



# Gloucester County Nature Club

## Monthly Newsletter

[www.gcnatureclub.org](http://www.gcnatureclub.org)

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

January 2009

### **Program – Owls of New Jersey**

**Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at The Wenonah Community Center**

**Presenter: Don Freiday, Director of Birding Programs, Cape May Bird Observatory, New Jersey Audubon Society**

**Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks (856) 468-6342**



“O, you virtuous owle, The wise Minerva's only fowle”.

-Sir Philip Sidney

“Can grave and formal pass for wise, When Men the solemn Owl despise?”

-Benjamin Franklin

Owl Fact: The collective noun for owls is a “Parliament”.

They fly without a sound, barely disturbing the air. With their oval faces and their large, front facing eyes, they look like no other birds. Owls are not, in fact, closely related to other birds of prey. Their closest relatives are the night-jars. Although some owls are diurnal, many owls are nocturnal hunters, occupying at night that niche in the food chain held by day by the other raptors. Owls are a world-wide order of predatory birds known as Strigiformes. Science currently recognizes 216 species that inhabit every continent except Antarctica and dwell in habitats as varied as tropical rainforest and arctic tundra. In North and Central America they vary in size from the Elf Owl, which is slightly larger than a Yellow-rumped Warbler, to the Great Gray Owl, which is slightly smaller than a Golden Eagle. Because of their predominantly nocturnal tendencies, owls have evolved several physical adaptations which facilitate catching prey in the dark. Their large forward facing eyes give owls good stereoscopic vision, vital for judging distances. Indeed, owls have the best stereoscopic vision of all birds. Owls have extremely acute hearing, much better than most other birds of prey and are able to locate prey through sound alone. The feathers on owls' wings have several unique features which permit totally silent flight even at the ultrasonic level which means that prey are not forewarned of attack.

Eight species of owls live or winter in New Jersey. Tonight's program will introduce us to these fascinating animals that are often so close but so illusive. Our presenter is owl expert Don Freiday of New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. Don will tell us of the amazing lives and habits of our owls from the familiar Great Horned and Eastern Screech to the Barred (listed as threatened in NJ) and the diminutive Northern Saw-whet. And yes, he does owl calls too.



## **Field Trip – Eagles at Conowingo Dam**

**Sunday January 18<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM (carpool leaving from Riverwinds at 8:00 AM)**

**Trip Leader: Jonathan Stillwell**

Conowingo Dam is the best place nearby to see Bald Eagles in the winter. Large groups of them feast on the fish that pass through the dam on the Susquehanna River. A large parking area affords a good view of the river and eagle feeding and interactive behavior. Eagles also perch on electrical towers and in nearby trees. Several species of gulls are also present, but the eagles are the focus. There's an adjacent level hiking trail on an old railroad bed that affords access to a riverside wooded area that's good for viewing woodpeckers and other songbirds.



Jon was there on 12/15 and saw Golden and Ruby Crown Kinglets, several species of sparrows, Pileated Woodpeckers, Yellow Bellied Sapsuckers, 50 Black vultures in a group, and 100 individual Bald Eagles.

Bring binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras with long lenses on tripods. It's also a good place for digi-scoping. There are Port-O-San facilities at the parking area. Bring water and a lunch or snacks.

We will **carpool from the Riverwinds complex** in West Deptford at 8:00 AM. Meet in the parking lot near the canoe/kayak launch. Take entrance road straight in, veer right as if to go to the river. We will arrive at the dam around 9:30 AM. Any questions - call Jonathan Stillwell at (856) 241-8658 Evening / (609) 485-6524 Daytime.

**Directions to Conowingo Dam:** 67 Miles total.

Take Rt. 295 to the Del Mem Br and continue on I-95 for 27 miles through DE and into MD. Take EXIT 93, for Port Deposit/Rt 222. Go RIGHT at the light at the off-ramp. At the next light turn LEFT and go NORTH on Maryland Rt 222 toward Port Deposit for about 9 miles until you come to the intersection with Rt 1. Turn LEFT onto Rt 1 and go across the dam. After crossing the dam, proceed up the hill and take the first LEFT on Shuresville Road. Proceed about a mile. Make another LEFT turn (a very sharp turn) onto Shures Landing Road. This road goes 1/2 mile down to the parking areas near the dam.

## **Field Trip – Babies in Backpacks / Toddlers in Tow**

**Tuesday January 20<sup>th</sup>, 9:30AM at Alcyon Lake Park, Pitman**

**Trip Leader: Maria Keefe (627-7010)**



Join us on Tuesday, January 20 at 9:30am at Alcyon Lake Park, Pitman for a winter walk with the kids. We will walk at a toddler's pace exploring as we go. Dress in layers according to the weather. Bring your own backpack and/or a stroller that is able to be pushed on unpaved paths. Everyone welcome.

**Directions:** From Rt 55 Exit 53A (or Exit 53 if coming from the south) take Rt 553 (Glassboro Road) south for about 1.5 miles to Holly Avenue. Turn right (west) on Holly Avenue. Continue for 1.2 miles to the park entrance, which is on the left. There is a small sign. Drive past the sports fields; meet at the pavilion.

## Conservation Corner – NJ's Largest-ever Farmland Preservation Deal Completed

Under an agreement announced on Nov. 12, the state will purchase development rights on **1,770 acres of the Seabrook farm in Salem County**, which will be permanently deed restricted for agricultural use. It is the state's largest farmland preservation deal to date. Another 120 acres of land will be purchased by the state Green Acres Program and added to the Salem River Wildlife Recreation Area, where it will help protect migratory and resident bird populations and endangered species.



Fortunately, state funding was available for the Seabrook purchase.

Unfortunately, future opportunities like this one may be lost, since the Garden State Preservation Trust is now depleted. No new funding mechanisms are on the horizon for land and easement purchases. Fiscal year 2009 will mark the first time the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund has run out of money. The program was created in 1997.

The same legislators who so proudly trumpeted the Seabrook preservation must now focus their attention on finding a long-term, stable funding source to continue this critical work of land preservation! Please contact your legislators and let them know that finding a source of funding for land preservation should be a high priority.

## Bottled Water Right-to-Know Law introduced

U.S. Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), has introduced a bill to provide consumers critical information about the origin and quality of the bottled water they are drinking and the impact producing and disposing of these bottles has on our environment. Lautenberg introduced his bill while chairing a hearing in the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security and Water Quality.

"Americans deserve to know what's in their water. Bottled water has become so popular and so much a part of our culture the public has a right to know where it comes from and how it's treated," Sen. Lautenberg said. "Our bill would make sure they get that information."

Lautenberg's bill, the Bottled Water Right-to-Know Act, would require bottled water manufacturers to display the quality and source of the water and type of treatment that the water has undergone on the bottles they sell. The bill also requires that manufacturers submit information about their bottled water's origins and quality to the Food and Drug Administration and that information be accessible to the public.



In 2007, Americans spent more than \$11 billion on bottled water, up from \$8 billion in 2005. Today, more than half of all Americans consume bottled water and Americans have come to rely on it during emergencies.

While some bottlers may use additional treatment to clean the water, almost 40 percent of bottled water comes from municipal water sources. Manufacturing bottled water also contributes to lasting environmental costs.

**Approximately 2.7 million tons of plastic are used each year to produce the nation's water bottles and the vast majority of this ends up in landfills. The amount of oil it takes to produce those bottles would power more than one million cars and trucks for a year. In an era where we're struggling to find new energy sources, this waste seems very foolish.**

## **Other Nature Notes**

### **Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount to GCNC members!**

Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount (for non bird food items) to GCNC members! *Due to the current volatile market for bird food, the 10% discount for these items has had to be discontinued.* However, members will still receive credit for their purchases towards the Frequent Seed Shopper Program. WBU offers the GCNC discount on all other items in the store. Members are requested to identify themselves as GNNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please contact Sharon at (856) 218-2973 or [sillybird348@comcast.net](mailto:sillybird348@comcast.net)



### **Events by other Organizations: January 2009**

- January 7 (Wednesday) - Insects in Winter Hike. 9:00 - 11:00 AM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, free to PCNP members. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.
- January 14 (Wednesday) - Fox Hike. 9:00 - 11:00 AM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, free to PCNP members. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.
- January 15 (Thursday) – Owl Prowl. 6:00 - 8:00 PM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, Free to PCNP members. Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center will be here with a live owl presentation, followed by an hour-long outdoor owl prowl. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.
- January 17 (Saturday) – Birding at Barnegat Light Inlet. Trip Leader: Lloyd Shaw. Sponsored by the Burlington County Natural Sciences Club. For info: <http://oldsquaw.tripod.com/>.
- January 17 (Saturday) - Beginning Birding for Adults. 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, free to PCNP members. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.
- January 21 (Wednesday) - Animals in Winter Hike. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, free to PCNP members. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.
- January 25 (Sunday) - Salem County Winter Raptors. 12:00 noon - 6:00 PM. Leader: Sandra Keller. Sponsored by the Rancocas Nature Center. \$Fee. For info: <http://njaudubon.org/centers/rancocas/>.
- January 28 (Wednesday) - Daytime Owl Prowl. 9:00 AM - 11:00AM. Sponsored by the Palmyra Cove Nature Park. \$Fee, free to PCNP members. For info: <http://palmyracove.org/>.

The following events take place at the Scotland Run Nature Center in Clayton. For details and registration, call the center at (856) 881-0845. All events are free.

- Bird Walks: Saturday 11/10 at 8:00 AM
- Trim-a-Tree for Wildlife: Saturday 1/10 at 10:30 AM
- Afternoon Nature Strolls: Wednesday 1/21 at 2:30 PM
- Family Nature Adventures: Saturday 1/24 at 10:30 AM
- Nature Tots: Wednesday 1/14 at 10:00 AM
- Wreath Making: Wednesday 12/17 at 7:00 PM
- 4H Kids Nature Club Meeting: Saturday 1/10 at 10:30 AM
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 1/17 at 10:00 AM

## Natural Events for the month of January

- Earthworms burrow below frost line and become dormant.
- Newly fallen snow makes it easy to find and study animal tracks.
- First mating season for gray squirrels.
- Look for flocks of robins eating holly berries in your backyard.
- Great horned owls, America's earliest nesting owl, may be on eggs by the end of the month.
- As days lengthen, tufted titmice and cardinals start singing.

## Kid's Corner - Be an Eco-Detective\* by Deb Maka

Did you know that about half the energy we use to heat our homes is wasted because it's escaping? The heat escapes from our home in a number of places like under doors, around window frames, through the attic, up the chimney and even right through the glass in windows. By decreasing the amount of heat being lost, you can help save resources used for heat like gas, coal, and oil.



Go on a "leak hunt"....

- On the next cold and windy day, take a light piece of paper or a piece of ribbon about 6 inches long around to all the windows and doors you want to check for leaks.
- Hold the paper or ribbon up to the window or door in places you think the air might be escaping.
- If the paper or ribbon moves, you've found a leak.
- Make a map showing the leaks and give it to your parents so they can try and seal the leaks.

There are other things you can do to prevent heat loss, too.

1. Create a "wall" at night keeping heat inside by closing curtains.
2. Make sure windows in your room are closed tight.
3. If your parents want to put up weather-stripping, ask if you can help.

\*adapted from The Earth Works Group. 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth. Kansas City: A Universal Press Syndicate Company, 1990: 116-117.

## **Looking Ahead:**

### **2008-2009 GCNC Programs**

February 12, 2009 – **Pot Luck Dinner / The Jersey Devil and Pinelands Folklore** - Jim Albertson

March 12, 2009 - **Birds of the Spring Migration** – Brian Hayes

April 9, 2009 – **The Grand Canyon: White Water Rafting, Canyon History and Geology** - Brett & Erik Mollenhauer

May 14, 2009 – **Native Plants for Insect and Bird Survival and Diversity** - Doug Tallamy, Professor of Entomology, U. of Del

June 11, 2009 – **Annual Picnic at Red Bank Battlefield and The Art of Karen Paust**

### **2008-2009 GCNC Field Trips**

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the rest of the season. Others may be added as opportunity permits and leaders become available. There will also be a series of Summer Field Trips.

February 28, 2009 (Saturday) - **Winter Birding at Jakes Landing** - Brian Hayes

March 10, 2009 (Tuesday) - **Full Moon Hike at Alcyon Park** - Kris Mollenhauer

April 19, 2009 (Sunday) - **Wildflowers on the Wenonah Trail** - Richard Dilks

May 16, 2009 (Saturday) - **Birding at Allaire State Park** - Jonathan Weir

June 6, 2009 (Saturday) - **Birding at Brightview Farm** - Bob Duke

### **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](mailto:blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com) or call 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](mailto:sharkeyes@comcast.net) or GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month.
- The January Executive Committee meeting will be held on January 4<sup>th</sup> at the home of Karen Kravchuck. Please contact Karen for more information.