

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

February 2001

REGULAR MEETING -Thurs., February 8, 2001 - 6:00 pm – EIRC Building, 606 Delsea Dr. in Washington Twp. (next to the Dairy Queen on Rt. 47)

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

Recognition Dinner – Fifty-one Years Old . . . and Counting

Our February meeting will be a **Recognition Dinner from 6-8 pm. Note this meeting starts earlier than normal!** The Nature Club is now 51 years old. At this dinner we will recognize the many people. . .officers, committee chairs, etc. who have served in leadership/organizing capacity over the years. Because of the possibility of inclement weather, this will be organized as a potluck dinner: attendees should contribute a food item of their choice as well as any favorite stories, anecdotes, or humorous incidents from the past. The Club will provide plates, utensils, cups. Snow date will be Thursday, Feb. 15. The Recognition Dinner is being chaired by Marge Dolente, Vice President, 550 E. Holly Ave. Pitman NJ 08071, 256-1259.

FIELD TRIP –Friday, Feb. 9, 2001 – Moonlit Walk – 8:00 pm

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

Moonlit Walk

Walk through a local woods in Gloucester County by the light of the full moon. Enjoy the tree silhouettes, moon shadows and the stillness of the woods in winter. We will listen for owls. The walk will be from 8-9 pm. The walk will be 2 miles long, over field and wooded trails. Wear warm clothing and bring a flashlight. **Please call the Field Trip Coordinator to register and obtain meeting location and drivers' directions.**

“ . . . I put on a dark coat and go out to be a part of the evening, and when I look up I am in the midst of an incredible galaxy of snowflakes. I return to the porch, and under the porch light I see the individual flakes on my coat sleeve. I cannot understand the infinite variety of the snowflakes, but there they are, crystalline perfection so fragile that my slightest breath reduces them to drops of moisture.

I return to the dooryard and stand there in the falling snow. The dusk deepens. Night is at hand. Soon I shall come back inside, to the security of walls and roof and fire, fruit of my own providence. But for a little while I am one with the dark and the snow, and I am full of wonder. Here is wholeness and holiness, and I partake, knowing that beyond the reasons lies belief.

- Hal Borland, Homeland

FUTURE EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!**Programs/Events:**

March 8: “A Natural History of Costa Rica”

April 5: An exciting event you won't want to miss. Our April 5 program (7 PM, first Thursday of the month) features **the Raptor Project: a close encounter with 15-20 different kinds of LIVE EAGLES, HAWKS, OWLS, and FALCONS**, including “Cody” the golden eagle, “Uncle Sam” the bald eagle and “Tiny Tina” the saw-whet owl. Currently the largest traveling collection of live birds of prey in the US, the New York-based program's focus is education, rehabilitation, propagation and conservation of birds of prey. The presenter, Jonathan Wood, has been on PBS, Good Morning America, The Today Show... to name a few. Great for families.

May 10: “Underwater Shipwrecks and Marine Life of the New Jersey Coast”

May 12: The **Second Annual Gloucester County Bird Quest**, from 7 AM-12 Noon on Saturday May 12. A fun, educational event, last year's Quest was joined by 150+ people, from young children to senior citizens, school groups, scout groups, environmental commissions, families and friends. The event was sponsored by 11 local environmental commissions and 15 businesses and industries. Teams of 4-7 people led by knowledgeable birders search the County to find as many species of birds as they can, learning about bird identification, behavior, and Gloucester County's unique natural areas. At noon, participants gather at James Atkinson Park (Bethel Mill Park) on Delsea Drive to report results, get a free lunch, free Quest T-shirts, posters and other materials/prizes. The 2001 Gloucester County Bird Quest will be in tandem with International Migratory Bird Day, an international effort to draw attention to the decline of migratory bird populations in recent years.

Field Trips:

Sunday, March 11: Cedar Run Refuge, Medford NJ

A guided two-hour afternoon tour of the wildlife compound and education center. The refuge cares for and rehabilitates many injured animals like Orion, an adult Bald Eagle. The refuge staff will talk to us about how to care for injured or orphaned wildlife. We will get a close-up look at many wild animals. A great trip for children and all age groups.

Sunday, April 22 - Bowman's Hill Wildflower Gardens, New Hope PA

Saturday, May 12 – Gloucester County Bird Quest

Saturday, June 2 – In Search of Great Trees: Rambles with Mimi. A driving tour of some of South Jersey's most spectacular trees, led by none other than Mimi Glass.

This Spring the Nature Club will offer a series of five mini-field trips (each lasting 1-2 hours) highlighting some unique signs and sounds of springtime in Gloucester County (full descriptions will appear in later newsletters).

Tuesday, March 5, (5 pm): Sky Dancers: The American Woodcock Join Brian Hayes

at dusk to seek the spectacular aerial courtship displays of the woodcock, an upland shorebird native to Gloucester County. Courtship begins with a ground display during which the male turns and utters a nasal “peent” for about a minute. This is followed by a 45-to 60-second sky dance in which the male spirals 30 to 90 meters above the ground while making a twittering sound. Then suddenly he rockets with a melodic warbling call, leveling off a few feet from the ground. The walk will be about 2 miles. Bring a flashlight. Call the Field Trip

Coordinator, Kris Mollenhauer, (589-4387) to register and for drivers' directions.

Tuesday, March 27, (7 pm) – Stalking *Spring Peepers* after Dark

Monday, April 2, (5 pm) – On the Trail of *Trailing Arbutus*

Tuesday, April 24, (5:30 pm) – Searching for the Elusive *Swamp Pink*

Monday, June 4, (5:30) pm – Summer Snow in Gloucester County: *Mountain Laurel* in Bloom

Environmental Info/Nature Notes - February, 2001

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Two Victories for Endangered Sea Turtles

Kemp's Ridley turtles are the most endangered sea turtles in the world. The Sierra Club's "The Planet" for December reports that the populations of these turtles have been driven down at a faster rate than any other sea turtle species. Padre Island, off the coast of Texas, is the only place in the United States where Ridleys still nest, but many die after being snared and drowned in shrimping nets. The good news is that Texas is now prohibiting shrimping in the waters along the South Texas coast from December 1 til July 15 (the turtles' nesting season). Use of turtle excluder devices will also be required.

Environmental Defense reports that a similar problem exists in North Carolina's Pamlico Sound, where endangered Kemp's Ridley, Loggerhead, and Green sea turtles are dying in fishing nets. As a result, the state has closed the southern flounder industry. It is believed that modifying net gear and changing where nets are deployed would protect the turtles without harming the flounder fishery.

"The Planet" article (by Johanna Congleton) also states: "In October, the U.S. Senate ratified an international sea turtle treaty for the Western Hemisphere . . . " It requires the use of Turtle Excluder Devices "on all shrimp-trawling nets. It also protects nesting beaches, prohibits trade in sea turtles and products made from them, and calls for continued research and habitat conservation. Eight nations that are original signatories must ratify the treaty for it to become effective. When "The Planet" went to press, there were six."

Editor's Note: In recent weeks the issue of communication/cell towers has been a regular feature of the news in Gloucester County. Much of the controversy has focused on the possible effects of these towers on human health. Communication towers are also a significant hazard to migratory birds and we hope this article, reprinted from the NJ Field Office of US Fish and Wildlife, will provide additional information as people consider whether, where and/or how to build these towers. Although most people associate bird migration with peak periods in the spring and fall, there is not a day in the year when birds are not migrating in New Jersey. Hopefully the growing problem of cell towers can be resolved in a way that works for both people and the environment.

Every year, man-made structures cause millions of bird collisions in North America. Records of bird mortality at these structures were first documented at lighthouses over a century ago. Today, migratory birds face the new

challenge of thousands of communication towers built in migratory flyways.

Researchers estimate that as many as four million birds are year are killed by communication towers in eastern North America alone. A large number of these are songbirds, which tend to migrate at night at low altitudes. Under inclement weather conditions, lights associated with communications towers (aviation warning lights) cause disorientation in the birds and make them vulnerable to collisions with obstructions. It is thought that night migrants find their way by following star rotations; during conditions of fog and low cloud, tower lighting refracts off the water droplets creating an illuminated area around the structures. Disoriented birds circle around the tower, colliding with tower structures, guy wires, other birds and even the ground.

With a reported 40,00-75,00 existing towers of all kinds (cell, digital, tv, microwave, etc) in the US, and an additional estimated 100,000 more towers to be built in the next decade, bird mortalities are sure to rise. Many songbird species are already undergoing significant population declines due to other factors including habitat fragmentation, habitat loss and pesticides.

Where towers will ultimately be built, the US Fish and Wildlife recommends that antennas be concealed and attached to existing structures. Where attachment to existing structures is not feasible, they recommend that towers be located away from areas where migratory birds are likely to concentrate. These include traditional flight corridors such as ridges, shorelines, river valleys; stopover or resting areas such as land bounding large bodies of water, wetlands, forests, and natural grasslands; reserves, refuges and nature sanctuaries; and seasonal flight paths (e.g. between feeding and nesting or roosting areas). In addition, the tower design should incorporate multiple transmitters on a single pole less than 200 feet in height, without lights or guy wires. The Service also recommends that towers be removed once communication technology advances beyond their need.

Information on tower kills, including mechanisms, studies, literature, bibliographies, legislation, links and summaries by state is available at the following website: <http://www.towerkill.com>. The Service's Migratory Bird Management Office maintains a partial bibliography of more than 125 citations from 1960-1998 on bird kills at towers and other man-made structures, which can be accessed at: <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/tower.html>.

101st Christmas Bird Count – Bob Cassel

Thirty-three Club members and friends participated in a rainy December 16th Christmas Bird Count, compiling 74 species and 41,328 individual birds during the 101st annual Christmas Bird Count. Just be glad we hadn't set the day on the 17th, when the rain came down so heavily that Ron Kegel on the Salem count had to stop often and finally, stop altogether early in the afternoon. This count we had three observers under 18, a number we hope will increase next year. Results are listed on the next page.

Participants included: Cathy, Elizabeth & Lauren Carter, Robert Cassel, John & Marilyn Courtney, Bob Duke, Loretta Dunne, Dr. Richard Ebert, Denise Everett, Joey Giroard, Jean Gutsmuth, Brian & Paula Hayes, Ed Hazzard, Scott Henderson, Ron Kegel, Ed Komczyk, Claire Lorraine, Susan McCarthy, Sheila McCullough, Dan Minix, Laura Mitchell, Erik, Jeff & Kris Mollenhauer, Maria Musciano-Keefe, Lauria Paoillo, John Perian, Donna & Kirk Strohmeier and Joan Zeigler.

THANKS!

Club Member Maria Musciano-Keefe has volunteered to be Community Events Coordinator. Maria will organize

