



Gloucester County Nature Club

Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

March 2011

Program – Snakes of the New Jersey Pine Barrens

Thursday, March 10 at 7:00 PM at Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah NJ

Presenter: David W. Schneider, New Jersey Regional Manager, Herpetological Associates

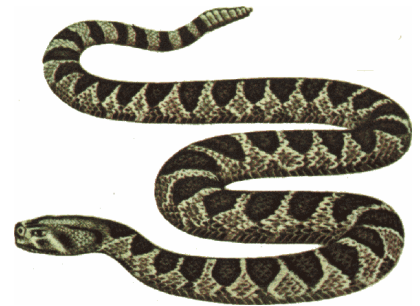
Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

*A snake, with mottles rare,
Surveyed my chamber floor,
In feature as the worm before,
But ringed with power.*

~ Emily Dickinson

Some snakes are all neck.

~ Carl Sandburg



Perhaps no group of animals has been more misunderstood and more undeservedly feared and hated than snakes. In our myths and literature the snake was the serpent who tempted Eve or writhing monsters on the head of the fearsome Medusa. The fear of snakes - ophidiophobia, is among the commonest of phobias. Yet, some cultures held snakes in high esteem as powerful religious symbols. Quetzalcoatl, the mythical "plumed serpent," was worshipped as the "Master of Life" by ancient Aztecs. Some African cultures worshipped rock pythons and considered the killing of one to be a serious crime. In Australia, the Aborigines associated a giant rainbow serpent with the creation of life.

Snakes have a remarkable evolutionary history. The earliest snakes were tiny, nearly blind fossorial (living underground) species, and fed on tiny prey like termites. Later, their descendants moved up above ground and re-evolved eyes from the vestiges of eyes left over from their ancient lizard ancestors. The over 3,000 species of snakes descended from lizards and have highly derived characters, such as a jaw that disarticulates to swallow prey larger than its own head. The forked tongue of snakes allows them to sense scents coming from each direction, giving them a stereo sense of smell.

23 species of snakes are native to New Jersey and many of these are found in the Pine Barrens. They range from the common and familiar Eastern Garter Snake and Black Rat Snake to the beautifully colored and state endangered Corn Snake, the arboreal Rough Green Snake, the state threatened Northern Pine Snake and the state endangered Timber Rattlesnake (found in both the NJ Highlands and the Pine Barrens). David Schneider has 30 years' experience with New Jersey Pine Barrens species and is an expert in the ecology of this region. Tonight David will tell us about this diverse group of reptiles, why they are important and beneficial to the natural ecology and why they are creatures to be appreciated and respected rather than feared.

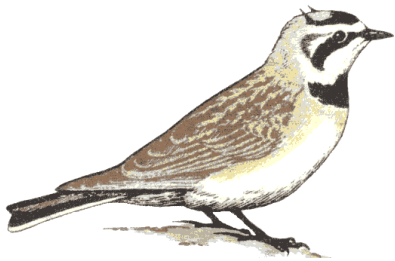
Dave is bringing *live snakes* for us to see and perhaps even touch. Don't miss this opportunity to experience a close encounter with the snakes of the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

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 – Early Spring Birding in Mannington Township, Salem County
Saturday March 12, 5:30 AM (Sunset Rd) or 7:00 AM (Woodstown Super Wawa)

Trip Leader: Jonathan Stillwell

We will start early in the morning at first light – 5:30 AM to spy a roost of local resident bald eagles awoken and fly off toward the Delaware Bay. This event can be viewed from Sunset Road off of Rt.540. Parking is limited so car pooling is encouraged.



If you don't want to get up so early, later in the morning at 7:00 AM we will meet at the Woodstown Super Wawa at Rts. 40 and 45 and continue to some of the local birding sites including Featherbed Lane and a Salem River overlook, as well as revisiting Sunset Road to view waterfowl. We will finish the morning with a walk at Marilyn Pattison's small nature preserve. With some luck we'll see Bobolinks and Horned Larks, Eagles, several species of waterfowl and a variety of hawks.

Directions: To Sunset Road; Take Exit 2B of Rt. 295. and continue 5 miles South on Rt. 540, turn Right on Sunset road and continue ½ mile to Kates Meadow and park on the South side of the road.

To the Woodstown Super Wawa, Take Rt. 45 or Swedesboro-Woodstown Road to the center of Woodstown and head West on Rt. 40/45 to the Wawa at the light with the Cemetery and the Acme. Park in the back of the building.

Information: Call 609-485-6524 during the workday or 856-848-1324 the evening before the trip or 609-202-4254 the morning of the trip.

Family Fun Walk

Monday, March 21 at 10:00 AM at Timber Creek Park, Gloucester Township

Trip Leader: Maria Keefe 856-627-7010

Email: maria_mk@comcast.net

Join us for a walk on Monday, March 21 at 10am at Timber Creek Park, Gloucester Township. ****Note this there are two parks with the same name, see the directions**** 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. All ages welcome.

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 Black Horse Pike/Rt 168. Turn left at Chews Landing Road.

The East Coast Vulture Festival Presents: The 2011 Vulture Day Children's Fair

Saturday, March 5 from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM at The Wenonah Community Center

Vulture Day Children's Fair is again coming to Wenonah to celebrate the vultures that make this quiet town their winter home. This family oriented event will transform the Community Center (the historic train station) into a "Children's Vulturefest" with hands on vulture arts & crafts, games, educational and vulture art displays, and guided walks to observe the vultures and their roost. The **Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge** will be present with a special exhibit, hosted by Refuge naturalists that will include live birds and reptiles. The Children's Fair is sponsored by the Gloucester County Nature Club and the Wenonah Environmental Commission. This event is FREE and open to the public. Everyone is welcome.

Kid's Corner - Make Watercolor Paints * by Deb Maka

Painting a picture can be a lot of fun. If you don't have any watercolor paints at home, you can make them at home using some simple ingredients that are probably already in your kitchen.

What you need:

- 3 tablespoons baking soda
- 3 tablespoons corn starch
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 & ½ teaspoons light corn syrup or glycerin
- Food coloring



What you do:

- Combine the baking soda, corn starch, white vinegar, and corn syrup
- Add a few drops of food coloring to create the color you want. Remember your color wheel: red and yellow make orange; red and blue make purple; yellow and blue make green
- Store your paint in a glass jar with a leak-proof lid

* adapted from the National Wildlife Federation website (<http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Activities/Cook-and-Craft/Make-Watercolor-Paints.aspx>)

A Word From Our New Club Treasurer

I'm Scott Barnes, the new club treasurer. Let me take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Ed Cleary, for his years of cheerful and dedicated service in this position. In addition to handling the behind-the-scenes mechanics of the club's finances, the treasurer is responsible for collecting membership dues, event registration fees, and contributions. Should you have any questions about these areas, please feel free to see me at a meeting or contact me through one of these channels:

- Email: sbarnes@ieec.org
- Phone: 856-468-4174
- Postal mail: PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ

Other Nature Notes

Events by other Organizations: March 2011

- Saturday mornings, 7:30 AM to about 9:00, **Bird Walks**. Joe Esterly is doing bird walks at Scotland Run Park, weather permitting. Walks meet at the nature center parking lot. For information phone Joe at 856-629-7626, or e-mail jde9773@aol.com.
- March 5 (Saturday) – 11:00 AM. **Winter Waterfowl at Amico Island**. Sponsored by the Burlington County Park Commission. Free, but registration is required; phone 609-265-5858. Bad weather cancels.
- March 12 (Saturday) – **Salem County Winter Waterfowl**. Leader: Jean Gutschuth. Sponsored by the Audubon Wildlife Society. For info: www.audubonwildlifesociety.org/
- March 20 (Sunday), 2:00 PM – **Walk in the Wild: First Day of Spring - What's happening here?** Sponsored by the Old Pine Farm Natural Lands Trust. Free. Experience a casual stroll on the trails of the land trust with a knowledgeable leader to observe the plants, animals, natural features and processes, and just plain magic that make this place very special. Meet in the parking area at the end of Rankin Avenue in Blackwood Terrace. For More Information call Carl Ford at 856-579-4441. We will do this on the third Sunday of each month, with a different focus each month.

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: Saturdays 3/5 and 4/2 at 8:00 AM; Tuesday 5/10 at 6:00 PM
- Nature Tots: Wednesdays 3/9, 4/13, and 5/11 at 10:00 AM
- Afternoon Nature Stroll: Wednesdays 3/16, 4/20, and 5/25 at 2:30 PM
- Family Nature Adventures: Saturdays 3/12 and 4/16 at 10:00 AM
- “Fresh Air” After School Program: Every Thursday starting 3/3 from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM (except 5/12 and 5/19)
- 4H Kids Nature Club: Saturdays 3/5 and 4/2 at 10:30am
- Environmental Workshops for Teachers
 - Growing Up Wild, Tuesday 3/8 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM
 - Aquatic Project Wild, Friday 4/15 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
- Performers in the Park: Every Tuesday starting 3/15 from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM (except 4/26 and 5/31)
- Scout Saturday: Saturdays 4/30 and 5/21 at 10:00 AM
- Frog Song Night Walk: Thursday 5/19 at 7:00 PM

Natural Events for the month of March

- Woodchucks emerge from hibernation.
- Male skunks wander widely, searching for mates.
- Red maples flower in late March, with male and female flowers on separate trees.
- Roadside "weeds" such as speedwell, wintercress, hairy bittercress, purple dead-nettle, and storksbill bloom before most native wildflowers.
- Eastern screech owls, New Jersey's most common owl, lay eggs beginning in March and continue through May.
- Woodcocks begin courtship flights.
- Male goldfinches begin to molt into their brilliant yellow breeding plumage.
- Eastern Phoebes return this month.
- Nature Club members come out of hibernation to embrace the spring. ☺

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.



Looking Ahead:

Upcoming GCNC Programs

April 14, 2011: **TBD**

May 12, 2011: **Landscaping With Native Plants** - Alan Koch, Landscape Architect

June 9, 2011: **Annual Picnic plus "Cargo For Conservation"**. Location TBD.

2010-2011 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the next season. Changes and additions are not impossible. If you would be able and willing to lead an additional field trip, please contact Karl Anderson at karlanderson6@aol.com or 856-845-7075.

April 16 (Saturday) – **Biking Along the Delaware** - Brian Hayes

April & May – **Bird Quest Training Sessions**

May 7 (Saturday) – **Bird Quest 2011**

June – **To be determined.**

Gloucester County Nature columns on the Gloucester County Times website

A collection of past Gloucester County Nature columns can be viewed on the Gloucester County Times website at: http://www.nj.com/gloucester/voices/index.ssf/gloucester_county_nature_club/index.html.

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 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 sharkeyes@comcast.net or GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15th of the preceding month.
- The March Executive Committee meeting will be held on March 6th at the home of Jayne Rhynard. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.