



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

February 2015

Annual GCNC Pot Luck Dinner and Interactive Program

6:00pm: Pot Luck Dinner

7:00pm: After Dinner Activities: River Stone Painting & Nature Story Sharing

**Thursday, February 12, 2015 at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ
(directions below)**

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342



Please note the dinner begins at 6:00pm.

Our annual Pot Luck Dinner is always a highlight of the year and a great opportunity to share a meal with and enjoy the company of our fellow club members. We will be combining two after dinner activities this year: river stone painting and nature story sharing. You are invited to paint a nature image on the stone that has special meaning to you - perhaps a tree, a bird, a wolf's paw print, a leaf or flower. For those who are not artistically inclined, images that can be applied by decoupage will also be available. There will be no cost for the stones and art materials. We are also inviting our members to engage in a friendly and informal conversation with our table mates about our mutual love, interest and delight in nature. Perhaps the image you paint on the stone can introduce or connect to your story. You may wish to share an experience you've had, tell of a marvelous place you have been to or just offer a simple reflection on how nature is a part of your life. We will have a chance to share, listen to and enjoy stories and experiences that amuse, move or inform us and come away from the evening knowing our fellow club members a little bit better than before. There will be a facilitator at each table who will have an optional set of questions (e.g. Did you have a favorite place in nature as a child?) to get things started. We all have stories and we all love stories. What better way to spend a winter's night than sharing them with friends.

As always, please bring either an entrée or dessert and a plate and utensils for yourself.

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 – Eagles at Conowingo Dam

Sunday, February 8, 10:30am (carpool leaving from Timberline Shopping Center at 9:00am)

Trip Leaders: Paula and Brian Hayes



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. Depending on the weather and how much open water there is you can easily spot 50 or more eagles here in a morning. 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. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras with long lenses on tripods.

There are portable bathroom facilities at the parking area. Water, a lunch and/or snacks are a good idea; this is a rural area without a lot nearby services.

Directions to Conowingo Dam: About 70 Miles total.

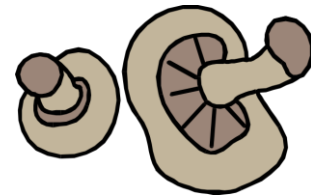
If you would like to carpool meet at Timberline Plaza (across from Target) on Woodbury-Glassboro Rd. at 9:00am. We will arrive at the dam around 10:30am.

To drive on your own: 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 – Tour of Mushroom Farm

Saturday, February 28, 9:30am (carpool leaving from Timberline Shopping Center at 8:15am)

Trip Leaders: Paula and Brian Hayes



Join us as we visit “The Mushroom Capital of the World;” 65% of all mushrooms consumed in the United States are grown in this part of Chester County. It all began in 1896 when two local florists, wanting to use the empty space under the tables in their green houses, started growing mushrooms. On this tour we will learn a bit about the area, Kennett Square was the first area to grow mushrooms in greenhouses, as we tour the mushroom farm with the grower Dennis Melrath. We will see how mushrooms are grown, harvested, and prepared for sale. We will hear the history of the Kaolin Farm. The farm sells their mushrooms under the name South Mill.

Special Note: This is a food production facility so you will be required to wear hair/beard nets. No jewelry, gum, or candy is permitted. You should wear good walking shoes/boots, long sleeved shirt, and long pants. You must be 18 or older to attend this trip.

If you are driving use the following address for Mapquest or your GPS:

Kaolin Mushroom Farm: 649 W South Street, Kennett Square, PA 19348

If you would like to carpool meet at Timberline Plaza (across from Target) on Woodbury-Glassboro Rd. at 8:15am. We will arrive at the farm by 9:30am for the tour.

Family Fun Walk at Timber Creek Park

Monday, February 16th, 2015 at 10:00am

Trip Leader: Maria Keefe (cell/text: 609-315-4759 or mariakeefe19@comcast.net)

Come take a walk with us on President's Day, Monday, February 16 at 10am, at **Timber Creek Park**, Gloucester Township. ****Note this there are two parks with the same name, see the directions**** Timber Creek park is 128 acres in Lindenwold and Gloucester Township.

All ages are welcome. These walks are for anyone that enjoys seeing the wonder of the natural world through a child's eye. You don't need children to join these walks with active, excitable, and enthusiastic children. Bring a baby in a backpack, a toddler in tow, grade schoolers, parents, or grandparents along for a walk. We will walk at child's pace stopping to look at anything interesting we find. The walk will last an hour or so. Dress in layers according to the weather. Bring your sense of adventure and join us for a morning outdoors.

Directions: Entrance to park is on Chews Landing Road, Gloucester Township.

From the Deptford Mall head south on Almonesson Road toward Deptford Center Road. Turn left at Deptford Center Road. Turn left at Hurffville Rd/ Rt 41 (signs for Runnemede/Haddonfield/State Hwy 41N). Continue to follow Hurffville Road. Continue on Clements Bridge Road. Slight right at W Evesham Rd. Turn right at South Blackhorse Pike/Rt 168. Turn left at Chews Landing Road. The park is at the intersection of Chews Landing Road and Taylor Road.

GCNC History: The Club Gets Involved – by Jayne Rhynard

As I've been scanning and reading our club's historical newsletters it has made me aware of our deeply rooted, long history of conservation concerns and activism. This hit home with me when I read that the first field trip to the newly protected "Tinicum Marsh" (that the club had urged its members to write their representative in support of) in the winter of 1958 was cancelled by a blizzard. Long before the advent of eBird and internet access, it is apparent that the leaders of the club recognized that the annual Christmas Bird counts were an important conservation tool to track, over time, the trends and health of the bird population in Gloucester County as well as the country as a whole. Our members represented the club annually in the spring weekend in Cape May as an organized club activity. This went beyond just personal appreciation and club prestige but was viewed as an important contribution to a body of scientific knowledge.

Members were always "taking care of" local sites – one newsletter reports how arbutus plants were saved by concerned members in anticipation of the new Kmart being built in Mantua; another offers congratulations to Wenonah for establishment of its conservation area. Club members' regular participation in the NJ Conservation Council was noted. But the club's preservation activism extended beyond the county boundaries; it urged members to write their Congressman to oppose an area later referred to as the Wichita Mountain wild life refuge from being taken over by the US Army; it encouraged actions to protect the Pine Barrens as well as an area in New Brunswick for Rutgers' research use. They collected postage stamps to support Bald Eagle conservation efforts in Florida.

Our predecessors acknowledged an emphasis on conservation at various times over the decades and programs for monthly meetings included speakers on water sources and pollution (50's); soil conservation (60's) and mosquito control (70's) and representatives from the state fish and game departments. The iconic book, Silent Spring was recommended reading.

While much in Gloucester County has changed (many sites have been lost to development) some things don't. Our efforts to preserve and pass on to future generations have continued – from the club's role in preserving Ceres Park in Mantua in the 70's 'til now, with the public fundraising efforts and club's

generous donation of club funds for preservation of Maple Ridge/Tall Pines as the first state park of its kind in New Jersey. We can all be proud of our club's rich preservationist activities. I, for one, am humbled and impressed.

Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count 2014

The Christmas Bird Count was very successful. This year's count was a few days later in the month this year as a result of how the calendar fell. We were fortunate to have 63 participants on the count. 5 of these participants were feeder watchers and we appreciate their efforts too!

With all the hard work by everyone 95 species were found in the 15 mile radius. A total of 60,836 birds were recorded. A large portion of the overall total was made up by Snow Geese, blackbirds (Red-winged, Common Grackle, and Cowbirds), Canada Geese (or 'regular' geese as my wife calls them!), Junco's, and believe it or not Robins. Ring-billed Gulls, White-throated Sparrows, and mallards rounded out the 'Top 10' of quantity of birds found.

Interestingly, some record highs were amassed by everyone. Highest recorded quantities were tallied in these species: Ring-necked Ducks 262, Bufflehead (duck) 215, Red-bellied Woodpecker 126, Hairy Woodpecker 28, Northern Flicker 115, Winter Wren 19, and Eastern Bluebird 208. Conventional wisdom might tell us that with open water for the most part this is the reason for the high # of lake/pond ducks. Bluebirds are likely increased due to awareness and folks putting up nesting boxes. And the woodpeckers? Could it be we have more dead trees around the area? Just saying. Incidentally the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker # was moderately high too.

Some of the species continuing to struggle include: Ring-necked Pheasant 0, Bobwhite 0, American Kestrel 6, Eastern Meadowlark 0. Even House Finch and House Sparrow #'s seem to have peaked. For example: House Finches – 94 in 2014/record count in 1984 2853. House Sparrows – 246 in 2014/record count in 1972 2200!

Some unusual finds were had as well. Rich Dilks and crew had a White-eyed Vireo. This is a bird that should have migrated months ago and it is only the 3rd time one these little insectivorous birds was seen on the count. My crew saw a Short-eared Owl. The bird was hunting over a field of stubble at 2:00P.M. The bird was viewed shortly after seeing a male Harrier and an adult Bald Eagle in the same general vicinity. This was only the 5th year this amazing species was viewed. Also, new to the count was a Forster's Tern found by the Lloyd Shaw party. This was a first.

Thank you to all who participated in this citizens science project. The compiler is lucky to have so many dedicated folks. May you continue to find new things and have further excitement in the world of birding!

Incidentally, since the count started in 1951 December, there are 14 species which have made the list every year (there was a year or two where the count was not accomplished I believe). Maybe next month we can list them in the March newsletter. Some species might surprise you! If you would rather not wait, one can go on the [Audubon.org website](http://Audubon.org) and look up Christmas bird count.

Please save the date for the count next year! December 19, Saturday, 2015! Please join, invite a friend. Until then, happy birding! Birding is a great escape from the rigors of the world!

Ron Kegel - compiler

Nature Notes

Events by other Organizations: February 2015

- February 21st (Saturday), 10:00am. **Batsto and Wharton State Forest** - Please join South Jersey Land and Water Trust staff member Michael Hogan for a guided hiking tour of Batsto Village and Wharton State Forest on Saturday, February 21st, at 10:00am.

Wharton State Forest is the largest single tract of land within the New Jersey State Park System. It is also the site of Batsto Village, a former bog iron and glassmaking industrial center from 1766 to 1867 that currently reflects the agricultural and commercial enterprises that existed here during the late 19th century. Throughout Wharton are rivers and streams for canoeing, hiking trails (including a major section of the Batona Trail), miles of unpaved roads for mountain biking and horseback riding and numerous lakes, ponds and fields ideal for wildlife observation. Bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, marsh hawks, ospreys, great blue herons, swans, screech owls, great-horned owls, bluebirds, hummingbirds, purple martins, goldfinch, turkeys, beavers, river otters, fox and deer are only some of the wildlife the alert visitor can see. We will take a walk through the village and follow the trails along Batsto Lake and River. Please RSVP.

Directions: We will meet at the visitor center parking lot, 31 Batsto Road Hammonton, NJ 08037, Batsto Office: (609) 561-0024. Take Rt. 30/White Horse Pike east, in Hammonton turn left onto Rt 542. Follow Rt. 542 for 8 miles to left turn into park entrance.

This event is free for SJLWT members and \$3 per non SJLWT member. For more information and maps contact Michael Hogan at 609-476-2086/ hoganphoto@verizon.net

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

- Bird Walk: Saturday 2/7 at 8:00am. Enjoy a leisurely stroll while observing the birds wintering in the park. Bring binoculars.
- Nature Tots: Wednesday 2/11 at 10:00am. A fun program for pre-schoolers and their caregivers. Make a craft and talk a walk along the trail.
- Afternoon Nature Stroll: Wednesday 2/18 at 2:30pm.
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 2/21 at 10:00am.

Natural Events for the month of January

- Skunk cabbage flowers are emerging from the ground, in wetlands throughout the County. As they grow they generate heat, which melts the frozen ground around them.
- Alder catkins are swelling and will open on the first warm days.
- Melting snow may reveal the trackways of meadow voles, dug along the interface between the frozen ground and snow cover.
- Broom crowberry in bloom in the Pinelands.
- Mourning cloak butterflies emerge from hibernation on warm days.
- Killdeer and great blue herons return from the south as waterways thaw and snow cover melts.
- Chipmunks reappear around bird feeders.
- Best time for viewing tundra swans at Whitesbog and other Pinelands ponds.

Looking Ahead:

Listed below are the programs we have lined up for the new season. Meeting dates are the **second** Thursday of the month.

March 12, 2015: **Sacred Landscapes** - Erik Mollenhauer

April 9, 2015: **Bird Identification Workshop** - Susan Puder

May 14, 2015: **An African Adventure** - Larry A. Lyons

June 11, 2015: **Annual Picnic** (Location TBD)

2014-2015 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the new season. Changes and additions are not impossible. If you would be able and willing to lead an additional field trip, please contact Paula Hayes at pnbhayes@gmail.com.

March - **Moonlight Hike & Campfire Saturday**

April - **Bird Quest Trainings**

May - **Bird Quest** May 2nd

June - **Horseshoe Crab Walk**

Club Notes:

- If you'd like to receive the newsletter electronically or receive more info about the club please email Karen Kravchuck at president@gcnatureclub.org or call 856-468-6536.
- 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 newsletter@gcnatureclub.org or GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.
- The February Executive Committee meeting will be held on February 8th at the home of Barry Bengel. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.