

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

January 2001

REGULAR MEETING -Thurs., January 11, 2001 - 7:00 pm – EIRC Building, 606 Delsea Dr. in Washington Twp. (next to the Dairy Queen)

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

The American Chestnut –History, Demise and Promising Comeback of an American Survivor

The American Chestnut was one of the most important trees in the eastern forest. In the heart of its range, stretching from Maine to Georgia and west to Ohio, it was one-quarter of the hardwood trees. It was the “old growth” species of the East: trees could be 600 years old, average five feet in diameter and be up to 100 feet tall. Native wildlife depended on the nuts, especially bear, deer, turkey and squirrels. It was a vital part of eastern rural economies, supplying railroad carloads of nuts to eastern cities where street vendors sold them fresh roasted. The tree, one of the best for timber and rot resistant as redwood, was used extensively for furniture and home interiors. Then in 1904 the chestnut blight struck. Introduced to New York City, this lethal Asian fungus stormed through the eastern forests at rates of up to fifty miles a year, leaving in its wake dead and dying trees. It was considered to be America’s worst ecological disaster in the first half of the 20th century. By the 1950’s, the chestnut was gone.

Yet a few weakened survivors tenaciously hung on. Recent developments in genetics provide renewed hope for these survivors. In 1983 a group of prominent scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) to restore the “king of the forest” to its former glory. In 1995 the Pennsylvania Chapter initiated the first regional breeding program, to develop genetically diverse, blight-resistant American chestnut trees for PA forests. The program involves locating surviving flowering chestnut trees, pollinating them with pollen from trees with known resistance and planting the offspring. Such a large-scale restoration project by volunteers and the general public has never been attempted before and is showing great promise of success. Join Bob and Ann Leffel from TACF’s PA Chapter who will present this amazing story. Bob is a retired USDA research agronomist and breeding program scientist; Ann is a former teacher. Our program will be capped off with fresh-roasted chestnuts.

FIELD TRIP -Saturday, Jan. 13, 2001 – Conowingo Dam, MD

Kris Mollenhauer, 589-4387

Congregate with eagles! Join us on a trip to Maryland’s Conowingo Dam where winter birders can see dozens of Bald Eagles feeding on the fish just below the dam, along with gulls, ducks, herons and other raptors. Conowingo has the most viewable gathering of eagles anywhere on the East Coast. (Philadelphia Electric Company) completed the dam’s construction in 1928, a mile wide and 95 feet high, providing electricity for 250,000 homes; however, the dam destroyed what some have called the greatest fish highway in the nation. Best viewing spots are a birding platform below the dam; the fisherman’s catwalk along the dam face; the edge of the parking lot (from inside your car); or the riverbank.

Admission is free. This will be a day for long underwear and warm layers. A nature center will provide a warm up stop. Bring binoculars, field guide, lunch. Trip leaves from the Timberline Shopping Center on Woodbury-Glassboro Rd. in Mantua at 8 am (car-pooling is possible). Please call to register for the trip.

Upcoming Field Trips:

Friday, Feb. 9: Full Moon Walk

Walk through the woods on a (full) moonlit evening here in Gloucester County. Enjoy the tree silhouettes and moon shadows. Listen for owl calls.

Environmental Info/Nature Notes - January, 2001

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Open Space and Gloucester County

To see an animated map of how Gloucester County (or any other NJ county) has lost open space to development, go to www.crssa.rutgers.edu website, to the Projects section and "NJ Landscape Change". The maps cycle through 1984-1995, during which Gloucester County added 17,049 acres of development, primarily at the expense of existing farmland, grassland, forest and wetlands.

God will not seek thy race nor will he ask thy birth. Alone will he demand of thee, "What has thou done with the land that I gave thee?" . . . an ancient proverb

The Technology Graveyard: Computers and Recycling

When your old computer is ready to R.I.P, outfits like Share the Technology www.libertynet.org/share are ready to help. Rather than trashing it, this nonprofit organization matches potential donors with organizations seeking used equipment. Monitors can contain as much as 8 pounds of lead. CPUs can contain lead, mercury, nickel, cadmium. Computer recycling outfits such as Monmouth Wire and Computer Recycling in Tinton Falls, NJ www.computerreclamation.com) will usually arrange for free pick-up of large quantities of computer equipment but the average person with just a few items is usually put off by pickup charges or the inconvenience of driving long distances to a drop-off site. The NJ Solid Waste Policy Group maintains a list of NJ counties with free-of-charge recycling places on its website at (aesop.Rutgers.edu/wastemgmt); check the Where to Recycle or Recycling Providers for details. Given that pay-and-drive may be the only available option, some people will opt to put their old hardware out with the trash, leaving future generations to clean up the contamination. Before you do that, contact your Gloucester County Office of Recycling to find out your options, and push for help at the County level. Many counties have started electronics collection programs to divert them from landfills or incinerators. And promote the real solution to recycling problems: a disassembly/recycling tax added directly to the purchase price of new computers, cars, refrigerators, etc, that is used to disassemble/recycle old ones. That way, today's user pays the real cost of buying today's product, instead of passing disposal cost off to future generations.

SIGN-UP for 2001 Diversity Surveys

Make your New Year's resolution to participate in the 2001 field surveys for endangered species, as part of the Gloucester County Diversity and Habitat Protection Project. This spring marks the second field season of the 3-year project. These surveys are not only important in maintaining Gloucester County's wildlife for future generations, they are a chance to practice your identification skills, increase your knowledge of Gloucester County, and spend some time outdoors with friends.

At the January 11 Nature Club program meeting we will send around sign-up sheets for the different species groups listed below. We will also try to organize Club members to work together so that the surveys are more fun and we can learn from each other. Let's support this worthwhile project to protect our county's natural heritage. For more information about the Gloucester County Diversity Project, contact Steve Paturzo at 609-292-1231 or Melissa Craddock at 609-777-4136 or visit the project website at www.state.nj.us/wwwboard/gloucester, where you can post questions, comments and see findings.

Species groups:	Grassland birds	--- surveys May through July
	Woodland raptors	--- surveys March through July
	Marsh-nesting birds	--- surveys April through August
	Bog turtle	--- surveys April through July
	Pineland herps	--- surveys January through Sept
	Butterflies, dragonflies	--- surveys May through Oct
	Freshwater mussels	--- surveys throughout year
	Bald eagle, osprey	--- throughout year (eagle); May to Aug.t (Osprey)
	Scrub/shrub songbirds	--- surveys May through August
	Forest songbirds	--- surveys May through August

Club member Deb Maka has volunteered to be Environmental Commission Liaison Coordinator for the Nature Club. Deb will coordinate Nature Club efforts to facilitate communication between local environmental commissions in the county. At its December meeting the Executive Committee also moved to appoint a new Secretary to take the place of Cathy Carter whose free time has been limited in recent months by a new job. Paula Hayes has agreed to serve as Secretary. Congratulations and thanks to Deb and Paula for offering to serve in these positions; and to Cathy Carter for serving as Secretary previously. The Executive Committee is still looking for additional persons to help plan and carry out various Club activities. If you can spare a few hours a month and want to make a difference here in Gloucester County, the Club needs you. Contact any officer or member of the Executive Committee.

No-Melt Peanut Butter Suet Cakes

1 cup crunchy peanut butter
2 cups "quick cook" oats
2 cups cornmeal
2 cups lard (no substitutes)
1 cup white flour
1/3 cup sugar

Melt the lard and peanut butter, then stir in remaining ingredients. Pour this mixture into square freezer containers about 1 1/2" thick. Store in freezer. This recipe makes 8 cakes and will not melt in summer or warm winter weather.

Announcing the Gloucester County Environmental Commission Conference - January 20

The Gloucester County Nature Club is sponsoring a countywide environmental commission conference, the first of its kind in a long time. The conference will be held on Saturday, January 20 from 9 AM to 1 PM at the Deptford Municipal Building, Deptford NJ. The conference is cosponsored by many local environmental commissions including Deptford, East Greenwich, Franklin Twp, Harrison Twp, Logan Twp., Mantua Twp., Monroe Twp., Paulsboro, Pitman, South Harrison, Washington Twp, Wenonah. The purpose of the conference is to encourage a dialogue between local commissions about common issues and concerns, and to provide information on several topics of immediate interest here in Gloucester County. Short presentations by individual commissions will be followed by a panel presentation on open space in Gloucester County, the countywide endangered species/biodiversity project, and a new countywide watershed management project. Sign-in and refreshments are from 8:30-9 AM. **Pre-registration is required.** To pre-register, persons should call 856-582-7000 x110 and request a registration form (please leave your name, address, phone number). Or you can email your request to anner@eirc.org (again, give your contact information) and the registration form will be emailed to you. **Nature Club members and members of the public are welcome to attend.**

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 7th at 6:30 PM at the home of Brian & Paula Hayes, 413 N. Stockton Ave. Wenonah.

Club News: The Nature Club is always looking for ideas for future programs and field trips. Please contact the program and/or field trip coordinators with your ideas. For information about the Gloucester County Nature Club, call:
Brian Hayes, President 468-9272 Mimi Glass, Membership Chair, 589-6435

Information for next month's newsletter should be sent, by the 15th of each month, to:
Erik Mollenhauer, 606 Delsea Dr. Sewell NJ 08080, 582-7000 X128