

Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public
January 2005

Program - Habitat Management at Lakehurst Naval Air Station **Thursday, January 13th at 7:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell**

Program Coordinator - Bob Cassel 478-2496

John Joyce from the Naval Air Station in Lakehurst will bring us a most interesting program on January 13th. He is the Installation Natural/Cultural Resources Manager at this famous Naval Air Base in Central NJ. John will relate his work in forest management and wildlife management, including his work with threatened and endangered species. His work with bluebird box programs has been most successful. The intensively managed grassland bird program at Lakehurst hosts 10 bird species listed as in danger (T & E) in NJ and six of these are grassland species.



John is a graduate of the University of Maine and has studied forestry at Rutgers. His previous job was as the Fort Dix Base Forester, and among his duties there were firebreak management, prescribed burning, wildfire fighting, and occasional help to the base wildlife manager. He is a certified forester (Society of American Foresters) and like many of us is a member of numerous environmental organizations.

Field Trip – Wintering Waterfowl at Shark River Inlet **Saturday January 15th, 9 AM to mid afternoon**

Trip Leader: Bob Duke

Co-leader: Kris Mollenhauer



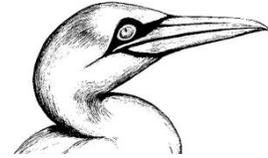
Meet at Timberline Shopping Center (on Woodbury Rd. in Sewell) at 9:00 am to car pool or at Belmar Marina about 11:00 am. Car pooling is encouraged because this is an 80 mile round trip.

There is a small restaurant and restrooms at the Belmar Marina. Bring lunch or purchase something there to eat later. Don't forget your binoculars, scopes and lots of warm clothes. After checking out the river behind the marina, we will visit at least 4 lakes and the inlet for a wide variety of wintering waterfowl. This is an excellent area for loons, grebes, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, geese, ducks (dabblers, divers, and sea ducks) and gulls. Many of these birds spend their summers nesting in Canada, Alaska, the Aleutians or the Pribilofs and their winters along the New Jersey coast.

Driving Directions to Shark River Inlet: Take **55N** and then **I-295N** to just below Trenton. Exit **I-295** onto **I-195**. Continue on **I-195E**. When **I-195E** ends, the road becomes **138**. **138** will merge with and become **35** just outside of **Belmar, NJ**. One traffic light **Past** the intersection with **71**, make a **left turn** at **10th St.** into **Belmar Marina**. We will be there about 11:00 am.

Field Trip Report – Avalon Sea Watch & Cape May Hawk Watch (11/6/04)

"Water World" by Kris Mollenhauer - Sometimes birders go out to ID birds and count them as fast as they can. Other times are not so rushed and there is more time to observe the bird's behavior. Our field trip on Nov. 6 provided an opportunity to do just that. At Avalon Sea Watch we had some nice long looks at Northern Gannets. This spectacular sea bird has a wing span of seven feet and never comes on land except to nest. We watched as they neatly folded their wings and dropped from as high as 100 ft above the water, like a bright white arrow shot through the sky. They entered the water so cleanly that they barely made a splash. It was exciting as they flew directly towards us and suddenly plunged into the water, popped back up, floated around for a few minutes and then awkwardly took off into the air again. This was by far my best look at a Northern Gannet because they came so close and also because it was a nice sunny day (usually I see them in frigid conditions at the end of Barnegat Light jetty in mid-January).



At the Hawk Watch in Cape May Point we spent a long time watching a Cooper's Hawk make repeated attempts to take a pigeon. First he flew to a high point on the side of the dune and hide in the shadow of a bayberry bush. Next, he waited for a group of pigeons to fly in below him and drink. Then he swooped down and tried to grab one. Feathers flew and we held our breath but the pigeon got away. After each failed attempt he got back in position and tried again. We were witnessing the real life drama of a hungry Cooper's Hawk, and it was fascinating to be there. Thanks to Jeff Holt for a great day: he was able to show us a lot of birds. There were over 30 club members along and we had beautiful weather.

Conservation Corner – State of the Birds by Loretta Dunne

National Audubon recently published a report on the state of the birds in the September-October 2004 Audubon Magazine. Surveys were done in 1996 and then again in 2003. While some species' numbers have not changed much, there are some that have shown sharp declines. For example, field sparrows declined by 68%, short-eared owls by 80% and northern bobwhite by 67%. Most of the declines are related to habitat loss. To view the entire report, see <http://www.audubon.org/bird/stateofthebirds>.

Although this report is alarming, it includes twelve steps, both personal and political, that you, as an individual, can take to strengthen the bird population. These steps are:

1. Develop a bird-friendly habitat in your yard.
2. Go out and watch the birds. And introduce someone new to birding.
3. Watch that your purchases help the birds, rather than harming them. For example, buy shade-grown coffee and organic produce and eliminate pesticides and toxic cleaning products in your home.
4. Participate in citizen science, such as joining in the Christmas Bird Count and the Gloucester County Nature Club Bird Quest.
5. Adopt a local important birding area, perhaps a park in the county or the Supawna National Wildlife Refuge and work to protect it.
6. Advocate more funding for the Land and Water Conservation Act – this allocates money to expand and protect national parks, forests and wildlife refuges and support state open-space projects.
7. Ask Congress to increase funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program. The goal of this program is to provide grants to plan for wildlife protection, hopefully helping to provide protection for “at-risk” birds.
8. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act provides matching funds for projects that conserve species that migrate. This act needs more funding.
9. Fight against invasive species. Invasive species threaten wildlife refuges and national parks.
10. Defend the Endangered Species Act. This act is threatened by many proposals, such as the current administration's proposal to exclude wildlife experts from the process of determining if pesticides harm endangered species.
11. At this time, grassland and scrubland birds are the most endangered. Programs proposed to protect them should be supported.
12. Global warming is a big threat to birds. Work to address global warming must be started as soon as possible.

This list has been summarized from the Audubon Report. On the simplest level, there seems to be two things to do for the birds:

- Enjoy them by getting out into the field often and learning about them.
- Do everything you can to assure that our bird populations flourish.

--- Thanks to Karen Kravchuck for bringing the Audubon report to my attention.

Looking Ahead:

Programs-

February 10th – Non-standard monthly program – Nature Artwork
March – Birding Senses

Field Trips-

February 12th – Winter Tree ID Walk with Karl Anderson
March 19th – Scouting for Ducks with Dick Ebert

Club Notes:

- The January Executive Committee meeting will be at 7 PM on January 9th at Kris & Erik Mollenhauer's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Brian or Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@comcast.net or call 468-9272.
- 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.