



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

March 2017

Program - Vulture Culture: A Face Only a Mother Could Love

Thursday, March 9, 2017 at 7:00pm at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ

Presenter: Jane Morton Galetto, President, Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

Let us praise the noble turkey vulture. No one envies him; he harms nobody; and he contemplates our little world from a most serene and noble height.

~Edward Abbey.

V is for vulture, a carrion crow

Ugly to look at, this scavenger low.

~Anonymous



Vultures are no strangers to many members of the Gloucester County Nature Club. From 2006 to 2012 the GCNC, along with the Wenonah Environmental Commission, sponsored the East Coast Vulture Festival. These birds, who roost communally during the winter months, are a common sight in our region. Almost the size of eagles, they can be seen sailing gracefully in the sky or gathering in trees, and on rooftops and water towers. Few birds have stirred more controversy in the communities where they congregate, yet these harmless scavengers perform an important role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem that benefits us all.

There are two vulture species native to eastern North America, the turkey vulture and the black vulture. Both are members of the New World Vulture family, which also includes three other vulture species native to Mexico and South America and the California and Andean condors. Black and turkey vultures will often roost together. Turkey vultures are such adept fliers that they can travel great distances while seldom flapping their wings. They have keen eyesight and a highly developed sense of smell, and use both to locate food. They also have some rather unusual behaviors such as urohydrolysis (urinating on their legs) and projectile vomiting to escape a predator.

Come join us and enjoy Jane Morton Galetto's offbeat presentation style of Vulture Culture. Jane is renowned for her thoroughly-researched scholarly, yet humorous, presentations on wildlife native to our region. This one covers the natural and cultural history of vultures, with focus on the turkey vulture. Here is Jane's description: "Different" One thing is for sure - it will give us a new perspective on vultures.

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 – Crystal Lake Park, Burlington County

Sunday, March 12, 2017, 9:30 am to noon

Trip Leader: Erik and Kris Mollenhauer

Our March field trip is to Crystal Lake Park, Burlington County. Meet at the park, at 9:30 am. Crystal Lake is a large (370 acre) Burlington County Park. It has large areas of upland and lowland forest, a lake, some wetlands and lots of trails. We will do a one to two mile easy hike, looking for signs of spring and learning about the trees in our lives. Bring binoculars and a snack and/or picnic lunch and water. Follow directions below.

Directions: Take I-295 north to Exit 47A (Rte 541). Go west on 541 and in about a half mile, bear right onto Burlington Bypass road... across from the large shopping center on left. Continue on Bypass til you intersect Fountain Avenue. Turn right and go past Burlington Township High School. Continue straight, go over Jacksonville Road. Fountain Ave now becomes Old York Rd. Follow that one road about 6-7 miles north... (go over Columbus Rd... under I-276... over Kinkora Road). A mile past Kinkora Rd, Crystal Lake Park is on your left. Turn slight left off Old York Rd onto Axe Factory Rd and then quickly turn left onto the park entrance driveway. Follow to the bathroom parking lot. Yes there is a bathroom. We will meet there at 9:30 am. The park address is 2401 Axe Factory Rd, Bordentown, NJbut you **MUST** approach the park entrance **FROM THE SOUTH**. Do **NOT** allow your GPS to take you to Bordentown**NORTH** of the park. You cannot access the park entrance from the north. . Driving time is about 50 minutes from the Gloucester County area.

2017 Gloucester County Bird Quest: Saturday May 6, 2017



The Gloucester County Nature Club and co-sponsors invite people of all ages to participate in the **2017 (18th annual) Gloucester County Bird Quest**. This year Bird Quest will take place on **Sat. May 6, 2017 from 7 AM to 12 noon throughout Gloucester County**.

We are pleased to return to Scotland Run Park (Wilson Lake) in Clayton for our picnic and gathering. We hope to reach new families and continue to excite our legacy participants with a wonderful setting for our picnic. Scotland Run Park is located at 980 West Academy St., Clayton, NJ 08312 (directions below).

See the separate enrollment form on BirdQuest flyer

During this time, teams visit parks and natural sites in Gloucester County to find as many different bird species as they can. The Quest is:

- A way to discover Gloucester County's parks and natural areas
- A way to discover the unique birds that live in and through our county
- An opportunity to learn how to identify birds by sight, sound, behavior, and habitat
- An opportunity to have fun with family, friends, and colleagues
- A light-hearted competition

The Quest is an educational event: novices are encouraged to participate.

How it works: Teams have 5 hours on Saturday (7am to noon) to visit sites in Gloucester County. Birds are identified by sight or sound. The goal is to find as many different species of birds as possible. At noon, all participants gather at **Scotland Run Park in Clayton** to report results and for **(free) lunch, t-shirts, live bird show, owl interpretive center, and prizes**.

You can participate in one of the following ways:

- Form a team, plan your route (locations you will visit) for the day of the event and record all the bird species you see within Gloucester County. Hand in your results at Scotland Run by 12:30pm to be eligible for prizes.
- Join one of the buses led by a bird expert. These buses will visit a few locations in the County where bird experts will help you to identify the many bird species. The buses will meet back at Scotland Run Park at 12:30pm.
- Join one of three guided walks, each lasting between an hour and an hour and a half, in various natural places in Gloucester County lead by a bird expert who will help you identify the bird species present. These walks will be paced and placed so you can participate in all of the walks or just one or two while you spend the rest of the time birding on your own. Hand in your results at Scotland Run Park at 12:30pm to be eligible for prizes.
 - 7:00-8:45: Tall Pines Preserve (Maple Ridge): From the intersection of Rt 553 (Woodbury-Glassboro Rd) and Mantua Ave in Wenonah (and Holy Nativity Lutheran Church), travel .75 mile south on Rt 553 to the intersection with Bark Bridge Rd. Turn right onto Bark Bridge Rd then in 200ft turn left into the parking lot, meet there. There are no bathrooms at Tall Pines
 - 9:30-11:15: Glassboro Wildlife Management Area: Meet at Carpenter Ave in Clayton. From the Intersection of 322 and Route 47 (Delsea Drive), take RT 47 South into Clayton. Make a left onto Carpenter Ave – about 1.6 miles south of Route 322. Meet in the parking / turn around area where the road turns to dirt.
 - 11:30-12:30: Scotland Run Park (also the picnic location): From Route 55 take exit 45 and proceed North on Route 553/ Buck Road. After 1.2 miles turn Right on CR 610/ Clayton-Aura Road. Continue on CR 610 for 3.8 miles. After the traffic light at Fries Mill Road, turn left into the parking lot for Scotland Run Park. You will meet in the bluebird field adjacent to the parking lot.

Last year's Gloucester County Bird Quest attracted participants from across the county organized in teams representing schools, scout troops, environmental commissions, families and friends. Each year the Club holds pre-Quest field and classroom trainings, attracting 15-30 persons each, in which local experts help new birders learn to identify birds by sight, sound, behavior, and habitat. The winning team in 2016 located 109 species in 5 hours!!! A tremendous effort when you consider all teams saw a total of 151 species but everyone was a winner because of how much they learned about birds and the natural areas of Gloucester County through this fun, educational event.

This year we have developed educational materials including a Quest t-shirt with original artwork featuring a blue jay in an oak tree holding an acorn which we are using to discuss the old connection between Jays and oaks, birds and forests. Participants will learn about the importance of forests for some bird populations and the many unseen aspects of a forest that help birds thrive. These materials will have lasting educational value for teachers, students, and the general public. Live birds, including owls, will be at the park. **The \$15 fee per participant helps to defray the cost of lunch, T-shirts, prizes etc.**

More information and registration forms are posted to the Gloucester County Nature Club's website at www.gcnatureclub.org. For more information, join a team or reserve a seat on the bus, contact Brian Hayes at bkhayesoutdoors@gmail.com or 856.649.8723.

Participants are encouraged to attend any of a series of free field trainings in the evenings, mornings and weekends before the Quest. Training sessions are listed at the end of this newsletter.

Nature Notes

Events by other Organizations: March 2017

- March 14, 2017 (Tuesday), 6:00pm - **Annual South Jersey Land & Water Trust Fundraising Dinner** at Auletto's Caterers (1849 Cooper St., Deptford Township, NJ, 08096. Tickets are \$40 each, which includes a delicious Italian dinner. Tickets may be purchased online at www.sjlandwater.org/event-directory or by mailing a check with "Annual Dinner" in the memo line to 21 Main St. Swedesboro, NJ 08085. The evening will feature a delicious Italian dinner by Auletto's Caterers, an introduction to the Land Trust and its successes over the past 25 years, and a silent auction of fine art pieces donated by dozens of local artists and artisans. Art pieces include handmade jewelry and ceramics, paintings, drawings, photographs and mixed media artwork in a range of styles. All proceeds from the evening will fund SJLWT's ongoing work in land preservation, watershed assessments, volunteer training, open space stewardship, natural resource conservation and education about South Jersey's cultural, historical, and natural treasures.

The following events are also sponsored by the South Jersey Land & Water Trust. Maps, directions, and more information can be found at www.sjlandwater.org/event-directory.

- Pinelands Short Course: Saturday 3/11 at Stockton University
- Vernal Pool Walk in the Woods at Wharton State Forest: Saturday 3/18 from 10:00am - 1:00pm (meet at Atsion Mansion, \$3 per nonmember)
- Spring Workday at Oldmans Creek Preserve: Sunday 3/19 at 9:00am, 21 Main St./Auburn-Pointers Rd., Swedesboro, NJ 08085 (FREE)
- Community Cleanup at Laurel Ravine: Saturday 3/25 at 10:00am (meet near the intersection of Winding Way Rd. and Timber Creek Rd. in Stratford, NJ, (FREE)
- Table at MOM's Organic Market in Cherry Hill: Wednesday 3/29 from 4-7 pm (1631 Kings Hwy N. Cherry Hill, NJ 08034)
- Spring Workday at Oldmans Creek Preserve: Sunday 4/2 at 9:00am, 21 Main St./Auburn-Pointers Rd., Swedesboro, NJ 08085 (FREE)

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 3/4 at 9:00am
- Nature Tots – Windy!: Tuesday 3/7 at 10:30am
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 3/11 at 10:00am
- Nature Tots - Green Walk: Tuesday 3/14 at 10:30am
- Nature Tots - Could it be Spring? Tuesday 3/21 at 10:30am
- Nature Tots - April Fool You: Tuesday 3/28 at 10:30am

The Long Beach Island Foundation, 120 Long Beach Blvd, Loveladies, NJ, 08008 hosts **Science Saturday** programs from January through April. For details and to register for programs, call the foundation at (609) 494-1241 or see www.LBIfoundation.org. All events are free for members and \$5 for non-members.

- Saturday 3/4, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm: **The Salt Marshes of Barnegat Bay - A Walk & Talk Presentation**
- Saturday 3/11, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm **Beaches**
- Saturday 3/18, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm: **Raptors of New Jersey**
- Saturday 3/25, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm **Fossils: Natures Time Machine with Scientific Social**

Conservation Corner by Suzan Delozier

NEW WEBSITE DEDICATED TO THE KIRKWOOD-COHANSEY AQUIFER

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance has created a website, <http://savethesource.org/>, as part of a 'Save the Source' campaign to protect the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer which contains 17 trillion gallons of fresh water beneath 80% of South Jersey and all of the Pinelands. Through this campaign, the PPA hopes to draw attention to the aquifer and encourage strengthening of the laws protecting the pines. Check out the site. If you choose to sign up, the PPA will keep you updated about news affecting the aquifer.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT THREATENED

The American Bird Conservancy reports that key members of environmental committees in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have made weakening of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) a top priority. In last month's newsletter, the success of the ESA was discussed – it has saved more than 90% of the species it protects. Please consider signing the following petition which the American Bird Conservancy plans to present to members of Congress on Earth Day.

https://secure2.convio.net/abcb/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=290&_ga=1.127930377.409684368.1475874486

LEDs and LIGHT POLLUTION

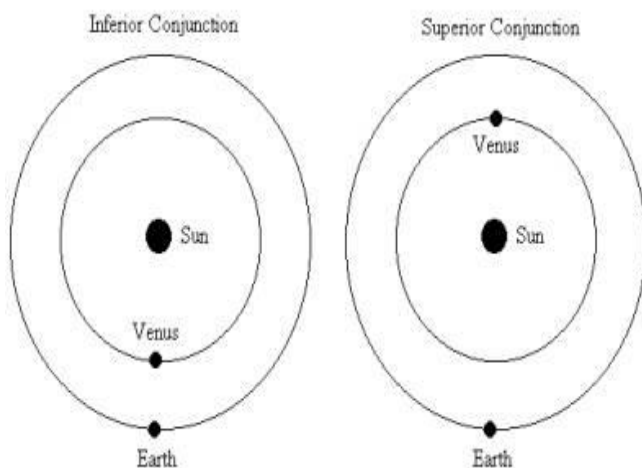
Anyone who has looked up at the night sky over the years knows that light pollution has increasingly obscured the stars to a point where only the brighter magnitude stars are visible (see May 2016 newsletter for a discussion of light pollution's effects on humans and animals). The director of the Kitt Peak National Observatory near Tucson states that even in areas where the value of dark skies has been appreciated, the conversion from low or high pressure sodium streetlights to LEDs could be a giant step backwards. The blue-rich light of LEDs increases glare which inhibits vision, has a greater spread than light with less blue which means light will intrude on areas not meant to be lit, and, according to the AMA, there is growing evidence that this light is harmful to people.

The American Astronomical Society held a workshop recently to identify ways to minimize the effect of the blue-rich light emitted by LEDs. They identified three factors affecting light pollution: (1) shielding – all fixtures should direct the light downwards, (2) brightness – dimmer lights result in less peripheral light spread, and (3) color temperature of the light. The color temperature of outdoor LED lights should be 3000K or less (color temperature is measured in degrees Kelvin and indicates the part of the color spectrum that is found in the light). The blue-rich light of 4000K LEDs emits the strong blue light that is harsh in appearance and produces the problems mentioned above.

On a promising note, Lowell Observatory and the city of Flagstaff are working on a plan to deal with artificial light. Hopefully this effort will serve as a model for other communities to use.

Sources: <http://darksky.org/category/light-pollution-2/> and

http://www.eaglelight.com/category/lighting_tutorials.color_temperature/



MORNING and EVENING WITH VENUS

When the orbit of Venus places the planet between the earth and the sun, an inferior conjunction occurs. Every eight years, Venus passes as much as 8 degrees north of the sun (from our point of view) during this conjunction giving us a rare observing opportunity.

From December until present, Venus has been the evening star but in recent weeks has been dropping rapidly in the sky. On March 25 it will be in inferior conjunction with its dark side facing us. But, because of those 8 degrees, for 10 days prior to the conjunction we on earth will be able to observe Venus as both the evening and morning star. For example, on March 22, Venus sets 30 minutes after the sun but rises 33 minutes before the sun on March 23. Can you try to see Venus at the start and finish of the same night? Or try to catch it in the morning and evening of the same day? Looking at the diagram, we can see that, like our moon, Venus goes through phases. As March progresses and Venus approaches inferior conjunction, more and more of Venus' dark side faces us and Venus appears in binoculars or a small telescope as a thinner and thinner crescent (waning). As Venus approaches superior conjunction, it appears more and more as a round disk (waxing). See March issue of Sky and Telescope magazine for more information. And, by the way, Mercury becomes visible in the west around the evening of March 15 for its best apparition of the year. One last astronomical event – the spring equinox occurs 6:29 AM EDT on March 20th.



PERENNIAL OF THE YEAR

The Perennial Plant Association has chosen native plant *Asclepias tuberosa*, also known as butterfly weed, as the “Perennial of the Year” for 2017. This is good news for monarch butterflies since butterfly weed is a milkweed and thus serves as a host plant for monarch caterpillars. Being given this honor often propels a plant into mainstream attention and makes it more readily available to the public. The more gardens with milkweed, the better for the monarch. The loss of milkweed in the monarch's spring and summer breeding areas (due mainly to pesticides and habitat loss) is the major factor in the drastic decline of the butterfly. Other milkweeds native to our area include *Asclepia incarnata* – swamp milkweed and *Asclepia syriaca* – common milkweed. Please consider planting these in your garden. For more info see <http://www.xerces.org/milkweed/>.

Looking Ahead:

Listed below are the programs we have lined up for the remainder of the club year. Meeting dates are the **second** Thursday of the month.

April 13, 2017: **Birds of Gloucester County and Tips on Photographing Them** - Dennis DiMarco & Marilyn Henry

May 11, 2017: **Annual Plant Sale (6:00pm)** and **Program: A Green Legacy: John Burroughs and the Catskill Mts (6:45pm)** - Erik Mollenhauer

June 8, 2017: **Annual Picnic (6:00pm) at Alcyon Park, Pitman, NJ** followed by **Program: Surfskis, Outrigger Canoes, Kayaks, Lifejackets, Rescue Throw bags, Paddles - Up Close & Personal** - Glen Forest Green, P.E., U.S. Canoe Assoc. Safety Committee Chairman

2016-2017 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the remainder of the club year. 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.

April 2017 - **BirdQuest Training Sessions**

May 6, 2017 - **BirdQuest**

June 10, 2017 - **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 March Executive Committee meeting will be held on March 5 at the home of Elaine Dzeima.

Bird Quest Training Sessions 2017 **Please note that there are AM and PM sessions!**

April 20 (Thursday) 6 - 7:30 P.M.

Old Pine Natural Lands Trust
400 Rankin Ave., Deptford, NJ 08096

Open views of the water provide good opportunity for sighting water birds like ducks, herons, red wing blackbirds and mergansers. Wooded section could produce woodpeckers, nuthatches, warblers, chickadees, and tufted titmouse. *Directions: Access from Good Intent road (Rt.534), turn onto Rankin Ave. Follow to end and park. Walk down woods road to the Big Timber Creek.*

Leaders: Ed & Millie Cleary

April 22 (Saturday) 7:30 - 9 A.M.

Greenwich Lake Park
Tomlin Station Road, Gibbstown, NJ 08027

The paved and unpaved trails here explore various habitats and wind past lagoons and waterways that drain eventually into the Delaware River. In spring, look for Green Herons among the reeds and emergent vegetation in the small ponds and along the banks of the lake. Listen for the song of Yellow Warbler among other migrants. *Directions: Meet in the main parking lot.*

Leaders: Jayne Rhynard and Marilyn Henry

April 23 (Sunday) 6 - 7:30 P.M. Birding Basics.

Alcyon Lake Park
Track Ave. Pitman, NJ 08071 (off W. Holly Avenue)

Learn the basics of good birding and the tools of the trade. Discover the world of birding from bird guides to binoculars, birding etiquette to bird song and of course bird identification. Any level of interest is welcome. Questions are encouraged. A walk around the park will let you use your newfound —or refreshed — skills. *Directions: Drive past sports fields; meet at the pavilion.*

Leaders: Rich Dilks, Mike and Suzan DeLozier

April 24 (Monday) 6:30 - 8 P.M. Birding by Ear - Part 1

“An Introduction to Birdcalls”

Wenonah Lake
W. Maple St., Wenonah, NJ 08090

Learn mnemonics and “tricks of the trade” to identify birds by their songs and calls. This is a great session for novices and those that would like to brush-up on their “Birding by Ear” skills. *Directions: Meet in the parking lot.*

Leaders: Brian Hayes and Jeff Mollenhauer

April 25 (Tuesday) 7 - 8:30 A.M.

Tall Pines State Preserve
Bark Bridge Rd., Sewell, NJ 08080

Newly preserved by the state, this former golf course has ponds, marsh and wetlands, and patches of eastern hardwood forest. More than seventy species of birds, including the Bald Eagle, a rare albino Red Tail Hawk and eleven species of warblers, have been identified here. *Directions: From Rt. 553 (Woodbury-Glassboro Rd) turn west onto Bark Bridge Rd. Park in the lot on the left. Please do not park at Hutchinson Cabinets.*

Leaders: Rich Dilks and Erik Mollenhauer

April 27 (Thursday) 6 - 7:30 P.M. Junior Birding

Red Bank Battlefield Park

100 Hessian Avenue National Park, 08063

This field trip is designed to introduce young birders to the "sport." Binoculars to borrow will be available to all participants on this trip. As they enjoy all the birds, young birders will be shown how to locate and identify birds through binoculars and in field guides. This is a great first field trip for a child that is interested in birding. Depending on the age and size of the group of the birders we can divide the group by age or ability. This trip will be designed to be fun and engage children with the goal of introducing them to the activity. However, any level of interest is welcome. Questions are encouraged. *Directions: Meet at the pavilion closest to the river.*

Leaders: Paula Hayes and Maria Keefe

April 28 (Friday) 7 – 8:30 A.M.

Ceres Park Nature Preserve

Main Street/Alternate Route 553, Mantua Township, 08080

Learn your woodland birds like wood thrush, scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds, water thrush, black and white warblers, and pine warblers. Birds will be identified by sound, sight or both. *Directions: Meet in the Main Street parking lot.*

Leaders: Barry Bengel and Jayne Rhynard

April 29 (Saturday) 7:30 – 9 A.M.

Chestnut Branch Park

545 Main Street, Mantua, NJ 08051

Find the hidden habitat in any location. This multiple use park has some great birding spots around and among the ball fields. Find species that like the edge like indigo buntings, mockingbirds, and yellow-rump warblers.

Directions: Meet at the wildflower garden, beyond the basketball courts.

Leaders: Bob Duke and Jay Hoffecker

April 30 (Sunday) 7:00 - 8:30 A.M.

Scotland Run Park

980 E Academy St, Clayton, NJ 08312

In the largest of the county parks, Warblers and other song birds are abundant and conspicuous in the spring. Look for Prairie Warbler, Ovenbird, Eastern Bluebird, Field Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, and Louisiana Water thrush, among others. *Directions: Meet in the parking lot on the lake side of Academy St.*

Leaders: Ron and Linda Kegel

May 1 (Monday) 6– 7:30 P.M. Birding by Ear - Part 2

“To Pish or Not to Pish, That is the Question.”

Jack Sheppard Community Center (historic train station)

E. Mantua Ave & N. East Ave, Wenonah, NJ 08090

In a classroom setting, continue to learn mnemonics and “tricks of the trade” to identify birds by their songs and calls. Learn about Pishing - What is it? Who does it? Is it right for you?

Leaders: Brian Hayes and Jeff Mollenhauer

May 3 (Wednesday) 6 - 7:30 P.M.

Wheelabrator Refuge

600 Crown Point Rd, Westville, 08093

At the intersection of the Delaware River and Big Timber Creek, the wide-open space behind the Wheelabrator plant is great habitat for swamp, meadow and river birds. Trails and old roads make access easy. Bob White can be heard here.

Directions: Access from Rt. 130 (Crown Point Rd,) opposite Hazel Ave in Westville, just south of Big Timber Creek. Meet at the pavilion in parking lot.

Leaders: Kris Mollenhauer and Marilyn Henry

May 4 (Thursday) 6 - 7:30 P.M.

RiverWinds Park

1000 Riverwinds Drive, Thorofare, NJ 08086

Riverside shrubs and forested areas along the Delaware River make for great birding here. Start at the West Deptford Scenic Trail and, if time allows, continue along the Delaware River. Look for migrating warblers, scarlet tanagers, hawks and maybe a bald eagle! *Directions: Turn left onto RiverWinds Drive. Go approx. 1000 ft, then turn right at the trail sign.*

Leaders: Gary Lizzi and Gale Cannon