



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public.

February 2018

Annual GCNC Pot Luck Dinner and An Evening of Sharing by GCNC Members



6:00 P.M Pot Luck Dinner

Thursday, February 8, 2018 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, and the program at approximately 7:00pm.

This February 8th we gather, as we have for many years past, for our traditional annual winter Pot Luck Dinner. It is always a highlight of the year and a great opportunity to gather together with fellow club members and share a wonderful meal on a cold winter's night in the warmth of good company. As always, please bring either an entrée or dessert and a plate and utensils for yourself.

Share Something Special with Us

Our after dinner activity will be, **An Evening of Sharing by GCNC Members**. Our club membership has a wealth of knowledge, experiences, stories, memories and ideas. This evening is an opportunity to share something you find amazing, amusing or important with friends, in a casual and informal way, It could be a story- a poem- an experience- a cool web site- a book- a biofact- an artifact- a work of art- a special photo- something you found or made- an anecdote about our club's history- something you love. In sharing what we have or know, we all become richer.



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 – Ex-Village Dock Campground, Franklinville

Saturday, February 10 at 1:00pm

Trip Leader - Erik Mollenhauer



This field trip will last about 1.5 hours as we walk the flat, sandy trails of this largely wooded area and lakeshore. The lake and streams are part of the Scotland Run watershed. This is a unique opportunity to visit this privately-held land and explore it with Erik. Even though it's winter, there will be many interesting things to see.

Formerly known as The Village Dock Campground, this 277 acre tract of forest with 65-acre lake is now operated by Amazing Grace Ministries as a home for homeless US military veterans trying to adjust back to civilian life. The project is called **Operation Safe Haven**. Google "Village Dock Franklinville NJ" to learn more about the project.

Meet at Village Dock. Address for GPS:1664 Delsea Drive, Franklinville, NJ.

Directions: Take Rt 47 (Delsea Drive) south through the center of Franklinville. In several miles you will come to the intersection with Fries Mill Road (on your left). Shortly after that, a dirt road (Pennsylvania Ave) is on your left. Follow that, as it heads back north, parallel to Delsea Drive, along the lake.

Christmas Bird Count Follow-Up by Ron Kegel, compiler

Thanks to all who participated in the Audubon NW Gloucester County Christmas Bird Count. The count started out with some rough weather conditions with snow overnight and less than wonderful roads in the morn. No doubt we lost some participants because of these conditions. Folks were instructed to go out only when they felt comfortable. Some folks were traveling a pretty good distance to reach the meet up place (Roger Johnson gets the medal for traveling 2 hours to get to his meet up at 5:00am!).



After all the hard work we saw/heard 96 species. There were a few 'oddities' seen to include: Common Raven- seen harassing a Bald Eagle and a Bonaparte's Gull seen following a tugboat on the Delaware River, both seen by Scott Henderson, Barb Bassett, and Jayne Rhynard. Short-eared Owl seen by Bob Duke's group, Lapland Longspur seen by Roger Johnson in our group, and Common Loon seen by Gary Lizzi.

Good numbers were viewed in: Snow Goose (12,000+), Northern Pintail (96), Bald Eagle (28), Eastern Screech Owl (15), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (21), Horned Lark (432), White-breasted Nuthatch (35) but no Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet (42), Rufous-sided Towhee (9), and almost as many White-throated Sparrows as Dark-eyed Junco's (1029 to 1124 respectively). Concerns or low numbers included: game birds except Turkey, Gray Catbird (1), Brown Thrasher (0), Cedar Waxwing (14), Eastern Meadowlark (0).

Word has it natural food supplies were very good this winter to our north. This is probably the reason for the lack of northern finches. No Purple Finch, Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatch as mentioned, nor Grosbeaks.

Thanks again for making the count a success once again. A nod to our 'feeder watchers' who provided some interesting results. Also thanks to our '1st timers', Nancy Erickson, Bob Killian, Ali Hayes, Roger Johnson, Alison Derenberger, Bob Barsotti, Charlotte Ryan, Esin Gursel, and Erik Nelson.

There were 56 participants, 6 of which were feeder watchers. Results will be sent to National Audubon. All areas were covered! From the compiler, thanks for your continued cooperation and support! Save the date – the 2018 Audubon Christmas Bird Count takes place on December 15, 2018! - Ron Kegel, compiler

Bluebird Box Monitors Needed - Can you help us grow the bluebird population in Washington Township? The Township Environmental Commission is seeking volunteers to help monitor bluebird boxes in Washington Lake Park and several other locations in the community. Training will be provided, if needed. The project is being done in partnership with The NJ Bluebird Society and GCNC. Please contact us at WTEC@twp.washington.nj.us ("Bluebirds" in the subject line) to volunteer or to learn more.

Events by other Organizations: February 2018

February 16 - 19 (Friday - Monday). **Great Backyard Bird Count.** Count birds in your backyard or other locations, submit highest daily species totals. Organized by the Cornell Lab. Of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. For information: <http://www.birdcount.org/>

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 2/4 at 9:00am - Join other bird watchers for a brisk morning walk to discover the beautiful birds of Scotland Run Park.
- Nature Tots: Tuesdays at 9:00am:
 - 2/6 – Eco-music
 - 2/13 – To Nature with Love
 - 2/20 – Wiggly Worms
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 2/10 at 10:00am

Annual Optics Sale: This event actually takes place in April, however, we wanted to provide enough advance for people to set the date aside, as well as start saving money for that new pair of binoculars or spotting scope.

From the Cape May Bird Observatory:

"We will contact you again soon with more specific info on some of the great deals we'll have, but for now we just want you to mark your calendar. If you would share these dates with your members we would be most appreciative!"

New Jersey Audubon's, Cape May Bird Observatory

23rd Annual Optics Sale

April 14 & 15, 2018

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

600 Route 47 North

Cape May Court House, NJ 08210

We look forward to getting the best optics into your hands, whether it is your first binocular or scope, or an upgrade to your dream optics. Hope to see you then!"

Natural Events for the month of February

- 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.

Conservation Corner by Suzan Delozier

TWO MONARCH-FRIENDLY BILLS PASS LEGISLATURE AND SIGNED BY CHRISTIE

Two NJ state bills promoting the planting of milkweed, the only plant on which the monarch butterfly lays its eggs, were signed into law by Governor Christie early in January. Both bills were sponsored by Nilsa Cruz-Perez, a South Jersey State Senator. The first bill, S1732, titled “Adopt a Monarch Butterfly Waystation”, requires the Department of Environment Protection to create a program that will ‘utilize volunteer labor in a cooperative effort with State and local government to develop, maintain, and protect monarch butterfly waystations on State-owned land throughout the State.’ Interested persons, groups or organizations request and will be assigned state-owned land on which to develop a monarch waystation. The State will provide information and, when possible, seeds and planting material. The second bill, S1986, called “Milkweed for Monarchs” will establish a similar volunteer program to encourage milkweed planting on state-owned stormwater management basins. Each program is to be established within 180 days of the effective date of the act creating it.

GRASSLANDS — NEW JERSEY’S VANISHING LANDSCAPE

Over one-third of New Jersey’s threatened or endangered birds are dependent upon grasslands for survival. These birds include the vesper sparrow, kestrel, bobolink, meadowlark, bobwhite, grasshopper sparrow, and upland sandpiper. Grassland habitat can be defined as a meadow of grasses, forbs, and wildflowers, but other areas such as agricultural fields, pastures and airports can provide habitat for grassland birds that require large expanses of land for breeding. The most beneficial plants for grassland birds are native, warm-weather grasses like big and little bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass because they mature in the hot summer months unlike lawn, hay, and non-native pasture grasses which go dormant. Further, these grasses are clumping grasses that provide birds with cover and foraging space within the clumps and nesting room on the ground between clumps.

Unfortunately, grasslands are disappearing at an alarming rate throughout the Northeast including New Jersey. In our state, several thousand acres are lost each year to development, earlier harvesting during nesting period, monocultures, and crops of little habitat value. The Conserve Wildlife Foundation (CWF) of New Jersey has been working with farmers for the past decade to improve habitat management. One simple way to help grassland birds is to stop mowing from April through July. Another way is to plant warm-weather grasses on crop land and open fields. These grasses do not need to be watered or fertilized and they are excellent grazing crops.

CWF has launched a new effort to work with airports within our state. In fact, airports provide the only habitat left in NJ for the upland sandpiper. Management practices are extremely important as the upland sandpiper requires short grass for courtship and foraging, tall grass for nesting, and short to medium grass for rearing young. The Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst has the largest known colony of upland sandpipers and the second largest known colony of grasshopper sparrows in NJ. CWF is working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to convert hundreds of acres of airport land into habitat suitable for the upland sandpiper. Work began in the spring of 2017 and will continue for several years.

Grasslands also provide valuable habitat for bees and butterflies. Milkweed, the sole host plant for monarchs, is a grassland plant. Box turtles, field mice, turkeys, snakes, insects and bats also benefit from well managed grasslands. See <http://www.conservewildlifeni.org/> for more information on grassland birds of New Jersey.

A few NJ grassland birds:



Horned Lark



Northern Harrier



Short-eared owl



Upland sandpiper



American Kestrel



Bobolink

BIRD-SAFE BUILDINGS ACT

The American Bird Conservancy asks that we write our congressional representatives and encourage them to support the Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act S1920/HR2542 introduced into the Senate by NJ senator Cory Booker. Hundreds of millions of birds die each year in the US from collisions with glass. It is sad to think of a bird that has safely flown thousands of miles during migration dying from a window strike. Bird friendly building strategies are available and could reduce bird mortality substantially if used. The text of the bill, which goes into detail about available building material, can be found at www.congress.gov. A pre-written letter which you can sign and email to your representatives can be found at <https://abcbirds.org/action/petition-bird-safe-buildings?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=2288da57-01cb-4cee-bf4c-f55004d38972>.

OIL DRILLING IN THE ATLANTIC?

The Trump Administration has also proposed the largest expansion to date of offshore drilling in the Atlantic, Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, along with several other governors, has explicitly opposed drilling off our Atlantic Coastline. Oil spills not only harm wildlife, they devastate fishing industries and tourism. The Sierra Club reminds us that the Deep Horizon Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico damaged 1,313 miles of coastline - more than the coastline of California. The Sierra Club provides a pre-written letter you may email to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, opposing offshore drilling. The letter may be found at https://sierra.secure.force.com/actions/National?actionId=AR0099730&id=7010Z000001P3mlQAC&data=e6e80d8656b52f7bf527ceac9ae5d309f71d7db7f4d0f3f53223e713901d24969fc9bb0c09579e15c030436468f6bbb5&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sierraclub&utm_campaign=ourwildamerica&utm_content=offshore.

OIL SPILL LIABILITY TRUST FUND EXPIRES

In 1990, the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund was created by Congress to ensure funding for the Environmental Protection Agency and other first responders when dealing with oil spills. The intent of the Fund was to limit damage by these spills to local communities. For every barrel of oil sent to a refinery or imported, Big Oil contributed to the fund. Unfortunately, the trust fund program expired January 1, 2018 and has not been renewed by the Trump Administration. If you feel that the oil industry should pay to have its messes cleaned up, you may email a pre-written letter, provided by Friends of the Earth, to your senator. The letter is located at <https://us.e-activist.com/page/4308/action/1?ea.tracking.id=Email&ea.url.id=31797&forwarded=true>.

R.I.P.

Our Gloucester County Nature Club made Bird Watcher's Digest when member Jayne Rhynard wrote a letter to the editor in response to an article in noting International Vulture Awareness Day. The letter was to showcase to their readers what our small group achieved regarding this frequently misunderstood bird. So, IN MEMORIAM of the East Coast Vulture Festival (which we would be getting ready to hold next month) let's all celebrate and remember the great work this club did pulling this fun event together for 7 years, with a tip of the hat (vulture headdress) particularly to the original idea-hatchers and all those members who made it special. Take a pictorial walk down memory lane by clicking www.eastcoastvulturefestival.org. Read the letter and share your memories of our Vulture Festival and photos on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gcnatureclub/>

Looking Ahead:

Listed below are the remaining programs we have lined up for the 2017-2018 season. Meeting dates are the **second** Thursday of the month.

March 8, 2018: **Salt Marshes of Delaware Bay** - Zach Nickerson, The American Littoral Society

April 12, 2018: **Exploring the Birds of Ecuador** -:Marilyn Henry and Jeff Mollenhauer.

May 10, 2018. **Annual Plant Sale** followed by **Program: Pollinators and the Plants They Pollinate** - Joe Kiefer, Triple Oaks Nursery

June 10, 2018: **GCNC Annual Picnic** at The Village Dock Campground, Franklinville, NJ, followed by Program: **The Plight of the Bobwhite and Our Efforts to Save It** - South Jersey Quail Project

2017-2018 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the remaining 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 2018 - **Hike in Wissahickon Park, Philadelphia**

April 2018 - **Bird Quest Trainings**

May 5, 2018 - **Bird Quest**

June 15, 2018 - **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 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 February Executive Committee meeting will be held on Monday February 5th at the home of Jayne Rhynard. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.

Please remember to 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.

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