



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public
March 2005

Program – Plant Communities of New Jersey
Thursday, March 10th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell

Program Coordinator - Bob Cassel 478-2496

Just in time for early spring flowers, Karl Anderson will present his program about Plant Communities of New Jersey. Any of us who have been on field trips with Karl will look forward to the unusual insights he brings in with his botanic discussions. It's a learning process with the man who retired after 25 years as director of the Rancocas Nature Center.



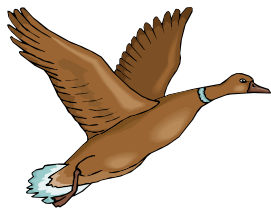
Karl started his life interest in nature in the wilds of Central Park, New York City and in the corridors of the American Museum of Natural History.

Although his big interest lies in botany, he also led and co-led 60 birding tours in the United States and in East Africa, the Galapagos, Costa Rica, and Morocco. Karl has contributed writings on nature and co-authored the book *Plant Communities of New Jersey* (Rutgers 1984). Look for a botany tour of New Jersey from High Point to Cape May, and enjoy Karl's unique slides and commentary.

Field Trip – Scouting for Ducks
Saturday March 19th, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Trip Leader: Dick Ebert

Co-leader: Kris Mollenhauer



Join us for a trip through Gloucester and Salem counties looking for waterfowl. Winter is waning and spring is coming and ducks should be moving north. Hopefully the ice will be off the ponds and lakes. We should see tundra swans, snow geese, many species of ducks, other waterfowl, and raptors.

Meet in parking lot at Red Bank Battlefield in National Park (adjacent to the bathrooms) at 9AM. Bring lunch, warm clothing, and scopes.

Field Trip Report – Winter Botany (2/12/05) by Karl Anderson

29 GCNC members and friends turned out for this winter botany walk around the "scenic trail" at Riverwinds Community in West Deptford. The focus was on tree identification, and 23 species were identified by their characteristics of branching, bark, buds, persistent fruit, and such species-specific traits as the distinctive inner bark fragrance of sassafras and black cherry, or the chambered pith of black walnut. Not surprisingly, the small patches of older forest on this site were dominated by oaks (six species), with an occasional black walnut, Virginia pine, and sassafras. The more extensive successional areas and hedgerows were dominated by black cherry, tree of heaven, sassafras, and white mulberry. One good find was a massive old white mulberry, 13'-8" in circumference. This is not a state record for this Old-world species, which was introduced into North America in the 18th century, but it might well be the largest specimen in Gloucester County. A few birds were also noted, among them red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, sharp-shinned hawk, and great horned owl, as well as mourning dove, American crow, and other typical species of this mostly old-field habitat.

Thanks, Karl

The 36 people who attended February's *Winter Botany* field trip got much more than a look at plants in winter clothing. They rambled with a field naturalist magna cum laude: Karl Anderson. Karl combined an encyclopedic knowledge built with a spider's art of skillful spinning. Most people spend a lifetime learning just to identify things in the field. Identification is an important first step in learning the story of the land, but only the first step. Stopping there in your education is equivalent to learning nouns only, and never learning the other bits called verbs, adverbs, adjectives. How well could you understand or communicate if your knowledge of language was limited to a long string of nouns: "Persimmon... bark... needles... spider... tree... Walnut... plant". By learning how one thing relates to another... where each bit came from...where it is going... THAT is the real power of language.... and of the language of life. Nobody said this better than Aldo Leopold: "To see merely what [the land] is or has is to see nothing. To see *why* it is, how it *became*, and the direction and velocity of it changes - this is the great drama of the land, to which "educated" people too often turn an unseeing eye and a deaf ear." The Nature Club is lucky to have a member of Karl's calibre, who helps us learn to identify, but also to see the great drama of the land. --- Erik Mollenhauer

Conservation Corner – Fight Fast Track Now by Loretta Dunne

Follow-Up on Fast Track

To date, 12 persuasive and intelligent letters on the Fast Track law written by Club members were printed in the *Gloucester County Times*. And everyone who wrote a letter deserves thanks, whether it was published or not. The number of letters sent exhibited the level of community concern. If you wrote one and it was not published, now is the time to send it on to the *Courier Post* or the *Inquirer* to reach an even larger audience. It's still not too late if you didn't write any letter at all; short or long, they are all important. (If you want them to write something that gets published, I would think long is NOT the way to go.) The bill to repeal Fast Track is still pending. And of course, contacting your state representatives is still crucial.

In addition, maybe you have an opinion on another environmental issue. The success of our letter campaign makes it clear that it is possible to get your letters published. Expressing your views and concerns in the public eye helps to raise awareness about issues. It is easier than you might expect to see your name in print. Give it a shot - a hundred words can have a lot of power!

The Garden

Spring is almost here. Now is the time to think about making your yard wildlife friendly, or plan additions if you have already made some enhancements. There are many things that you can do to make wildlife more at home in your yard. You could plant some native perennials or a tree that birds seek out for fruit or protection or flowers that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. The best idea is to start gradually. Perhaps, select a part of your property or focus on a specific type of plant. Whatever you do, be sure to do a little research to determine that what you are planting will work well in your yard. And focus on natives. They are the plants that do well in our environment and require the least amount of water and care. Pesticides are poisonous to birds and wildlife, therefore, you should chose plants that thrive in our habitat. Think of your yard as an extension of the natural area that once existed everywhere in South Jersey.

You might want to consider attending the Gardening for Wildlife workshop sponsored by the Federation of Gloucester Co. Watersheds and the Gloucester County Dept. of Parks and Recreation on Saturday, March 12, 9 AM to 12:30 PM at Franklin Township Community center. Adults and Children aged 5-11 are welcome. Topics include Planning a Backyard Habit, Native Plants for Your Backyard, Attracting Birds and Butterflies, and Environmentally-Friendly Lawn Care. Classes are free but registration is required. Call 856-881-0845 or email cladybug5@hotmail.com.

There are many websites that provide information on wildlife friendly yards:

Ten tips for backyard habitat from New Jersey Audubon

<http://www.njaudubon.org/education/backyardhabitat/tenthings.html>

The National Wildlife Foundation has a wealth of information:

<http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/>

This site has a sample yard in New Jersey – before and after

<http://www.thegardenbench.com/>

Natural Resources Conservation Service has a lot of good information:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/>

You can also call 1-888-LANDCARE or email backyard@swcs.org to request a 28-page booklet about backyard conservation.

A healthy, nature friendly backyard is healthier for the entire family. Also, as more sprawl occurs, there are less areas available for wildlife. Your yard could become a haven for birds, frogs or native plants that are being displaced. Start slowly and soon you will have a yard that is a positive addition to the environment and a pleasure to come home to.

Other Nature Notes

Wild Birds Unlimited now offers an everyday 10% discount to GCNC members!

Wild Birds Unlimited has recently entered into a discount agreement with the GCNC executive board and is pleased to now offer GCNC members an everyday 10% discount on all purchases excluding optics and food or sale items. Sharon Oakes, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, appreciates the many volunteer contributions made by GCNC members and hopes members can benefit from this discount. Members are requested to identify themselves as GCNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please call Sharon at 218.2973.

White Dog Café's 8th Annual Eco Tour: Solar Houses, Sustainable Houses Saturday, March 19, 9am

Dennis Winters, coordinator of the Philadelphia Million Solar Roofs Partnership, will lead our tour of homes using sustainable technologies, including solar power, to save energy and non-renewable resources. Dennis will take us first to the Los Balcones solar project in Norris Square where members of the MSR Partnership have installed electricity-producing solar panels on eight adjacent affordable housing row homes.

We'll also visit Hap Haven's two Germantown houses. Each incorporates solar heated hot water pumped by solar electricity, whole house fans for summer cooling; high performance windows; water-based paints and more. In addition, the 1895 carriage house incorporates a passive solar design; energy star appliances; recycled lumber, stone, brick and carpeting; an in-ground cistern for recycling rain water and a composting system.

Hap has been helping homeowners lower the environmental impact of their homes for almost 25 years – most recently through his new company, SunHaven Solar. Back at the White Dog Café for lunch, Dennis will discuss other solar and sustainable houses in the Philadelphia area, and how to apply for grants to add a solar installation to your home or business.

\$36 includes breakfast of muffins and coffee, tour, discussion, lunch, tax & gratuity. Call the White Dog Café at 215-386-9224 for reservations.

The 2005 Gloucester County Bird Quest: Saturday May 7



The Gloucester County Nature Club and many area businesses, industries and local environmental commissions invite people of all ages to participate in the **2005 (sixth annual) Gloucester County Bird Quest**. The **2005 Bird Quest** will take place on **Sat., May 7, 2005** from **7 AM to 12 noon** in Gloucester County.

During this time, teams visit parks and natural sites in Gloucester County and find as many different bird species as they can. The purpose of the Quest is to discover natural areas of Gloucester County, to learn to identify birds by sight and sound, and to have fun with friends, colleagues and family. **The Quest is an educational event: novices are encouraged to participate.** At noon, all participants gather at Atkinson County Park on Delsea Drive to report results and for **(free) lunch, t-shirts, posters and prizes.**

Most people organize their own Quest team with colleagues, friends, and/or family. Last years Gloucester County Bird Quest attracted several hundred participants made up of teachers, school groups, scout troops, environmental commissions, families, friends... residents of Gloucester and neighboring counties. This year with support from Wheelabrator, LP of Gloucester County, the Club will operate two (free) guided buses for teachers and other persons unable to form their own team and who are willing to join a larger group.

The **2005 Gloucester County Bird Quest** highlights the importance of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), a nation-wide effort to draw attention to the plight and needs of migratory birds. The 2005 IMBD theme, "*Collisions: Clear the Way for Birds* ", examines the obstacles birds encounter in flight (cell towers, home and office windows, moving vehicles) and explores the ways we may minimize those impacts. The colorful IMBD T-shirt and poster, designed by world-famous wildlife artist David Sibley, a former NJ resident, can be viewed at www.birdday.org/imbd.htm. A county map and other materials are provided to registered teams. **A \$10 fee per participant covers the cost of lunch, T-shirt, posters, prizes etc.**

For more information and registration forms, go to the Gloucester County Nature Club's website at www.gcnatureclub.org To join a team or to ride a bus, contact Anne Rossell at EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive, Sewell NJ 08080. Registration forms can also be requested by phone (856-582-7000 X110) FAX (856-582-4206) or e-mail at anner@eirc.org.

Participants can attend any of a series of free field trainings in the evenings, mornings and weekends before the Quest. These training sessions are listed on the following page. Included in this year's training series is the Raptor Project - a renowned program of 15-20 live hawks, owls and eagles which will be held on Wednesday, April 20 at 7:00 PM in the Pitman High School Auditorium, 225 Linden Ave, Pitman, NJ. See the flyer at the end of the newsletter, and feel free to make copies and help publicize this exciting event!

BirdQuest 2005 Training Sessions

- April 18 – Monday 6:00 – 7:30 PM** **Birding Basics**
Alcyon Lake, Pitman Learn the basics of good birding and the tools of the trade.
Leader: Brian Hayes CoLeader: Ed and Millie Cleary
- April 19 – Tuesday 6:00 – 7:00 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
Chestnut Branch Park, Mantua
Leader: Jeff Holt CoLeader: Barry Bengel
- April 20 – Wednesday 7:00 – 8:30 PM** **GCNC Event – Jonathan Wood**
The Raptor Project, Pitman High School
A fantastic program with over 15 live hawks, owls, and eagles in attendance.
- April 24 – Sunday 7:00 – 8:30 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
West Deptford Scenic Park, West Deptford
Leader: Jeff Holt CoLeader: Gary Lizzi and Arlene Beebe
- April 25 – Monday 6:00 – 7:30 PM** **Birding Basics**
Alcyon Lake, Pitman Learn the basics of good birding and the tools of the trade.
Leader: Bob and Carol Cassel CoLeader: Paula Hayes
- April 26 – Tuesday 6:00 – 7:00 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
Greenwich Lake Park, East Greenwich
Leader: Dick Ebert CoLeader: Loretta Dunne & Jonathan Stillwell
- April 27 – Wednesday 6:00 – 7:30 PM** **Birding by Ear Part I**
EIRC building, Washington Twp. This is an intro to bird calls in a classroom setting.
Leader: Brian Hayes CoLeader: Karen Kravchuck
- April 28 – Thursday 6:00 – 7:00 AM** **Birding by Ear Part II**
Glassboro Woods, Clayton Take the skills learned in the classroom out in the field.
Leader: Bob Baruzzi CoLeader: Kris Mollenhauer
- May 1 – Sunday 7:00 – 8:30 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
Flood Gate Road, East Greenwich
Leader: Dick Ebert CoLeader: Karen Kravchuck
- May 1 – Sunday 6:00 – 7:30 PM** **Bird Quest Training**
Washington Lake Park, Washington Twp
Leader: Bob Duke CoLeader: Doris and Dwight Weir
- May 2 – Monday 6:00 – 7:00 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
Wheelabrator, Westville
Leader: Bob Baruzzi CoLeader: Deb Maka
- May 3 – Tuesday 6:00 – 7:30 PM** **Birding by Ear Part III**
EIRC building, Washington Twp. This is an intro to bird calls in a classroom setting
Leader: Erik Mollenhauer CoLeader: Ed and Millie Cleary
- May 4 – Wednesday 6:00 – 7:00 AM** **Birding by Ear Part IV**
Ceres Park, Mantua Take the skills learned in the classroom out in the field.
Leader: Jayne Rhynard CoLeader: Barry Bengel
- May 5 – Thursday 6:00 – 7:30 AM** **Bird Quest Training**
Old Pine Farm, Deptford
Leader: Gale Cannon CoLeader: Joan Tracy

Looking Ahead:

Programs-

April – Raptor Project (co-sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited, Washington Township)
May – Stories from Lilliput: Exploring the World of Insects
June – Club Picnic

Field Trips-

April 24 – Mt. Cuba Gardens
April (numerous days) – BirdQuest Training Sessions
May – BirdQuest '05 (6th Year!)
June – Amphibians in the Pinelands

Club Notes:

- **Election of Trustees** - May is our Annual meeting to elect Trustees. In the May newsletter we will be including a ballot which you can use to vote for the Trustees of your choice. Trustees are responsible for electing and providing direction for the Executive Committee members. When elected, Trustees serve a three-year term at which time the seat is up for election. All voting is final at the close of the May meeting with the results to be included in the June newsletter. If you are interested in becoming a Trustee please contact Brian Hayes at (856) 468-9272 or email at pnbhayes@comcast.net before April 15 to have your name on the ballot.
- A vote on the club logo will be held at the March meeting.
- The March Executive Committee meeting will be at 7 PM on March 6th at Bonnie Dann's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Brian or Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@comcast.net or call 468-9272.
- 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 6 Greenwood Drive, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month. Also - if your email address changes, please inform Barry.

FREE WILDLIFE PROGRAM

15-20 live hawks, owls and eagles from around the world

The Raptor Project

“One of the most unique wildlife presentations,
captivating young and old” - Buffalo News



Wednesday, April 20 – 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Pitman High School Auditorium, 225 Linden Ave, Pitman, NJ

Sponsors: Gloucester County Nature Club

www.gcnatureclub.org

Wild Birds Unlimited – Washington Twp.

www.wbu.com/sewell

This popular program for all ages is the largest and most varied collection of traveling birds of prey in the world. The Raptor Project has been seen on Good Morning America, The Today Show and PBS. Jonathan Woods (a Master Falconer), discusses the role of raptors in the environment, their conservation, the rehabilitation of injured birds.... and flies some of his friends as part of the program. Educational materials available.