Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

February 2006

Program – Nature Pictures and Pot Luck
Thursday, February 9th at 6:00 PM at EIRC, Sewell
Program Coordinator – Rich Dilks



This is our traditional non-standard program for February. This year we ask you to bring a favorite nature-related photo, painting, or drawing, along with a pot luck dish. Since we are eating, we are starting one hour earlier.

In keeping with this year's theme, we are asking each club member to come to the meeting with nature-related photo, painting, or drawing which is related to nature. We would especially like items that have a story that you could share with the group. Maybe you have a picture of that turkey vulture that landed on your porch rail one autumn day, or maybe it's a painting that reminds you of a favorite outdoor place.

As for those pot luck dishes – please bring either an Entrée or a dessert. In the event of snow or other seriously bad weather, you can always stay home and enjoy your food! **Also, please bring a plate and utensils for yourself.** Our time this evening will be spent eating and socializing.

Field Trip – Dead End Roads of the Western Shore
Saturday February 11th, 10:00 AM to about 3:00 PM
Leaders: Gale Cannon and Karl Anderson



The western shore of Barnegat Bay, that is - looking for waterfowl, winter raptors, and gulls along a few of the roads that cross the marshes to end at the bay. Meet at 10:00 AM at the Dynasty Diner in Tuckerton. Come early for breakfast! This trip will involve about twenty miles of driving, punctuated by stops to scan the marshes and waterways. Dress to suit the weather, bring lunch and hot beverage, and bring a 'scope if you have one. The trip might be cancelled for bad weather; if things look doubtful, phone the leaders at 856-845-7075 on Friday for an update.

Directions: The diner is on the west side of Route 9, a short distance north of the intersection of Routes 9 and 539; you can't miss it. The distance from Gloucester County is between 60 and 70 miles, depending on route; travel time about 1 1/2 hours.

Field Trip Report: Moonlit Walk at Alcyon Park (1/15/06) - by Barry Bengel

The scheduled night of January 14 was too cloudy, and the trip had to be postponed until the next night, but the alternate night of January 15 proved to be crystal clear and perfect for our moonlit walk around Alcyon Park in Pitman. Upon our arrival, we were taught about the phases of the moon, as well as when the moon rises and sets. Then as we walked around the park, there were several stops where our "guides" told us about the moon through the eyes of people of various cultures, and pointed out some of the winter constellations. It was a very enjoyable and interesting evening. Thank you to Kris and Erik Mollenhauer, Karen Kravchuck, and Ed Cleary for sharing their stories and knowledge.

Conservation Corner by Loretta Dunne

Why Oppose the Dredging?

The Delaware River is our local river, a fact that we were reminded of when last year's oil spill threatened our local wildlife and wetlands. Many people have worked hard to restore the river's health during the last 30 years and any changes that could pose a threat should be made with care and consideration.

Today, the Delaware Bayshore area is home to fishing, boating, and a significant amount of ecotourism. All of these industries bring money to the citizens of both Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

In spite of these signs of a thriving river, there are still many remaining problems. For example, the horseshoe crab population is in great danger. Their numbers have fallen so low that a group of scientists requested that the Red Knot, the bird that depends on eating horseshoe crab eggs during its long migration, be put on the endangered species list. And a number of the eagles that eat fish from the river show signs of heavy metal pollution and some are unable to reproduce to the amount of toxins in their bodies.

The proposed dredging could cause additional problems for the struggling ecosystem. How many heavy metals and toxic chemicals are in the sediment? How extensive will the problem be if the dredging disturbs them? How much of the oil that was spilled in the water will be stirred up during dredging?

The Delaware River is a source of drinking water for many of our communities. Dredging could result in salt intrusions into our drinking water, as well as an increase in toxins— threats which need to be carefully weighed against any possible benefits from dredging.

The real beneficiaries of the deepening of the Delaware would be the oil companies. Their ships are the only ones that are unable to move up the Delaware at this point. The so-called "jobs" that are going to come to this area from the dredging will all be associated with the dredging and will be temporary, at best. Perhaps, as happens with so many jobs these days, people from outside the immediate area will be brought in to fill the positions.

The Government Accountability Office did a study as requested by Congressman Robert Andrews and they determined that the economic value of the project was not equal to the cost. On his website (http://www.house.gov/apps/list/hearing/nj01_andrews/1_13_06.html), the Congressman indicates, "spending almost $300 million on a project which the Government Accountability Office concluded is based on 'miscalculations, invalid assumptions, and significantly outdated information,' would be irresponsible."

Please let Congressman Andrews know you support his opposition to this plan. Also, please consider sending a letter to the editor of the Gloucester County Times to keep the conversation going on this important issue.

Letters to the Editor
The Gloucester County Times
309 S. Broad Street
Woodbury, NJ 08906
gcletters@sjnewsco.com

Other Nature Notes

Wild Birds Unlimited offers an everyday 10% discount to GCNC members!
Wild Birds Unlimited has a discount agreement with the GCNC executive board and is pleased to offer GCNC members an everyday 10% discount on all purchases excluding optics and food or sale items. Sharon Oakes, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, appreciates the many volunteer contributions made by GCNC members and hopes members can benefit from this discount. Members are requested to identify themselves as GCNC members before their sales are finalized. Questions? Please call Sharon at 218-2973.

Looking Ahead

Programs-

March 9, 2006 - 1491: The Americas before Columbus

A Preview of our March Program: What was the New World like at the time of Columbus? The picture that is emerging is quite different than what most Americans believe. The wild, pristine American forest of the first colonists was in fact in the midst of violent change and demographic collapse. Modern research is only beginning to reveal the extent of our tragic loss. Join the ghosts of North America as they tell a story of things long forgotten or only recently known, of firemasters and of 500 nations, of passenger pigeons and of distant mammoths, of holocaust and survival.

April 13, 2006 - Organic Farming

Field Trips-

March 12, 2006 - John James Audubon's House: Mill Grove (Jeff Holt)
April (various dates) – Bird Quest Training



Other Events-

"Save the Date!"….
Saturday evening, March 4: ***The Vulture Festival*** (at the Wenonah Community Center)
Sponsored by the Wenonah Environmental Commission and the Gloucester County Nature Club
…a fun evening out…with live music, food, and educational activities

More details at the February 9 Nature Club Meeting

Club Notes:

- The February Executive Committee meeting will be on February 5th at Deb Maka's house.
- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.
- 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.
- Thank you to **Rich Dilks**, for volunteering to become our **new Program Coordinator!**
- We're still looking for a **field trip coordinator** and **secretary**. If anyone is interested in helping out the club, please email Deb Maka at deborahann@backpacker.com or call 863-0330.
- 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.