



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public.

March 2018

Program - Salt Marshes of Delaware Bay

Thursday, March 8, 2018 at 7:00pm at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ (directions below)

Presenter: Zach Nickerson, Education Outreach Coordinator, American Littoral Society

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

Salt marshes are one of the most productive ecosystems on earth. As such, they provide real and measurable environmental, social, and economic benefits. Salt marshes act as nurseries for commercially and recreationally important shell and fin fisheries provide habitat and food sources for birds and other wildlife; protect coastal areas from flooding and storm surges; and provide educational and recreational opportunities. Salt marshes also play a role in estuarine health by aiding in nutrient attenuation and cycling, water quality improvement, shoreline stabilization, and mitigation for climate change and sea level rise.

Come learn about the Thompson's Beach salt marsh restoration project, which seeks to mitigate human impacts, increase resilience to future sea level rise and how this biome is an integral part of the Delaware Bayshore region.

Born and raised in South Jersey, Zach Nickerson received his bachelor's degree in political science in 2011 and spent two years as the AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador for the Cape May watershed. Zach joined the Littoral Society in the fall of 2015 as the Education Outreach Coordinator for the Delaware Bay office, where he is currently working on increasing student involvement in the society's restoration work through a new program to grow Spartina grass in classrooms, taking students on field trips to our restoration sites, and increasing volunteer participation in our horseshoe crab tagging and oyster reef restoration programs.

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 – Riverwinds Scenic Trail

Tuesday, March 20 at 6:00pm

Trip Leaders - Paula Hayes and Maria Keefe 609-315-4759 MariaMK19@comcast.net

Come take a walk with us to welcome spring on the vernal equinox, at the West Deptford Scenic Park, West Deptford. Today the sun crosses the celestial equator as the Earth's tilt shifts so the northern hemisphere is towards the sun and the days become longer than the nights. We will look for signs of new life, budding trees, singing birds, and buzzing insects as we take a leisurely stroll in this pretty part of Gloucester County. All ages are welcome. Dress in layers according to the weather. Bring your sense of adventure and join us for an evening outdoors.

Directions: From Exit 21 on I-295, take Delaware Avenue west. In about 0.4 mile, cross Grove Street. Continue for another 0.3 mile, on what is then called Riverwinds Drive. Watch for a sign to the trail, on the right. Meet in the parking lot.

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.

2018 Gloucester County Bird Quest: Saturday May 5, 2018

The Gloucester County Nature Club and co-sponsors invite people of all ages to participate in the **2018 (19th annual) Gloucester County Bird Quest**. This year Bird Quest will take place on **Sat. May 5, 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 East Academy St., Clayton, NJ 08312 (directions below).

See the separate enrollment form

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, educational material, 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 lead 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.
 - 7:00-9:15: 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
 - 9:45-11:15: 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 2017 located 102 species in 5 hours!!! A wonderful effort when you consider all teams saw a total of 128 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 the Bald Eagle, the symbol of our nation and a great conservation success story. We will provide educational materials on conservation success. These materials will have lasting educational value for teachers, students, and the general public. **The \$15 fee per participant helps to defray the cost of lunch, T-shirts, prizes etc.**

More information and registration forms will be 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 near the end of this newsletter.

Events by other Organizations: March 2018

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 3/3 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:
 - 3/6 – Windy
 - 3/13 – Green Walk
 - 3/20 – Could it be Spring?
 - 3/27 – Eggs
- Scout Saturday: Saturday 3/10 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 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.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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.

According to High Country News (<http://www.hcn.org/articles/energy-and-industry-16-environmental-protections-the-trump-administration-cut-in-2017>), during 2017, the Trump Administration has attempted to roll back 16 major environmental protections put in place by the Obama Administration. These roll-backs include but are not limited to the following:

- Cutting back protections for national monuments and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (see Jan 2018 newsletter)
- Proposing to rescind the clean water rule that protects navigable waterways and adjoining wetlands from being filled in, ditched or diverted
- Suspending the BLM and EPA Methane Rules which limit the amount of methane released by oil and gas wells
- Repealing the Clean Power Plan, a regulation intended to reduce greenhouse gases
- Revoking rules that blocked the building of Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines
- Withdrawing protections against drilling along US coastlines (see Feb 2018 newsletter)
- Ending policies that required the consideration of the cost of climate change to future generations when analyzing the impact of government action
- Revoking a rule requiring consideration of storm water rise and surges when designing infrastructure in flood-prone areas

A non-Obama regulation, The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund also was recently allowed to expire by the Trump Administration (see Feb 2018 newsletter). Now, most recently, the administration has reinterpreted the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and limited its ability to protect birds.

THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT

In 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was signed into law making it one of the oldest wildlife protection laws in the world and one of the first major victories for the National Audubon Society. At the time of its passage it codified a treaty we already had with Canada protecting species near extinction. Over the years, we have extended its protected area through treaties with Japan, Mexico, and Russia. The MBTA states *“that it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, sell, purchase, barter, import, export, or transport any migratory bird, or any part, nest, or egg or any such bird, unless authorized under a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior.”*

Today, birds face relatively new dangers from wind turbines, high-tension lines, and communications towers. They also land on uncovered oil waste pits. Industries must apply for permits to cover a level of incidental deaths and if they exceed that level they must pay a fine. (Incidental refers to deaths that occur due to legal activities) When a company fails to protect birds, MBTA provides an enforcement tool as well as an incentive to implement best practices. To limit incidental take, many oil and power companies have devised new technologies to protect birds. As a result of MBTA, many oil companies now store their waste in closed tanks or put nets over their pits. Fishing boats now weigh down their lines so they descend quickly into the water noticeably decreasing the numbers of albatross, petrels and other seabirds taken. Communication towers now use flashing lights instead of steady red lights which attract warblers. And wind companies are experimenting with new windmill designs.

In December 2017, the Trump Administration announced a new interpretation of the MBTA eliminating penalties for incidental bird deaths that were not 'intentional'. If these changes go through, BP would never have been liable for killing a million birds during the Deepwater Horizon debacle. American taxpayers will be totally responsible for cleaning the oil-covered birds. Only the purposeful taking of an eagle's egg or the shooting of a crane would be prosecuted. For decades industry has had an incentive to cooperate with the federal government in minimizing bird deaths. That incentive is being eliminated.

Millions of birds are dying every year due to glass windows (see Feb 2018 newsletter), power lines, communication towers, and oil pits. Without these protections, millions more will die. The House Committee on Natural Resources approved a bill (HR4239) that will gut the MBTA as described above. You may go to the National Audubon Society webpage act.audubon.org/onlineactions/X2eSSqGMfEuGvlpUrOZ7mQ2?ms=policy-adv-web-website_nas-engagementcard-20171109_mbtalert and send a letter to your representative telling him to vote NO on this bill. You may also go to the American Bird Conservancy website abcbirds.org/action/petition-mbta and send a letter with the same message to Trump and Interior Secretary Zinke.

Sources: abcbirds.org/, audubon.org/news/the-migratory-bird-treaty-act-explained, npr.org/sections/twotwo-way/2017/12/27/573845851/accidentally-killing-birds-isnt-a-crime-says-trump-administration, fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations/laws-legislations/migratory-bird-treaty-act.php, hcn.org/articles/dc-dispatch-interior-cancels-decades-old-protections-for-migratory-birds/, <https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/blog/2018/01/18/migratory-bird-treaty-act-threat/>

Alphabetical listing of birds protected by MBTA fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/migratory-bird-treaty-act-protected-species.php

Migratory Bird Treaty Act fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/MIGTREA.HTML

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.

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

2018 GCNC Field Trips

Listed below are the remaining field trips we have lined up for the 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.

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 March Executive Committee meeting will be held on Sunday March 4th at the home of Barry Bengel. 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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