



Gloucester County Nature Club Monthly Newsletter

www.gcnatureclub.org

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

March 2022

The Gloucester County Nature Club Resumes Live Programs

Thursday, March 10 at 7:00 PM

The GCNC is pleased to announce that, after presenting virtual programs over this past winter, we are resuming live, in person programs with our March 10 meeting. The health and safety of our members and guests are of paramount importance. In order that we may gather together safely, we have instituted the following procedures in strict accordance with the CDC guidelines:

- Attendance is limited to vaccinated individuals only.
- Face masks should be worn by all attendees.
- Seating will be arranged so that attendees will be socially distanced.

We welcome back our many members, friends and guests, and we look forward to many exciting programs and gatherings to come.

Program: My Year in the Antarctic in 1962

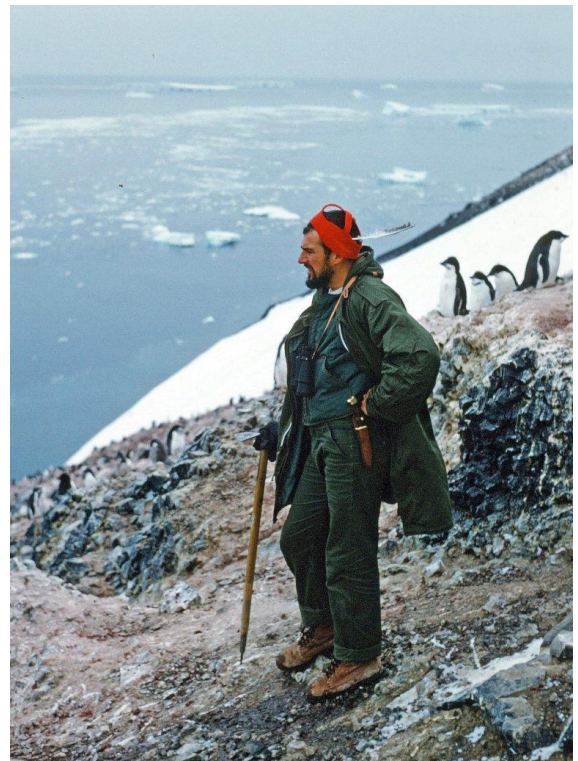
**Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 7:00 P.M. at the Holy Nativity Lutheran Church, Wenonah, NJ
(directions below)**

Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks 856-468-6342

Presenters: Elwood and Scott Barnes

Elwood Barnes grew up on a dairy farm in Maryland, gaining an early appreciation for both animal life and science. After four years in the Air Force, he obtained degrees in physics at the University of Maryland and in electrical engineering at Penn State. Now retired from a research career in the electronics industry, he remains curious about the many mysteries of the world that are yet to be understood or solved. Scott Barnes is his son and collaborator for this presentation.

Come visit a remote Antarctic outpost populated by penguins, seals, seabirds, and a few intrepid scientists as it existed 60 years ago.



Antarctica is truly a No Man's Land. In 1959, an international treaty suspended all territorial claims, permitted only peaceful activities, and required the free exchange of scientific data. It was in this environment that Elwood Barnes had a unique opportunity to live and work for a year at the then-new Hallett Station, a joint U. S. - New Zealand facility built both to provide aviation weather data and to conduct geophysical research.

Living at the station involved isolation from most of human society for months at a time. In 1962, there were no communication satellites and no Internet. Planes could not safely land during the cold and 24-hour darkness of winter. And bulk supplies could only be brought in by ship with the assistance of icebreakers during the summer.

The isolation was counterbalanced by the natural beauty of Cape Hallett and its creatures. Like most of Antarctica, there were no land animals and only a few tiny insects. But there was abundant sea life, including nesting Adélie penguins, Emperor penguins, seals, killer whales, and skuas. Stark white glaciers punctuated the skyline. Bright starlight and Aurora Australis meant it was never completely dark when the sun was absent.

Through pictures, 16mm film clips, and personal recollections this special place will come back to life in the present day.

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).

Save the Date!

Saturday May 7, 2022 - Gloucester County Bird Quest

While the format is not yet finalized, this year's 22nd Annual Gloucester County Bird Quest will be held on Saturday May 7th. The details will be published in the April newsletter.

June 25, 2022 - Gloucester County Firefly Festival

This year's Gloucester County Firefly Festival will be held at Tall Pines Preserve on Saturday, June 25th at 8:00 pm. The details will be in the May and June newsletters.

The Big Year Eco-Challenge: Update

The 2021 *Big Year Eco-Challenge* officially came to a close this past December 31, as teams of volunteers did their final postings of species on iNaturalist. So ended a year-long effort to identify all species that frequent seven sites including five here in Gloucester County: Ceres Park, Elephant Swamp Trail [in Elmer], Piney Hollow, RiverWinds and Tall Pines State Preserve. The project was successful by various measures including: the number of people who participated (34)... the number of species identified (several sites/teams had over 1,000 species)... the amount of knowledge gained by participants (phenomenal)... and prospects that The Big Year concept will be used in other places (see below).

Over 1,000 species of plants and animals were identified at Ceres Park, Elephant Swamp and RiverWinds. Species totals at Tall Pines and Piney Hollow were short of 1,000 but no less impressive. Over the past two months, several Big Year participants... Karl Anderson, Rich Dilks and Joe Arsenault... have been analyzing their site data to see what larger lessons can be learned.

Jeff Mollenhauer, the Big Year's Principal Investigator, has been analyzing data across all sites. He is also preparing a written guide that will be available at no cost to groups of people who want to conduct a *Big Year Eco-Challenge* elsewhere. The Big Year concept could be used in preserved parks or to areas that might be considered for preservation. And there's no reason *The Back Yard Bird Count* couldn't have a twin called *The Back Yard Big Year*!

An 18-minute film about *The Big Year Eco-Challenge* is currently in the final stages of production. When finished, that film will be available at no cost to interested people. Both the film and written guide should be available no later than May 1.

Meanwhile, the Big Year Eco-Challenge concept is already being adopted in a new location. Starting April 9 and running a full year, a Big Year Eco-Challenge will be conducted on a ranch south of Austin, Texas. Four teams of volunteers including students and teachers from three universities will survey portions of the 4,200 acre ranch. The goal is to use the baseline data gathered to restore the native plant and wildlife communities on the ranch. Jeff and Erik Mollenhauer will fly to Texas later this month to train the volunteers.

When the film and written guide are available, we will make an announcement. Meanwhile, if you have questions, contact Erik at emollen213@gmail.com.

Conservation Corner by Bonnie Dann

Get Ready to Shop without Single-Use Carryout Bags!

On May 4 of this year, New Jersey's ban on single-use carryout bags will take effect in stores throughout the state. This is good news for the environment, but shoppers will have some adjustments to make.

The law, which was passed in 2020, generally prohibits stores from providing those ubiquitous plastic bags that litter the landscape and even the oceans. As the Legislature explained, "New Jersey must do its part to minimize plastic pollution in the ocean, and to ensure that future generations have a clean and healthy environment." Along with plastics, New Jersey is banning single-use paper bags as well, noting that their production consumes even more resources and contributes to air pollution.

Because adequate alternatives are not always available, there are numerous exceptions written into the law. Items that do not fall within the definition of prohibited bags include the following:

- Bags used to contain uncooked meat, fish, or poultry.
- Bags used to package loose items such as fruits, vegetables, baked goods, flowers, small hardware items, and greeting cards.
- Bags used to contain food sliced or prepared to order.
- Bags used to carry prescription drugs.
- Newspaper bags.

In addition to the ban on bags, the law prohibits polystyrene food service products such as coffee cups. Exceptions include trays used for raw meat, fish, or poultry, and products that are pre-packaged with polystyrene by the manufacturer.

In place of the banned items, shoppers are encouraged to carry out their purchases in reusable bags. According to the law, a reusable bag is made of fabric, has stitched handles, and is capable of at least 125 uses. Stores are not required to provide such bags for shoppers, but many offer them for sale.

Plastic straws for carryout drinks are already banned, unless requested by a customer.

NEW YOUTUBE CHANNEL: We have begun posting full recordings of recent club programs for the convenience of members and the public. To find the club's channel, use [this link](#) or search for the club's full name within YouTube. Five videos are now available:



1. [Roger Tory Peterson and the Origins of the Modern Field Guide](#) (April 2021)
2. [Native Plants of South Jersey](#) (May 2021)
3. [Birding in Argentina](#) (September 2021)
4. [We Can't See The Forest For The Trees - Young Forests and Biodiversity](#) (November 2021)
5. [Edible Wild Plants](#) (January '2022)

As you often hear on YouTube, be sure to subscribe to the club's channel and "like" the videos so they will get recommended to more people! We will continue recording all online programs, and hopefully in-person ones as well, during this club year.

Nature Notes

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.

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.
- **Important Note:** This month, newsletters will have a From address of newsletter@gcnatureclub.org, instead of the personal email address. You may want to add newsletter@gcnatureclub.org to your address book just in case your email thinks it is Spam.

New Jersey Bluebird Society Seeks New Coordinator for Gloucester County



The eastern bluebird has been making a great comeback in Gloucester County and the NJBBS has played an important role in that, assisting with the installation of nesting boxes on private and public lands and the establishment and maintenance of bluebird trails at places such as Tall Pines State Preserve, Alcyon Park and at Washington Twp. parks.

The NJBBS is now seeking a new Coordinator for Gloucester County. This is a part time voluntary position. The Coordinator would work to coordinate bluebird activities within the county.

Requirements. The Coordinator should be someone who has had some experience with serious/proper nest box monitoring and a familiarity with bluebird management techniques. The NJBBS would be happy to help train the Coordinator in additional management techniques and the retiring Coordinator would also assist as much as possible.

The County Coordinator is an ambassador for proper bluebird management and the NJBBS.

Duties.

- Conduct on site visits on properties to determine if a location is suitable for a bluebird nest box.
- Assist folks with proper placement of boxes in promising bluebird habitat. That could be in a back yard, farm land or on public lands or parks.
- Assist with single box installation and the setting up of bluebird trails in parks and natural areas.
- Monitor boxes himself/herself or help individual monitors monitor boxes on their own. The idea is to get folks involved in proper bluebird management. Teams can be established to monitor larger trails and report back to the Coordinator.
- Assist potential monitors on how to obtain a NJBBS approved nest box with predator guard and have it placed properly.
- Refer potential bluebirders to the NJBBS for guidance and any assistance when needed.

Anyone who may be interested in or would like to know more about this opportunity can contact:

Allen Jackson, President , New Jersey Bluebird Society

email aljaxn@aol.com