



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public.

January 2020

Program: Rediscovering America's First Artificial River

Thursday, January 9 at 7:00pm at Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ (directions below)

Presenter: Scott Barnes

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

Explore the enduring changes in landscape and society sparked by the Erie Canal, as observed on a 400-mile group bike trip along the Erie Canalway Trail from Buffalo to Albany.

Travelers going across upstate New York in the early 19th Century faced many natural barriers, including thick forests, swamps, and rivers. One writer in 1816 described the main road as "a causeway formed of trunks of trees...we could by our feelings have counted every tree we jolted over." These primitive conditions stood in contrast to the rapid improvements occurring in water transportation: Robert Fulton's pioneering steamboat had begun carrying passengers between Albany and New York City in 1807 on a 36-hour schedule.

As early as 1724, farsighted individuals had pointed out the benefits of an all-water route from the Hudson along the Mohawk River extending west to the Great Lakes. But at that point, nobody in the world knew how to construct such a long canal route through a heavily-forested wilderness. President Thomas Jefferson thought such an ambitious and expensive project should be pursued in 1909, not 1809.

Through a combination of political courage, hard work, and a number of technical innovations, the Erie Canal came into being between 1817 and 1825. This presentation will show how the proponents and builders of the canal overcame the numerous challenges in their path. It will then show how the historic canal corridor has evolved over the past 200 years, up to today where it is becoming a 365-mile linear park. How much of the canal and the human history it touched can be seen today from a bicycle seat?



Grain-Boat on the Erie Canal.

Directions: The Holy Nativity Lutheran Church is located just off Rt 553 (Woodbury-Glassboro Rd.) immediately south of the traffic light at Mantua Ave. The church parking lot can be accessed by entrances on either Woodbury-Glassboro Road or Lenape Trail (first left off of Mantua Ave).

Field Trip – Birding Along the Delaware River in Gloucester County

Saturday, January 11 at 8:00am – Noon, starting at Red Bank Battlefield

Trip Leader: Lloyd Shaw

Check out three reliable Gloucester County sites with Lloyd Shaw in search of winter ducks, bald eagles, raptors and anything else we might find along the way. Sites covered will include Red Bank Battlefield, Riverwinds, and Floodgates. The area along the river will be cold in January; dress in layers for comfort. Snow or heavy rain will cancel this trip. This trip will be a joint trip with Rancocas Nature Center, the trip is free but donations are encouraged.



Directions: Meet in the lower parking lot at Red Bank Battlefield at 8:00am.

Address for GPS: 100 Hessian Ave, National Park, NJ 08063

Northwest Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count - Preliminary Findings

I would like to thank everyone that participated in the Northwest Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count. Yours truly picked another great day of precipitation and fog this time. Fortunately the temperatures were not bad; the day could've been worse (positive encouragement!).

We had a total of 86 species counted. The day started with some of us looking for owls. Eastern Screech owls we're not bothered by the weather, and 15 were found by 4 parties. Duck counts were low. Black Vultures almost outnumbered Turkey Vultures with 170 versus 154 respectively. Hawk numbers seem to be down a little bit. Once again no Bobwhite or Pheasant. Red-bellied Woodpecker and Yellow-shafted Flicker numbers were good and comparable.

Crow (both species) were low, at least until 10:00 AM in some zones, as it was difficult to make out what was in the sky. Nuthatch numbers were low, with only two Red-breasted Nuthatches seen. Creepers numbered only two as well. Winter Wren numbers seem to be up a little with 14. Also, two Marsh Wrens were spotted by two different parties. Only 4 Catbirds were seen, and no Brown Thrashers.

American Robins were around in masses, particularly in the new developments, where many ornamental pear trees are planted and the birds are gleaning the diminutive pears. Northern finches were pretty much nonexistent with Purple Finch (3) Pine Siskin (0) and American Goldfinch in short supply. Sparrow numbers were somewhat typical except no American Tree Sparrows.

Thanks again for all of the help, support, and time dedicated to this endeavor. This year was the 120th overall count and with our count getting close to 70 years! I will be announcing the full results real soon. Until then, enjoy the holiday season, join us again, and don't forget to keep feeding the birds throughout the winter.

Other birding happenings this winter include Raptor Census, Marsh Raptor Survey, Great Backyard Bird Count, and the remaining Christmas Bird Counts until January 5. Before you know it will be time for Bird Quest!

Ron Kegel, Compiler

Bird Walks - Recurring Event

The Scotland Run Park Nature Center and the Gloucester County Nature Club will be hosting bird walks year-round on the **first and third Thursday of every month at 7:30am**. This month, walks will be on **January 2** and **January 16**. Come and explore the nature trails as we look for all different species of feathered friends that the park has to offer. This event is open to all ages and families are encouraged to attend together. Bird walks will NOT take place during snow or rain.

Events by Other Organizations: January & February 2020

February 1 (Saturday), 8:00am to 4:00pm – **2020 Cumberland County Winter Eagle Festival** Location: Mauricetown Firehall, 9544 Noble Street, Mauricetown, NJ. Adults \$10, Children under 12, \$5. Special Family Programs, Lectures, Exhibits, Vendors, Birdwatching, Food. For more information call 856-453-2177 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/wintereaglefest/>.

Along the Delaware Bay

Five staffed viewing sites with scopes & birdwatching experts
Bayshore Center at Bivalve walks, food & activities
Morning & evening owl watches
Guided trail walks
East Point Lighthouse
Leechester Hall

At the Firehall

Speakers and presentations
Non-profit and commercial exhibitors
Local fare refreshments & lunch available
Live raptors exhibited by Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge
Hands-on art activities by Clay College

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.

Conservation Corner

The club is still looking for someone to follow in Suzan Delozier's footsteps by serving as the club's Conservation Chair. This is not as hard as it sounds; generally it just involves providing timely Conservation information for the newsletter. Please contact club President Karen Kravchuck or any other member of the executive committee if interested.

Looking Ahead:

Listed below are the programs we have lined up for the rest of the 2019-2020 season. Meeting dates are the **second** Thursday of the month. Meetings start at 7:00pm unless otherwise noted.

2019 - 2020 Programs

February 13, 2020 (6:00pm): **Annual Pot Luck Dinner** followed by program **Bird-Window Collisions** - Jeff Mollenhauer

March 12, 2020 **Species Discovery and the Future of Biodiversity Exploration** - Dr. Daniel Duran, Lecturer, Rowan U; Naturalist, Scotland Run Park.

April 9, 2020: **Birding the American Heartland** - Jeff Mollenhauer

May 14, 2020. **Annual Plant Sale** (6:00pm) followed by program **May on the Bay: Taking Action for Shorebirds and Horseshoe Crabs** - Laura Chamberlin, Assistant Director for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

June 11, 2020 (6:00pm): **GCNC Annual Picnic** at Fasola Park, Deptford, NJ

2019-2020 Field Trips

Remaining 2020 field trips TBD. If you would be willing to lead a field trip, please contact Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@gmail.com.

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 or call 609-617-6693 (cell).
- 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 GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.
- The January Executive Committee meeting will be held on Sunday January 5th at the home of Jayne Rhynard. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.

Please help out the Gloucester County Nature Club while shopping online!



Shopping at Amazon can also benefit the Gloucester County Nature Club at **NO extra cost** to you!

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from nearly one million organizations to support.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. The purchase price is the amount paid for the item minus any rebates and excluding shipping & handling, gift-wrapping fees, taxes, or service charges. You may even use your existing Amazon.com account for your purchases.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.