



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

December 2006

Program – Eco Art: The Goldsworthy Lesson

Thursday, December 14th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell

Presenter: Lee Whitehead

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks

“At its most successful, my ‘touch’ looks into the heart of nature.....things are all part of a transient process that I cannot understand unless my touch is also transient- only in this way can the cycle remain unbroken and the process be complete.”

-Andy Goldsworthy

Ecological art, eco-art for short, is a concept that is still unfamiliar to many of us. Eco art uses natural surroundings, natural material and found objects such as rocks, leaves, wood, sand or snow to create art from the simple elements of nature. This holiday season program will be an excellent opportunity to encounter the ideas behind eco-art and to explore the intimate relationship between the subtle beauty of the natural world and the complexities of human creativity. Inspired by the works of British sculptor, Andy Goldsworthy, Lee Whitehead, artist and Arts Director at YMCA Camp Ockanickon, has prepared a program that will demonstrate the principles and involve us in the process of eco art. It will be an evening of fun, discovery and creativity that can inspire the artist in us all.

This is the combined annual meeting of the Gloucester County Nature Club and the South Jersey Land and Water Trust. As always, this is a chance to meet other environmentally-concerned people, and to get an update on the organizations too.

Field Trip – Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Saturday December 16th, Dawn ‘til Dusk

Coordinator: Ron Kegel

Looking for a holiday tradition that doesn't include going to the mall? The Christmas Bird Count may be for you. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count was started in 1900 and the Gloucester County Nature Club coordinates the Gloucester County count. Groups will divide up a 15 mile count circle and census all the birds seen. Many groups will begin or end their day searching for owls, and use the daylight hours to identify raptors, warblers, sparrows, great blue herons, and many other birds. We invite you to join us in this wonderful tradition by joining one of the groups. The starting and ending time for each group is decided by the team organizer(s); generally it is at least dawn to dusk but that will vary by team.



The National Audubon Society requires a \$5 fee of all participants that is used for administrative costs. If you'd like to join the Count, please call Deborah Maka at 856-863-0330.

Note: Just because a team starts and ends at a certain time... Doesn't mean everyone on that team has to do the same. Some teams have participants who come for part of the day (morning or afternoon). Some team leaders prefer that participants stay the whole time. It really depends on the team; please check with the leaders for details.

Field Trip Report - Pine Barrens Nature Hike (November 5, 2006)

This four-mile, four-hour stroll in Brendan Byrne State Forest took us through upland and lowland pine barrens, oak forests, cedar swamps, and a series of cranberry bogs and reservoirs. Some of the distinctive plant species of the Pine Barrens were noted, and the general ecology of the area was discussed. Birds included the expected chickadees, kinglets, and titmice, but also Cooper's hawk, swamp sparrow, and a flock of tundra swans. The weather was cool but calm, with periods of bright sunshine. The autumn foliage was colorful, with the greens of the pines and cedars making a pleasant contrast to the reds of maples and huckleberries and the yellows and browns of oaks. The trip leaders were Gale Cannon and Deb Maka. There were 23 participants. Some photos from the hike are available on the GCNC website at http://gcnatureclub.org/Lebanon_SF.htm.

Conservation Corner – Two Easy Things by Loretta Dunne

Here are two easy ways for you to personally reduce global warming.

The Best Bulbs

The first way to make a difference is to commit to florescent light bulbs. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, if every household in the United States replaced on regular incandescent light bulb with a compact florescent light bulb, it would prevent 90 billion pounds of greenhouse gas omissions. This saving is the equivalent of taking 7.5 million cars off the road. Additionally, replacing one regular light bulb with an approved compact florescent light bulb would save consumers \$30 in energy costs over the life of the bulb. If you haven't taken this simple step, now is the time to do it!

For much more on the benefits as well as sources of incandescent lights, check out the Environmental Defense website (www.environmentaldefense.org). This site is very useful for determining exactly which type of bulb to use for your fixture. If you enjoy knowing exactly how you are saving the environment, use their online calculator to calculate your bulb savings.

Idling Away the Clean Air

Don't leave your car idling. According to Natural Resources Canada, each day idling engines releases eight million kg of greenhouse gases into our air.

Statistics show that if you are idling for more than ten seconds, it is advisable to shut your car off. It uses less gas to start and stop than it does to sit with the engine running.

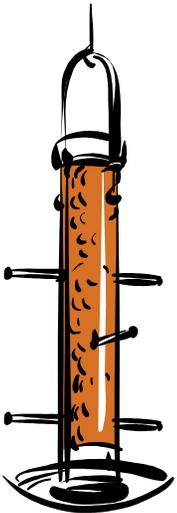
Emissions from a cold, idling engine contain extremely high levels of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, and hydrocarbons. These contribute to global warming and degrade air quality.

Whenever it is possible, turn off your car when you are waiting. Reduce your car warm-up time. School buses often idle for extensive times in front of schools. Take action to encourage schools to stop this harmful habit.

Note: This article includes information from the about.com environmental page (www.environment.about.com) and from New Jersey's Environmental Center webpage (www.njenvironment.org).

Other Nature Notes

Feeder Watching and Online Counts by Jayne Rhynard



Want another window on the outside world? How about Windows, as in on your computer? There are some sites that you can visit, check out birds and never leave your fuzzy bedslippers.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology has sponsored Project Feeder Watch for 20 yrs. Participants follow an easy, scientifically based methodology to identify and count the birds that visit their location. Locations can be one backyard feeder to your entire property. For a fee (\$15 or if you also join the Lab \$12) you will receive a kit to participate in this activity which began November 11 and will end in April. It makes a great gift for kids to kickstart their interest. Online participants can also immediately access the data that they enter as well as see what birds are showing up other places – in NJ as well as any other place there are Feeder Watchers. Feeder Watch gives you a personal sense of involvement because you can "see" your input. The website <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/PFW/index.html> has very helpful identification tools including photos to help you with tricky identifications as well as fun features like photos from participants and maps that let you see where other Feeder Watchers are located.

Whereas Project Feeder Watch runs just for a specific time, eBird (<http://www.ebird.org/>) is a site that lets you enter your bird counts for as many locations as you bird and any time. For free. You have access to data entered into the database by anyone else who uses it plus have your own counts saved for you to access electronically. There are many different ways to search or sort data. For instance, you can electronically search your counts to find the earliest date you ever saw a Rose Breasted Grosbeak in spring or you can find out where in NJ people are seeing Red Headed Woodpeckers. I began using eBird in 2002 and have entered about 600 checklists. I find it useful to keep track of my sightings year round and, because it quantifies your information for you, it lets me see how my identification skills have improved.

Then, there's the Great Backyard Bird Count to be held this February 16-19, 2007. This online count lasts just a few days, and is also free, fun and searchable to see what birds your friends and neighbors are seeing. Check it out now at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. Last year Sewell was among the top 13 municipalities in NJ for number of counts submitted and it would be great if

we could have some other Gloucester County towns participating this year. Nature Club members are everywhere!

Why should you do this?

- The exercise brings discipline to your bird watching. You'll be surprised at the variety and number of birds you see when you really pay attention.
- You get to vicariously spy through other people's windows to see what birds other participants are seeing.
- Fun and cheaper than surfing Amazon and Ebay.
- You'll learn more about birds.
- Builds a baseline of Gloucester County data on our birds from which we can all have fun and learn.
- Great for kids - keeps them linked to both the computer *and* the outside world.
- Helps scientists gather more data in the big bird picture.
- Did I say it's fun?

See you online!

Natural Places of Gloucester County NEW JERSEY

A publication of the Gloucester County Nature Club

Natural Areas Guide Update:

In an effort to increase the appreciation and knowledge concerning the important natural areas of the county, the Nature Club will be publishing the Guide to the Natural Places of Gloucester County NJ. It will include descriptions of 36 important county natural sites, seasonal information, directions, maps, and visitor information.

Much of the writing and editing on the book is nearly complete, and some prototypes will be produced soon. The prototypes will be used to solicit support from a number of county organizations so that this book will really represent what is best about Gloucester County and our connection to the natural world. The book is currently expected to be available in March, 2007.

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.

Volunteer Needed – Bird Quest 2007

A volunteer is still needed to work with Erik Mollenhauer to coordinate Bird Quest 2007. If you are interested in helping Erik coordinate this wonderful educational event, please contact him at 589-4387 for details.

Looking Ahead:

Programs- (All occur on Thursdays)

January 11 th	Fossil Legends of Native Americans (Erik Mollenhauer)
February 8 th	Pot Luck Dinner & Program - Sharing Our Culture: From A Native American Indian Perspective (Jean Red Raven Kilian)
March 8 th	Natural Wonders of The Jersey Pines and Shore: Presentation and book signing (Michael Hogan)
April 12 th	Tropical Rainforests and New Jersey's Extraordinary Songbirds - Emile DeVito
May 10 th	Gardening Naturally: Native Plants in gardening and landscaping (Lorraine Kieffer) plus Annual Plant Sale
June 14 th	Annual Picnic

Field Trips-

January 20 th (Saturday)	Backyard Bird Feeder Tour (Brian and Paula Hayes)
February 24 th (Saturday)	Cumberland County Birding (Bob Baruzzi)
March 11 th (Sunday)	Conowingo Dam (Bob Duke)
April 22 nd (Sunday)	Assunpink WMA Wildflowers and Birds (Karl Anderson)
May 19 th (Saturday)	Wenonah Woods (Richard Dilks)
June 16 th (Saturday)	Chestnut Branch (Kris Mollenhauer)

Club Notes:

- The January Executive Committee meeting will be held on January 7th at Bob and Carol Cassel's house. Please contact Deb Maka for more information.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Deb Maka at deborah71@msn.com or call 863-0330.
- 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.

