallard Hybrid and a Gadwall x Mallard hybrid. Woodland birds were also seen and/or heard, including Northern Flicker, Brown Creeper, Rufous-sided Towhee, and Fox Sparrow. Additionally, a Bald Eagle and its nest were another highlight of the trip. In all, 49 species were tallied; not bad for a winter's day!

Results of the NW Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count: December 19, 2015

Thank you to all who helped with the Bird Count. It was an interesting count as all are. One would have expected with the warm Fall/early Winter there might have been hold-overs or late migrants but as we were to find out, not really. We were to realize spotting 92 different species and 2 unidentified species. Extremely helpful were a number of feeder watcher counts too. Total number of birds appeared less this year. Reports in the area were similar even prior to the count. Activity was reported to be slow and non-existent at times. Despite being one of the warmest December's on record, I picked the coldest day of the month for the count!

Starting with some of the lesser 'finds' of the count, all 13 areas struggled to find the following. Snow Geese #'s were low at 170, we normally see #'s in the thousands. Wild Turkey #'s were down at 16, there has been an upward trend up until this year. Only one Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen. Mockingbird seemed low at 53. This would be an average of about 4 Mockingbirds per area. One would think more would be seen! House Finch numbers were on the lower side at 87. I can remember 15 years ago having this many in my backyard at one time. I think this species has peaked. And as has been the case for about a decade, no gamebirds. We were shutout on Bobwhite and Pheasant once again. Distressing!

On the happier side, Great Blue Heron #'s were up, probably due to all the open water. Vulture tallies were significant, with Black Vulture #'s continuing to rise. Woodpecker numbers were significant again. 95 Red-bellied Woodpeckers was amazing. Sapsuckers up too with 15 reported. Robins seemed like they were everywhere. Most times they were observed in the vicinity of ornamental pear trees feeding on the tiny pears. Despite being invasive, this particular food crop was still readily available and with warmer temp's the fruit stayed firm, thus the frenzy! My experience is the fruit tends to get mushy right after first couple of good freeze's or a little after Thanksgiving. Different story this warm Fall. Yellow-rumped Warbler #'s seemed to rebound this year too.

The 2 species not on the checklist observed on this count were Common Yellowthroat seen by Brian Hayes and Robbie & Maria Keefe. As well as, Barred Owl, seen by the group led by Rich Dilks. Apparently this bird capped off their day and rounded out their species total to 50! This group consisted of 10 participants! Barry Bengel and Kris Mollenhauer saw a Shrike but were unable to get close enough to it to determine whether it was a Loggerhead or Northern Shrike so it was listed as a Shrike species.

The most surprising and amazing item on the count was that all 13 areas reported seeing Bald Eagles! We know this is a first for many years and possibly an overall first. 15-20 years ago we would have had trouble observing 1! Those involved in the reintroduction of this magnificent bird deserve much credit and many thanks. We hope this level of activity is maintained and continues to increase.

Once more, thank you to all who slugged it out on a cold day! The count is a magical endeavor and a lot of fun. What makes it fun is you and the birds, a winning combination. Please mark your calendar, the 2016 count will be on December 17, Saturday. Hope you will join us again!

Ron Kegel, compiler.

MEETUP: In order to reach members with the most up to date field trip information we are asking everyone who is able to sign up for the Gloucester County Nature Club Meetup site. By accessing the site at www.meetup.com/Gloucester-County-Nature-Club/ or using the QR Code to the right, you will be directed to the site. Once you are signed up on the site you will receive up-to-date information on upcoming trips, meetings, events, and fun walks. If you attend field trips you should consider joining Meetup even if you receive the newsletter electronically.



Conservation Corner by Suzan Delozier

DELAWARE RIVER BASIN CONSERVATION ACT

Our Delaware River, only 330 miles in length, seems rather humble when compared to other river systems in the United States. However, if you consider that it provides high-quality drinking water to 17 million people in New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey, you will realize that few other river systems give so much to so many. At one time the Delaware was so polluted that fish migrating up the river turned around at Philadelphia, but that is no longer the case. The Clean Water Act and other programs have helped restore the river's quality even in urban areas. Consider these facts:

- 5% of the nation gets its water from the Delaware River.
- The Delaware River has no dams and supports hundreds of species of wildlife as well as critical habitat for horseshoe crabs and migratory fish like the Atlantic sturgeon and American shad.
- The tidal marshes and oyster reefs of the Delaware River Bay combat erosion, filter water and reduce the energy of waves as they approach the coast.
- 5 million people visit the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area annually making it the 8th most visited destination in the National Park System — more than Yellowstone, Yosemite or Mt. Rushmore.
- 241,000 jobs are associated with the Delaware River Basin, providing \$4.9 billion in wages.

Most of the nation's important waterways have a dedicated source of federal funding. For example, the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which provides drinking water to 12 million people, received \$73 million in federal funding in a recent appropriation; the Great Lakes received \$300 million. The Delaware River, unfortunately, does not receive dedicated federal dollars. There is now a bill in Congress, the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, S921/HR1772, which would provide \$25 million over 5 years to support projects that protect and restore water quality and wildlife habitat, and create or enhance recreational access to the Delaware River Basin. Even though both New Jersey senators and several representatives have signed on to the bill, please let them know that this bill is important to you. See www.congress.gov to read the bill and to see its co-sponsors.

Source: The Nature Conservancy www.nature.org/newjersey

DRAGONFLIES, DAMSELFLIES, AND THE MIGRATORY DRAGONFLY PROJECT (MDP)

Dragonflies and damselflies belong to the order Odonata which means “toothed jaws” and larger species of dragonflies and damselflies may actually give you a harmless bite. All odonates share certain characteristics — membranous wings, large eyes, slender bodies and small antennae. Odonates operate each wing independently giving them the ability to hover, fly backwards and take off vertically. But what are some of the differences between dragonflies and damselflies?

- Eyes: Dragonflies have eyes that touch or nearly touch at the top of the head. Damselflies have eyes that are clearly separated, usually appearing on each side of the head.

- Body: Dragonflies usually have stockier bodies while damselflies are usually long and more slender.
- Wings: Dragonflies have dissimilar wing pairs with hind wings broader at the base. All wings of the damselfly are similar in shape
- Position at rest: Dragonflies hold their wings open horizontally or downwards while damselflies hold their wings closed usually over the abdomen.

Dragonflies date back to 300 million years ago when they had wingspans up to 26 inches! Spending most of their lives underwater as larva (nymphs), their presence in an aquatic environment is a good sign since they require clean water to thrive. The survival of the nymphs also depends on healthy indigenous vegetation to provide oxygen, clean the water, help them hide, and give cover as they transform from nymph to adult flyer.

The Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (MDP) is made up of dragonfly experts, nongovernmental programs, academic institution and federal agencies from the US, Mexico and Canada. Its mission is to better understand and conserve North America’s dragonfly migration. At least two of its projects give the citizen scientist a chance to help out. First, in the Dragonfly Pond Watch Project, a citizen scientist regularly monitors and reports on the seasonal movement of five of the best known migrating dragonflies at a local pond(s). Second, in the Migration Monitoring Project, a citizen scientist volunteers to track the fall and spring movement of dragonflies, with emphasis on the five main migratory species in North America. The MDP website contains information on dragonflies including identification and the site will allow you to submit your observations online. If this type of volunteerism interests you (and we hope it does), please check out www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org/. The projects are describe under the “citizen science/initiative” tab. Also take a look at www.xerces.org/dragonfly-migration/.

Nature Notes

Events by other Organizations: February 2016

- February 6, 2016 (Saturday), 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM – **2016 Cumberland County Winter Eagle Festival.** Mauricetown Fire Hall, Noble Street, Mauricetown NJ. Special Family Programs, Lectures, Exhibits, Vendors, Food. Adults \$10, Children under 12, \$5. For more information call 856-453-2177 or visit www.co.cumberland.nj.us.



The following events take place at the Scotland Run Nature Center in Clayton. For details and to register for programs, call the center at (856) 881-0845. All events are free.

- Bird Walk: Saturday 2/6 at 8:30am. A beautiful time of year for a leisurely morning walk. Bring your binoculars and discover the many species of birds that call Scotland Run Park home.
- Nature Tots: Wednesday 2/10 at 10:00am. A fun program for preschoolers and their caregivers. Make a craft and take a walk on the park trail.
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 2/20 at 10:00am. A great way for scouts to earn their naturalist and forestry badges.
- Afternoon Nature Stroll: Wednesday 2/17 at 2:30pm. Take a leisurely walk through the park on one of the beautiful trails.

Natural Events for the month of February

- Skunk cabbage flowers are emerging from the ground, in wetlands throughout the County. As they grow they generate heat, which melts the frozen ground around them.
- Alder catkins are swelling and will open on the first warm days.
- Melting snow may reveal the trackways of meadow voles, dug along the interface between the frozen ground and snow cover.
- Broom crowberry in bloom in the Pinelands.
- Mourning cloak butterflies emerge from hibernation on warm days.
- Killdeer and great blue herons return from the south as waterways thaw and snow cover melts.
- Chipmunks reappear around bird feeders.
- Best time for viewing tundra swans at Whitesbog and other Pinelands ponds.



Looking Ahead:

Listed below are the programs we have lined up for the rest of this season. Meeting dates are the **second** Thursday of the month.

March 10, 2016: **A Journey Through Time and Space: Following the Ancient Song-lines of Ireland** - Erik Mollenhauer & Brian Hayes

April 14, 2016: **A Panama Adventure** - Barbara Bassett

May 12, 2016: **Annual Plant Sale (6:00pm) and Program: The Horseshoe Crab Lab 6:30pm)** - Sue Slotterback, The Wetlands Institute

June 9, 2016: **Thursday, June 9, 2016 Annual Picnic (6:00pm) at Alcyon Park, Pitman, NJ followed by program: Bluebirds** - Allen Jackson, President, New Jersey Bluebird Society

2015-2016 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the rest of this season. Changes and additions are not impossible. If you would be able and willing to lead an additional field trip, please contact Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@gmail.com.

March 20, 2016 - **Unexpected Wildlife Refuge**

April - **Bird Quest Trainings**

May 7, 2016 - **Bird Quest**

June - **Duke Farms**

Club Notes:

- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Karen Kravchuck at blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com or call 856-468-6536.
- The Nature Club is always looking for ideas for future programs and field trips. Please contact the program or trip coordinator if you have ideas or would like to help.
- Information for the next newsletter should be sent to Barry Bengel at sharkeyes@comcast.net or GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.
- The February Executive Committee meeting will be held on Sunday, February 7th at the home of Barry Bengel. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.