



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

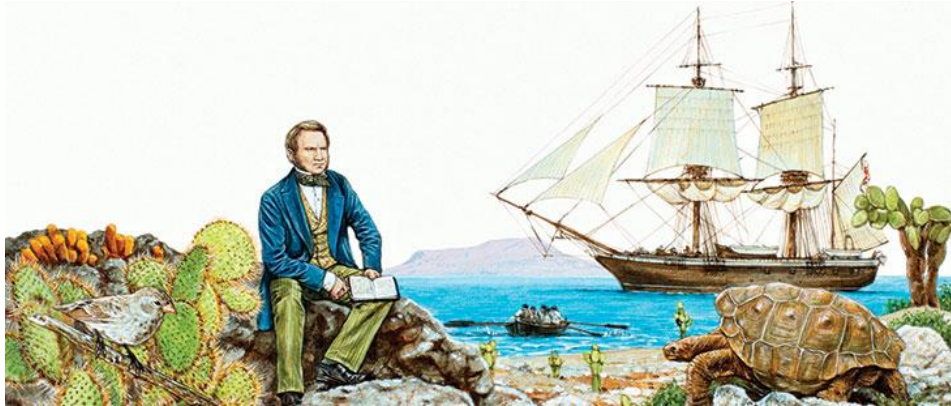
December 2014

Program - The Galapagos

Thursday, December 11, 2014 at 7:00 PM at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ (directions below)

Presenters: Larry and Sue Smith

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342



Discovered in 1535, the isolated desert islands of the Galapagos archipelago, spanning the equator, began ascending from the sea 3-5 million years ago. The Galapagos archipelago has been described as one of the most unique, scientifically important, and biologically outstanding areas on earth (UNESCO 2001). Many travelers describe their time in the islands as a life-changing experience. The Galapagos Islands are home to some of the highest levels of endemism (species found nowhere else on earth) anywhere on the planet. About 80% of the land birds, 97% of the reptiles and land mammals, and more than 30% of the plants are endemic. More than 20% of the marine species in Galapagos are found nowhere else on earth. Favorites include the giant Galapagos tortoise, marine iguana, flightless cormorant, and the Galapagos penguin - the only penguin species to be found in the Northern Hemisphere.

In 1831, Charles Darwin sailed to the Galapagos Islands in the HMS Beagle. The captain of the Beagle was Captain Robert Fitzroy, an illegitimate descendent of King Charles II. Charles Darwin was only twenty when he left England in 1831. Darwin's observations of the variations among the islands' species during the Beagle's five week stay in the Galapagos in 1835 played a crucial role in his discovery of the principles of natural selection. Thirty years later he published his theory of evolution, unquestionable one of the most revolutionary ideas science has ever known.

Our presenters tonight are Larry and Sue Smith of Wenonah who have returned from their recent journey to the Galapagos with a fascinating photographic record and amazing tales of one of the world's most remarkable places. Come share scenes of the plants, invertebrates, reptiles, birds and mammals of these extraordinary islands!

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).

Northwestern Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count scheduled for 12/20/2014

Picture this: You are going on a field trip with the Gloucester County Nature Club. You are hoping to see the very last active Bald Eagle nest in New Jersey in the late 1970's. Just so happens your mentors are there: Will and Thelma Middleton, Wyn and Mimi Glass, Bob and Eva Cassel, and Mr. Ed Manners, and many others too many to mention. One must climb a 'fill' pile to view 'the nest' which is constructed in a large pond pine a safe distance away. The last remaining pair of eagles soars over the nest and out towards the Delaware Bay.

Fast forward 30-35 years! As a result of hard work by a number of organizations and folks, eagle nesting has the state of New Jersey with over 100 pairs and maybe more than 200 birds fledged in a year. Now, one nest, but a mile from your house has raised at least one bird a year for the last three! What would the mentors be thinking now! On that day at Dividing Creek in the 70's, do you think anyone of them would have contemplated such a wonderful rebound? I suspect more they were thinking they were seeing the last vestiges.

You decide to get up at 4:00 AM to take part in this thing called a "Christmas Bird Count" to begin at 5:00 AM! You are not sure what it has to do with Christmas..... but the article in the Woodbury Times says "you count all the birds you can see". What if the same bird is seen twice? Anyway, you agree to meet a Mr. Bob Cassel and his friends on Route 45 at 5:00 AM (!), in the dark (!), to listen for owls!? It's pitch dark with only headlights for lights. When you pull to the shoulder of the road you cannot see anything, the road, no faces, let alone owls. Bob says "Hello young fellow" and then starts hooting like a Great-horned Owl. Immediately frantic thoughts are going through your head, most notably 'Why am I doing this?'. Within seconds an owl responds. The owl can't be any more than 50 yards away. 20 seconds later after calling the bird a couple more times the bird glides over you silhouetting against the early morning sky. You are hooked!

Jettison forward 30-35 years! The area where the owl was seen has completely changed with housing developments standing where the tall evergreens once were. One less area where one might 'raise' these beautiful creatures in the early hours.

Sightings and events such as these are available to us. One way is through the Audubon Christmas Count -ours the Northwestern Gloucester County Count- is a wonderful citizen science endeavor. If you are looking to do something that gives one a sense of accomplishment and provides important info and data, this is up your alley.

As noted by the previous two accounts, it is an ever-changing world and environment. It is probably more heavily weighted in decline but as the first account mentioned we can make a difference - look at the eagles! Taking part in the count opens many opportunities too. Meet new people, see more birds (maybe species you never saw before or see rarely), and see new places.

Much can be said about our count. It is over 60 years old! It has survived a 1/2 dozen or so compilers of which the last 5 were in the last 30 years (Will Middleton, the original compiler, kept it rolling into the 80's). It has helped us develop many friendships and many stories as well. It allows us to renew those friendships on a yearly basis too, including maybe not with someone you would see otherwise during the



year! And importantly, doing the count provides us with an account of the state of the birds in the same zone every year.

You can be of assistance too if you would like to be a feeder watcher if perhaps your home is within the vicinity of the count circle. Can't help in the field? Then how 'bout the feeders? Contact the compiler for details. Info can be sent.

Your Christmas Count is on December 20, Saturday. If you are new to the count and need to be placed you can receive help from the compiler. If you have a specific area you would like to join the compiler can help you connect there too.

Join us. Invite a young person to join you! We need to involve our youth! Maybe see an eagle! (Counts have produced a rough average of 5-10 over the last few years!). Make a story! Meet someone new (maybe your new person of the year)! Try to "hoot-in" an owl! Start a legacy!

As Bob Cassel would say "Hoo, hoo-hoo, hoo, hoo"!

- **Ron Kegel, compiler** ronaldk52@comcast.net 856-881-9262

Family Fun Walk at Atsion Lake

Sunday, December 14th, 2014 at 12:00 noon

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

Join us on Sunday, December 14, 2014 at 12:00 as we take a walk on the mile trail and skip rocks on Atsion Lake reminiscing of swimming at the beautiful cedar lake in the summer.

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 walk at child's pace stopping to look at anything interesting we find. The walk will last an hour or so. Dress in layers according to the weather. Bring your sense of adventure and join us on a nice fall day.

Directions: Meet at the Atsion Lake Recreation Area parking lot, 714 Rt. 206, Shamong, NJ 08088

For more information and Mapquest directions visit <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/wharton.html>

GCNC History – article from the Courier-Post, 5/21/1999

Octogenarians Advocate Getting Close to Nature - Gloucester County Club Turns 50

Freeholders Honor Founding, Longtime Members

Mimi Glass grew up near the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina, making a great connection with nature there that has lasted a lifetime. "We hiked all over those mountains," the Pitman resident said. Exploring the swamps and marshes around his childhood home town of Paulsboro had the same effect on Bob Cassel, now a Mantua resident.

This week, the Gloucester County freeholders adapted proclamations honoring Glass and Cassel, both in their 80s, as longtime members of the county Nature Club. Glass was a founding member of the 50-year-old club.

A veteran of mine explorations and numerous bird counts, Glass says there's a great need today for contact with nature. "Many people think, 'oh we can get it over the Internet.' But you can't" Glass said. "You can't understand the environment until you've experienced it." Glass came to South Jersey during the Depression of the 1930s, when her late husband got a job in the area. "I always miss the mountains, but I never regretted the move," Glass said. In Pitman, she joined fellow teachers and scientists in forming the county nature club. "It turned out to be an absolutely wonderful thing in my life," said Glass, who taught elementary school in Pitman and kindergarten in Lindenwold.

Cassel, 84, who lives in a stone house he built on six forested acres, joined the Nature Club in 1951 after leaving the Army. He plants trees on his land and names them for friends and relatives. The retired Mobil chemist is credited with promoting an endangered species education program his daughter developed in her job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It provided kits which confiscated skin and tusks of endangered animals for presentation to schools and civic groups.

One continuing club project is annual Christmas Bird Count, a national effort now in its 99th year. Club members conduct a daylong census of bird species within a 15-mile radius of the New Jersey Turnpike in Gloucester County.

Nature Notes

Events by other Organizations: December 2014

- December 7 (Sunday), 2:00 - 5:00 P.M. - **Groovin' on a Sunday Afternoon** with the band LOVE ALIVE. **Fundraiser for South Jersey Land & Water Trust.** Bus Stop Music Café, Pitman, NJ. Buffet of soups, chili, salad, fresh breads, desserts and coffee/tea to enjoy, and a selection of Auburn Road Wines available for sale. You can also BYOB (Beer & Wine only) and you'll get your very own unique soup bowl to take home! Tickets \$20. For details and to reserve tickets, see www.sjlandwater.org.

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.

- Nature Tots: Wednesday 12/3 at 10:00am
- Bird Walk: Saturday 12/6 at 8:00am. 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.
- Trim a Tree for Wildlife: Saturday 12/6 at 10:00am. Learn to make edible ornaments for wildlife.
- Afternoon Nature Stroll: Wednesday 12/10 at 2:30pm.
- Evergreen Wreath Making: Thursday 12/11 at 7:00pm. Learn how to make a wreath using fresh cut evergreens.
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 12/13 at 10:00am.

Natural Events for the month of December

- Geminid meteor shower - December 13.
- Shortest day of the year is December 22.
- Bald eagles arrive from the north and winter in New Jersey.
- Raptor migration ends mid-month.
- Great horned owls are pairing up this month – listen for their calls
- Watch for late waterfowl migrants – shovelers, mergansers and goldeneyes.
- Take part in a local Christmas Count.

Looking Ahead:

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

January 8, 2015: **Fossils of New Jersey's Coastal Plain** - Ned Gilmore, Academy of Natural Sciences

February 12, 2015: **Pot Luck Dinner & Nature Story Sharing** - Interactive member activity

March 12, 2015: **Sacred Landscapes** - Erik Mollenhauer

April 9, 2015: **Bird Identification Workshop** - Susan Puder

May 14, 2015: **An African Adventure** - Larry A. Lyons

June 11, 2015: **Annual Picnic** (Location TBD)

2014-2015 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the new 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.

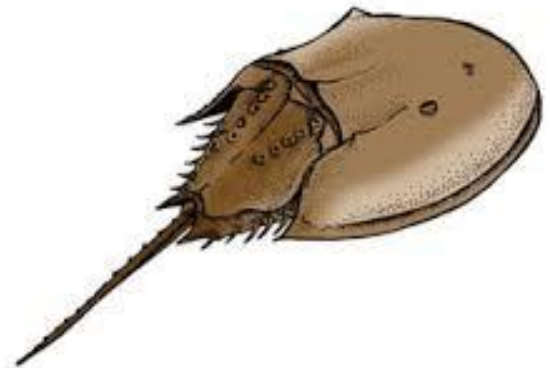
January/February - **Conowingo Dam for Eagles** (tentative)

March - **Moonlight Hike & Campfire Saturday**

April - **Bird Quest Trainings**

May - **Bird Quest** May 2nd

June - **Horseshoe Crab Walk**



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 December Executive Committee meeting will be held on December 7th at the home of Rich Dilks. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.