



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

May 2008

Program – The Horseshoe Crab Lab and Annual Plant Sale

Thursday, May 8th at 6:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell

Presenter: Sue Anne Slotterback, Program Director, The Nature Center of Cape May

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks (856) 468-6342

Please Note: Starting time for the plant sale is **6:00P.M.**

Horseshoe Crabs are some of the strangest creatures on earth. Not really crabs at all, they are more closely related to the Trilobites that swam in Paleozoic seas. Related to scorpions, ticks and land spiders, horseshoe crabs have their own classification (Class Merostomata). Horseshoe crabs, common along the Delaware Bay coast, have evolved little in the last 250 million years. Still, they have survived because of their hard, curved shells, which have made it difficult for predators to overturn them and expose their soft, vulnerable underbellies. The horseshoe crab has also survived because it can go a year without eating and endure extreme temperatures and salinity. The Delaware Bay region is home to the largest population of the American horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*), which is found along the western shores of the Atlantic Ocean from Maine to the Yucatan. Each spring the eggs of spawning Horseshoe Crabs along the Delaware Bay provide an essential food source for migrating shore birds, including the imperiled Red Knot on its extraordinary 12,000 mile journey. Because of their critical importance to migratory shore birds, of Gov. Corzine has recently banned commercial harvesting of Horseshoe Crabs in New Jersey.



Our presenter will be Sue Anne Slotterback, Program Director for New Jersey Audubon's Nature Center at Cape May. Sue's presentation tonight will be an adult (but kid friendly) version of the Horseshoe Crab Lab program she presents in area schools. We hope to have live specimens as part of the presentation. Come and see one of nature's most unusual animals and learn how even these unlikely creatures play their part in the interconnectedness of the natural world.



PLANT SALE! It's that time again! Spring is here - even though the weather left us wondering for a while - time to be in our gardens, getting them ready for the warm weather season. This means it is also time for the Club's annual plant sale. Hopefully, once again, we'll have a wonderful combination of nursery grown plants and plants from our very own gardens.

Here's where your part of this comes in. As you are in your gardens in the next couple of weeks keep an eye out for plants you can share. Maybe it could be some of those perennials you have been meaning to divide or a volunteer shrub or tree that just has to be moved. Even some extra seeds that you collected in the fall would be great. Just pot them up or pack them up and bring them with you. Please mark them carefully, though, so we keep the mystery plants to a minimum. The Plant Sale will be held just before the May meeting. It will start at **6:00pm** in the EIRC parking lot. It is open to the public so please tell family and friends.

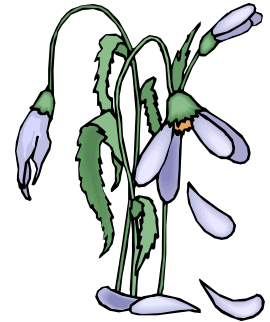
Field Trip – Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, New Hope, PA

Sunday, May 18th, 8:30 A.M. to early afternoon

Preserve Admission Fee: \$5

Trip Leader: Rich Dilks

Bowman's Hill is a 134 acre state wildflower preserve along the upper Delaware River, just south of New Hope, PA. It is dedicated to the preservation, enjoyment and appreciation of the native wildflowers and flowering shrubs of Pennsylvania. It is a "natural garden" with trails through diverse woodland and meadow habitats and contains a small pond, wetlands, streams and the flowing waters of Pitcock Creek. We will be looking at some of the late spring blooming wildflowers such as Yellow Lady's Slipper, Eastern Columbine, Golden Alexander, Shooting Star and Golden Star as well as flowering shrubs and ferns. Bowman's Hill is also a good birding area, so you may wish bring binoculars on our walk. Also on the site are a visitor's center with a bird observation area, a small natural history museum and gift shop. Native plants (green house grown) will also be for sale as the preserve. Near by, on the top of Bowman's Hill, is Bowman's Tower. You may take an elevator ride (for a small fee) to the top for a lovely view of the Delaware River and the surrounding countryside. There is a picnic area and rest rooms at the preserve for those who wish to bring a lunch and beverage.



Directions: Those who wish to car pool will meet at Timberline Shopping Center on Rt 553 in Sewell at 8:30 A.M. Due to road closings in PA, the best route to Bowman's Hill is on the NJ side. Take I-295 North all the way until it becomes I-95 South above Trenton (you're actually going east here). Take I-95 South to Rt. 29 North, just before I-95 crosses the Delaware. Take Rt 29 north to Lambertville. At Lambertville, turn left onto Bridge Street (Rt 179). Cross the bridge to New Hope and make an immediate left onto Main Street, (Rt. 32) which becomes River Rd. Continue south for 2 miles. The entrance to the wildflower preserve is on the right. Travel time from Sewell is about one hour and twenty minutes. We hope to arrive at Bowman's Hill about 10:00 A.M.

Field Trip Report - Salem County Birding - April 12

On this trip, nine members of the GCNC joined a similarly-sized contingent from the Rancocas Nature Center, for a spectacular birding tour of several Salem County sites. The leader was Lloyd Shaw. Locations visited included the Pedricktown Marshes, Featherbed Lane (just west of its junction with Kings Highway), and Mannington Marsh. A good variety of shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and passerines were seen. Some species of particular interest were pectoral sandpiper, greater and lesser yellowlegs, glossy ibis, eastern meadowlark, snipe, kestrel, palm warbler, great horned owl (on a nest) and bald eagle (also on a nest). In addition to birds, roadsides were adorned with veronicas, violets, mustards, dandelions, and other mostly non-native but attractive plants. The weather was cool and dry except for one brief shower.

Conservation Corner – Court Upholds Delaware’s Right to Veto the BP Natural Gas Pier

The Supreme Court ruled on April 1st that the state of Delaware has the right to veto the proposed British Petroleum Natural Gas pier planned for Crown Landing in Logan Township, Gloucester County. According to the Delaware News Journal, in an April 1st article by Jeff Montgomery, “Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writing for a 6-2 majority, branded New Jersey's arguments in authorizing the pier over Delaware's objections ‘implausible,’ and said the two states share authority to regulate construction on the river in areas where the full width of the waterway lies inside Delaware.” Although BP plans to fight on, this decision is a major set-back. The environmental groups who were concerned about the BP plan, such as Delaware Audubon Society and the Delaware Sierra Club, are very pleased with the decision. The article reported a statement made by John A. Hughes, secretary of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. "Our staff very correctly defined this facility as a bulk transfer facility specifically, clearly and unequivocally forbidden under the Coastal Zone Act."

Reminder – Keep up the pressure!

As you are all probably aware, the Governor’s proposed budget includes a 15% cut to the NJ Department of Environmental (DEP) Protection Budget. The DEP announced that **9 of our state parks**, which represent **20%** of our state parks, will be closed.

Please contact the governor and your state representatives in the assembly and senate. Let them all know how you feel about these cuts. Don’t know how to reach them? See below.

Reach your legislators:

Click on your district at <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/districts/districtnumbers.asp#3http> to find out how to contact your legislators.

Reach the Governor:

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html>

Kid’s Corner - Rubbings * by Deb Maka

You can make pictures while learning about all the shapes and textures in nature. Use paper and crayons or pencils to make rubbings of all the cool stuff you find outdoors (leaves, tree bark, rocks, etc.)

What You Need:

- Paper (paper without lines works best like computer paper)
- Crayons or a pencil or colored pencils

Directions:

1. Look for objects that are rough, bumpy, or feel interesting
2. Hold you paper over the object
3. Hold your crayon or pencil on its side and rub it across the paper where it covers the object you selected

For fun, you can change the colors and make some rubbings with a single color and others with different colors together.

*adapted from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website
(www.tpwd.state.tx.us/kids/explore/rubbings.phtml)

The 2008 Gloucester County Bird Quest: Saturday May 3, 2008

The Gloucester County Nature Club and its co-sponsors invite people of all ages to participate in the **2008 (ninth annual) Gloucester County Bird Quest. The 2008 Bird Quest** will take place on **Sat., May 3, 2008 from 7 AM to 12 noon throughout Gloucester County.**

During this time, teams visit parks and natural sites in Gloucester County to find as many different bird species as they can. The Quest is:

- A way to discover Gloucester County's parks and natural areas
- A way to discover the unique birds that live in and through our county
- An opportunity to learn how to identify birds by sight, sound, behavior, and habitat
- An opportunity to have fun with family, friends, and colleagues
- A light-hearted competition



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, and prizes.**

We encourage you to organize your own Quest team with colleagues, friends, and/or family. Last year's Gloucester County Bird Quest attracted several hundred participants made up of families, friends, teachers, school groups, scout troops, environmental commissions ... residents of Gloucester and neighboring counties. **If you have participated in the past why not invite a friend or colleagues to join you for this year's Bird Quest!** With support from Wheelabrator, LP of Gloucester County, the club will again operate two (free) guided buses for individuals unable to form their own team and who are willing to join a larger group. Our theme this year is "Natural Places of Gloucester County" and will be featured in a T-shirt designed by the club's own Gary Lizzi. A county map and other materials are provided to registered teams. **A \$12 fee per participant helps to defray the cost of lunch, T-shirts, prizes etc.**

More information and registration forms will be posted to the Gloucester County Nature Club's website at www.gcnatureclub.org. For more information, to receive a registration form, join a team or reserve a seat on the bus, contact Paula or Brian Hayes at pnbhayes@comcast.net or (856) 468-9272.

Participants are encouraged to attend any of a series of free field trainings in the evenings, mornings and weekends before the Quest. The training sessions are listed below, and an entry form can be found on the last page of this newsletter. More detailed directions and additional site information can be found in our book, *Natural Places of Gloucester County NJ.*

Remaining Bird Quest 2008 Training Sessions

April 28 (Monday), 6:00 – 7:00 AM

Bird Quest Training

Wheelerator Refuge, Westville

Directions: Access from Rt 130, opposite Hazel Ave in Westville, just south of Big Timber Creek. Meet in parking lot on the right just before the guard station.

Leader: Gary Lizzi

Co-leader: Arlene Beebe

April 29 (Tuesday), 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Bird by Ear Part III

EIRC building, Washington Twp This is an introduction to bird calls in a classroom setting.

Directions: Located right on Delsea Dr. (Rt 47) in Washington Twp just south of the Terra Nova Restaurant (used to be the Italian Bistro).

Co-leaders: Kris and Erik Mollenhauer

April 30 (Wednesday), 6:00 – 7:00 AM

Birding by Ear Part IV

Lake Narraticon, Swedesboro Take the skills you learned in the classroom into the field.

Directions: From Kings Highway (Rt 551) in Swedesboro turn onto Lake and then turn onto Park Ave. Access is from the end of Park Ave.

Leader: Gary Lizzi

Co-leader: Margie Lizzi

May 1 (Thursday), 6:00 – 7:00 PM

Bird Quest Training

Wenonah Woods, Wenonah

Directions: From Woodbury/Glassboro road (Rt 553) in Wenonah, turn onto Maple Ave. At the second stop sign turn right into the lake parking lot.

Leader: Rich Dilks

Co-leader: Loretta Dunne

Other Nature Notes

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

Wild Birds Unlimited has a discount agreement with the GCNC executive board and is pleased to 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.



WANTED: Information about Gloucester County Big Trees

The Nature Club is embarking on a new project - a publication about the trees of Gloucester County. For each species, there will be identifying information, a description of the range nationwide and in New Jersey, habitat information, a compilation of hopefully-interesting facts, and notes on where to find the species in Gloucester County. There will be photos of leaves, fruit, bark, and overall aspect. Between 35 and 40 species will be covered.

We would like to tell readers of this publication where to find some good examples of each species. So if any readers of this newsletter can provide locations for exceptionally large, well-grown specimens of any native trees (plus non-native white pine, princess tree, Norway maple, Norway spruce, black locust, and common catalpa) that are growing on public land or that are easily visible from a public road, please get this information to Karl Anderson, 46 North Childs Street, Woodbury NJ 08096; karlanderson6@aol.com. A complete list of tree species slated for this project will be on the GCNC website. Many thanks!

Events by other Organizations

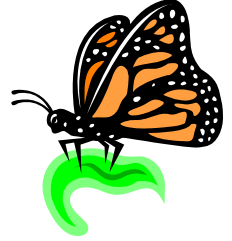
- May 4 (Sunday) - **Birds, Flowers, and Wild Places along Timber Creek.** Leader: Mary Belko. \$Fee. Sponsored by the Rancocas Nature Center. For info: <http://njudubon.org/centers/rancocas/>.
- May 17 (Saturday) - **Birding at Greenwald Park, Cherry Hill, for Spring Migrants.** Leader: Jean Gutsmuth. Sponsored by the Audubon Wildlife Society of N.J. For info: www.audubonwildlifesociety.org/.
- May 17 (Saturday) - **Sourland Montain (Somerset County) Wildflower Hike.** Leader: Karl Anderson. \$Fee. Sponsored by the Rancocas Nature Center. For info: <http://njudubon.org/centers/rancocas/> or contact Karl Anderson at 856-845-7075 or karlanderson6@aol.com.
- May 17 (Saturday) - **Burlington County Birding Bonanza.** Leader: Jen Bulava. Sponsored by the Burlington County Division of Parks. Registration required; space is limited. For info: www.co.burlington.nj.us/departments/ and click on "parks".

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

- Bird Walk: Tuesday 5/13 at 6:00 PM
- Kids Nature Club: Saturday 5/3 at 10:30 AM
- Afternoon Nature Strolls: Wednesday 5/14 at 2:30 PM
- Nature Tots: Wednesday 5/7 at 10:00 AM
- Scout Saturdays: Saturday 5/10 at 10:00 AM
- Learn to Play Folk Guitar: Saturday 5/31 at 10:00 AM
- Canoeing & Kayaking: Saturday 5/17 at 11:00 AM
- Water Fest: Sunday June 1, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Natural Events for the month of May

- Jack in the pulpit, pink lady's-slipper, and mayapple bloom by mid-May in the County's remnant woodlands.
- Early spring flowers such as spring beauty fade rapidly, as trees leaf out and shade the forest floor.
- Princess tree, or Paulownia (named after an 18th-Century Russian princess) blooms with large clusters of pale purple flowers. It's an invasive species but still very pretty.
- By late May, monarch butterflies arrive from the south and begin laying their eggs on newly emerged plants of common milkweed.
- Young rabbits, gray squirrels, and other small mammals are leaving their home nests. Drive carefully.
- Horseshoe crabs spawn on Delaware Bayshore beaches from late May to early June.
- Red knots arrive for their stop-over at the Delaware Bay area to double their weight on horseshoe crab eggs in preparation for their nonstop journey to Arctic breeding grounds.



Looking Ahead:

2007-2008 GCNC Field Trips

The one remaining regular field trip for the year is:

- June 21, 2008 (Saturday) - Unexpected Refuge - Karl Anderson and Sarah Summerville

There will be a series of Summer field trips announced soon.

Upcoming GCNC Meetings (All occur on Thursdays)

Only one regular meeting remains for this year:

- June 12, 2008 - Annual Picnic

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 468-6536.
- The May Executive Committee meeting will be held on May 4th at the home of Ed & Millie Cleary. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.
- 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.

Bird Quest Registration

Be sure to include your name, address, phone # and T-shirt size on the form. Mail the form with a check (\$12 per person) payable to Gloucester County Nature Club to: GC Nature Club, P.O. Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080. Questions? Contact Paula Hayes at 468-9272 or pnbhayes@comcast.net. Entries must be received by April 25 for t-shirts to be guaranteed on day of event.

Name of Team (ex: Costello's Cardinals) _____

Name of Team Leader (contact person) _____ T-shirt size _____

Leader's address & Telephone _____

Person #2 (name) _____ T-shirt size _____

Person #3 _____ T-shirt size _____

Person #4 _____ T-shirt size _____

Person #5 _____ T-shirt size _____

Person #6 _____ T-shirt size _____

Person #7 _____ T-shirt size _____

Attach extra sheet with additional names and T-shirt sizes.

Bus Space is limited: first come first served. You must reserve a seat in advance. Bus leaves at 7 AM from Atkinson Park. **Please attach a list of names of any people who wish to ride the bus.**

Fill in here for additional items: Additional T-shirts: Qty _____ (\$12.95 each)

Birds of Gloucester County Flash Cards _____ (\$4.00/set)

Natural Places of Gloucester Co. NJ book _____ (\$12.00 each)