

Gloucester County Nature Club

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

June 2001

REGULAR MEETING – Thurs., June 14, 2001 – 6 pm – Alcyon Lake Park, Pitman

Bob Cassel, Program Coordinator, 478-2496

Annual Picnic:

The Thursday, June 14 meeting of the Gloucester County Nature Club will be the annual spring picnic. This year's picnic will be held at Alcyon Lake Park in Pitman (at the picnic pavilion) and will be a covered dish dinner. Attendees should bring a food item of their choice to contribute to the fare, and perhaps a lawn chair to supplement the picnic tables available. Bring your own utensils, plates and cups to cut down on disposables. The picnic will begin about 6:00 PM. Informal discussions about past and future activities will occur. **A schedule of upcoming summer nature walks and activities sponsored by the Club will be available.** A guided nature walk of the park's wildflower meadow will take place, with a look at bluebirds, tree swallows and other birds resident to the area so bring binoculars and field guides. Like all Nature Club activities, the picnic is open to the general public. Access is from Holly Ave by turning onto Track Ave, and following it back to the pavilion at the upper end of the lake.

FIELD TRIP – Sat., June 2, 2001 – In Search of Great Trees – Gloucester Co. sites, 2 pm - Timberline Shopping Center, Mantua

Kris Mollenhauer, Field Trip Coordinator, 589-4387

Rambles with Mimi:

A driving tour of some of Gloucester County's most spectacular trees, led by none other than Mimi Glass. First stop will be the historic Clement Oak in Deptford. Long before the United States became a nation, the Lenni-Lenape Indians held tribal councils under its spreading branches. Because the tree is on private property, special arrangements were made for our visit.

We will continue on to see a 100-year-old Holly tree, a Gingko tree, a Monkey Puzzle tree, a Yellow Wood tree, a Sequoia, a Bald Cypress and end with Chestnut and Silver Bell trees in Mimi's own yard in Pitman. Meet at Timberline Shopping Center in Mantua (off Woodbury-Glassboro Rd.) at 2 pm to carpool.

Monday, June 4, (6:30) pm – Summer Snow in Gloucester County: *Mountain Laurel in Bloom* – Ceres Park, Mantua

Should anyone doubt that nature provides splendors which are unrivaled by any that man produces, I would advise them to join us on this woods walk when the mountain laurel is in bloom in Ceres Park. These were planted and tended by nature and are over 12 feet tall in places. *Kalmia latifolia* is one of the most beautiful shrubs in the world. The eminent Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus named *Kalmia* after New Jersey resident Pater Kalm, who in 1748 remarked: "The Swedes have named it spoon tree because the Indians used to make their spoons and trowels of its wood." We will use a hand lens to take a close look at the starlike pink and white flowers. They are a bit like a mousetrap. Wear good walking shoes and bring binoculars as the woods will be alive with birds. The hike is about a mile; we may cross a stream and walk up and down some hills. Meet at Ceres Park, Mantua, which is on Main St about ½ mile east of the Barnsboro Inn, or

about ¼ mile west of the Rt 55 overpass.

Bluebird Trails:

Join club member, Marie Hageman, as she monitors the Bluebird trail over the coming weeks. This involves opening the nest boxes and discovering what's inside. Marie has been trained by the Atlantic County Audubon Society and she reports her results to the North American Bluebird Society. This is a great opportunity to see and learn more about Bluebirds. To minimize disturbance of the birds, the walks are limited to 5 people. There are two walks each week. Call 589-0606 to arrange the time and location of the walk.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW -- by Brian Hayes, President, GCNC

What a great year we have had! When I think of what we have achieved in the past year I get really excited. Not only am I excited but also I'm impressed with how we have grown and expanded our membership and services. As I started to write this article I realized this was a year of many milestones.

To start, the newsletter grew from one page a year ago to three pages. With the additional room in the newsletter we were able to inform members of fieldtrips, events, and programs farther into the future. We started including articles in the newsletter relating to our programs or current events to better inform our members.

In many ways the past year started in May 2000 with the success of the first ever Gloucester County BirdQuest. This wonderful event set the tone and expectations for future events and the 2000-2001 year to come. Building on the momentum of BirdQuest the summer was filled with mini-fieldtrips. These fieldtrips spotlighted local parks or natural areas within the County. These mini-trips were an experiment since the summer has historically been an inactive period for the Club. We received such a positive response to these summer fieldtrips we added even more trips this past spring highlighting some natural events such as seeing swamp pinks bloom and the woodcock display. I know everyone is looking forward to the June 2nd tree ramble trip with Mimi Glass.

One of the new events the Nature Club sponsored this past January was a conference of all the Environmental Commissions in the County. The conference of Environmental Commissions created a successful platform for various commissions to share information and ideas. Over eighty people attended this event comprised of twelve Environmental Commissions, several conservation groups, and the State DEP. The Club received kudos from many of the Commissions for tackling the issue of the fragmented communities in the County.

Our February program, a change from the norm since we usually don't have a February meeting, was a celebration of past contributors to the Club. As a Club we reaffirmed our roots with the key people of our past. Club members shared memories and swapped stories. But more importantly, it was a great opportunity for many Club members to "catch-up" with old friends.

Since we are on the topic of special events I need to include the visit of Jonathan Wood and the North American Raptor Project. We had a great turnout for this event and I don't think anyone was disappointed with the show or the many live hawks and owls. Our coverage of community events was improved by the completion of a couple of large displays built for easy transport but able to best display the activities of the Club on a constantly changing basis. By expanding our media coverage we were able to reach more people and continue to grow as a Club.

To come full circle, this year's BirdQuest was again a success. While the first BirdQuest was big step the second Annual BirdQuest, this past May 12, was a huge leap. BirdQuest participants grew from 125 last year to 290 this year. This incredible growth is both inspiring and intimidating and will pose its own set of challenges.

Ready to meet the next set of challenges and continue to push the boundaries of Club activities is the Executive Committee. These are the people who are working so hard to bring you our events and activities. This is the perfect spot for a special thanks to Marge Dolente - Vice President, Paula Hayes - Secretary, Karen Kravchuck - Treasurer, Erik Mollenhauer - Newsletter and Special Projects (BirdQuest), Deb Maka - Environmental Commission Liaison, Gloria Caccia - Conservation, Kris Mollenhauer - Fieldtrips, Maria Keefe - Community Events, Bill Connison - Publicity, Mimi Glass - Membership, and Bob Cassel - Programs, Ed Gorman and the many other people who contribute time and resources on a day by day basis.

In closing, the success of the Club depends on you the members.

Environmental Info/Nature Notes - June, 2001

Gloria Caccia, Environmental Coordinator, 582-0980

Why Drilling for Oil in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is Not the Solution to Energy Problems

As you know, proposals to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are being strongly fought by environmentalists. The Refuge is one of the last true wilderness areas on earth and is the premier birthing ground for Arctic wildlife, including polar bears, musk oxen, grizzlies, wolves, foxes and a migrating herd of 130,000 caribou. The already existing Alaskan oil facilities in Prudhoe Bay have a dismal environmental record—400 spills a year from 1996 to 1999, releasing more than 1.2 million gallons of crude oil, diesel fuel, acid and other hazardous materials. The Natural Resources Defense Council disputes the oil companies' claims in favor of drilling:

- While oil companies state that the Refuge contains 16 billion barrels of oil and that this would make the U.S. more energy independent, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that only 3.2 billion barrels are economically recoverable. NRDC says that “over its 50-year lifetime, such an oil field would contribute less than one percent of the oil we consume.”
- The oil industry claims the Refuge would help boost short-term energy supplies and lower gas prices while we move to other energy sources. NRDC says” “It would take ten years for any oil from the refuge to reach west coast refineries and another 15 years for the oil field to reach its peak production level. It will be too little, too late. Improving fuel efficiency is faster, cheaper and cleaner.”
- The oil industry states that oil development on the coastal plain would be confined to only 2,000 acres. But NRDC points out that “those 2,000 acres are spread across dozens of separate sites and would be supported by a web of roads, pipelines and processing facilities extending over hundreds of square miles of fragile wildlife habitat.”

NRDC urges that citizens tell Congress not to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling but to pursue an energy strategy based on fuel efficiency instead. Your Senators and Representatives can be reached at 1-202-224-3121 or letters can be sent to Senators at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 and to Representatives at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

Good News for the “Spirit Bear” – and Its Forest:

The “Spirit Bear,” a white-colored Black bear, is found only in Canada’s rainforest on their west coast. Since 1997, the Natural Resources Defense Council, along with other environmental groups, has waged a campaign to stop the logging in this rainforest. NRDC has now announced, in their May/June Nature’s Voice, that the campaign “has culminated in the largest rainforest conservation measure in North American history. The far-reaching agreement—hammered out by logging companies, environmentalists, native peoples and the government of British Columbia—will permanently protect 1.56 million acres of Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest from logging, as well as place a two-year logging moratorium on another two million acres so that more stringent ecological forestry standards can be put in place. The total area is twice the size of Yellowstone National Park and contains 88 large rainforest valleys that are critical to the future of grizzlies, salmon, wolves and some 400 spirit bears.

Bad News for U.S. National Forests:

At our May meeting, we signed a petition urging the President and Congress not to weaken the Forest Service’s rule which went into effect in January and which banned road building and logging in 58 million roadless acres of our national forests. Unfortunately, an Associated Press report states that a federal judge in Idaho, in response to a lawsuit filed by the state of Idaho, timber giant, Boise Cascade, and a variety of other groups, has now blocked the ban and encouraged the Bush administration to continue studying possible revisions. The Justice Department has not yet decided whether to accept the judge’s order or appeal it within two months to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Community Events

The Nature Club is partnering with local environmental commissions to do joint exhibits/displays at community events. Please contact our new Community Events Coordinator, Maria Keefe at kityblu@juno.com or 856-627-7010 if you are able to help or if you know of another event where the Club should exhibit.

- Saturday, June 2: Mantua Day, 11 am – 4 pm, Chestnut Branch Park
- Sunday, June 10: Gloucester County Water Fest, 11 am – 4 pm, Scotland Run Park, Academy St., Clayton
- Saturday, July 7: Date tentative. Mini-grant clean-up. At least 15 people will be needed to clean up litter at a very interesting, little-known Gloucester County natural site.

Deb Maka, the Nature Club’s Environmental Commission Liaison, shares her thoughts as a first-time participant in the Gloucester County Bird Quest, held on Saturday, May 12.

Gloucester County Bird Quest – A Week in the Woods

Monday morning my alarm sounded at 4:45 am. There was only one question running through my head. “Why would any reasonable person voluntarily get up at this hour of the morning?” I had to

be losing my mind. The answer I gave to myself as I crawled out of bed was “I can’t be late for class”.

Bird Quest was on Saturday. To prepare for the event, the Nature Club arranged seven training sessions in partnership with Steve and Melissa from the NJ Endangered/Nongame Species Program. I wanted to take advantage of as many as possible. So this week, class was a walk in the park in an attempt to become an “RKB” (reasonably knowledgeable birder) which is a bit of a task because I am what a friend referred to as a “nature neophyte”. Simply stated, I am a nature lover living in a concrete jungle. I’m still finding my way in the woods.

At the beginning of the week, I could identify cardinals, crows, and blue jays by sight. Past that, I could say pretty confidently that if it had feathers, it was probably a bird. Birdcalls seemed way beyond my reach. But I had my binoculars and wanted to learn. So I attended all seven training sessions and listened. (In birding, it’s as much about hearing as it is seeing.) Wouldn’t you know that by the end of the week, I felt like I knew a few things. I could recognize at least a dozen more species by sight. I even learned a few birdcalls. (The prairie warbler’s my favorite.)

Saturday was the big event... Bird Quest. My team (The Red Knots) started as 5 people but grew to 13 with Steve Paturzo as our RKB. Armed with binoculars and field guides, we started our quest...to identify as many different species of birds as we could in 5 hours. We started at Alcyon Lake Park. We identified about a dozen different species while we were there. I think my team’s favorite was the blue birds. They are truly beautiful birds. Then we went to Ceres Park, Chestnut Branch Park, and Wheelabrator. While we were out on our quest, an amazing thing happened. Birds were calling and I recognized a few of them. Steve didn’t have to point out the Red-Winged Blackbird, Prairie Warbler, or Catbird.

We made one final stop on our way back to the picnic that was without a doubt the highlight of the morning. Two of our team members knew the location of a Great Horned Owl’s nest. We had the good fortune of seeing the baby and one of the adults. It was truly a wonderful and humbling sight. I had never seen a Great Horned Owl in person. The adult was huge. It looked as big as a third grader.

Then, we returned to Atkinson Memorial County Park and tallied our results. At the end of the morning, we had identified 43 different species. Finally, we ended our day by eating lunch and swapping stories about what we had seen with our friends. Looking back at the week, would I do it over again? Absolutely

Thank you to Bob Cassel for arranging a fascinating May Nature Club program, “Underwater Shipwrecks and Marine Life of the NJ Coast”, attended by 75 people. special thanks to Medford Nursery Inc. in Medford NJ, Ron Kegel and other Nature Club members for donating plants to the annual May Plant Sale.

Editor’s Note:

A total of 17 area businesses/industries and state/county agencies co-sponsored the 2001 Bird Quest, along with thirteen local environmental commissions. Included among the new co-sponsors was the Gloucester County Education Association, which publicized the Quest to teachers across the county.

Over 275 people participated in this year’s Quest, more than double last year’s number (125) of participants. Participation from all age groups and categories increased significantly, including children, senior citizens, teachers, students, scout troops, environmental commissions, and families. Participation at the pre-Quest trainings (daily, during the week prior to May 12) also more than doubled from last year; anywhere from 15-35 people attended the morning and evening sessions.

The winning team (The Geococcyx of Glassboro, a team of high school students led by their teacher, E. J. DeMarco) located 98 species, but once again nearly everyone felt like a winner, as they learned more about Gloucester County natural areas and the diversity of bird life that frequents it. Special thanks to all the co-sponsors listed below, who helped make their year's Quest such a success. We look forward to a bigger, better Quest next year, May 11, 2002, the second Saturday in May.

Co-sponsors: The Bank of Gloucester County, conectiv, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Damingers' Country Store & Wild Bird Depot, D'Angelo's Greenhouses, Eagle Retirement & Investment Planning, Educational Information & Resource Center, Equity Bank N.A, Gloucester County Education Association, Gloucester County Parks & Recreation, Heritage's Dairy Stores, Platt's Farm Market, Raccoon Valley Animal Hospital, Shop-Rite Supermarkets, Drs. Simmerman & Floyd, Optometrists, South Jersey Gas Company, Wheelabrator Gloucester Company, L.P. and the Environmental Commissions of: Deptford Twp., East Greenwich, Franklin Twp., Harrison Twp, Logan Twp., Mantua Twp., Monroe Twp., Pitman, South Harrison Twp., Washington Twp., Wenonah, Westville and Woolwich Twp.

Websites:

<http://www.safeclimate.net> New website allows visitors to determine their carbon dioxide footprint and reduce their energy consumption. Includes links to climate-friendly products.

<http://www.heavens-above.com> is the website for tracking the International Space Station. It is now large enough to be seen as it crosses the night sky.

<http://www.pitt.edu/%7edziadosz> a website that has web cams of nesting birds from all over the world. Some of the stills are unbelievable.

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee Meeting will be held on Sunday, June at 6:30 PM at the Lake Gilman home of Erik & Kris Mollenhauer. Call if you need directions.

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