



# Gloucester County Nature Club

## Monthly Newsletter

[www.gcnatureclub.org](http://www.gcnatureclub.org)

Nature Club meetings are open to the public

May 2009

### **Program – Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens & 2009 Annual Plant Sale**

**Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM at Wenonah Elementary School**

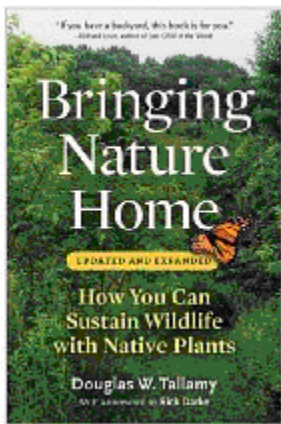
**Presenter: Douglas W. Tallamy, PhD. Professor of Entomology, University of Delaware**

**Program Coordinator: Rich Dilks (856) 468-6342**

**Reminder:** Starting time for the plant sale is **6:00 PM**, for the program **7:00 PM**.

*A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule.*

- Michael Pollan, *Second Nature* 1991.



Through our gardening and landscaping practices we have turned vast tracts of North America's suburban landscape into an ecological disaster zone. Our native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants have been replaced with thousands of square miles of sterile monocultures of alien grasses which we then insist on pampering with precious water resources, chemical fertilizers and pesticides while our native trees, shrubs and flowering plants have been rejected for ornamental exotics. The consequences of this are more than just aesthetic. The consequences are fractured ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, not just of plants but of insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Butterflies and other insects evolved in a special relationship with specific host plant species. Without those plants the insects cannot reproduce and survive. Without the

insects, birds and other vertebrates are deprived of important high protein food sources essential to their survival. The result is ecological collapse. In his remarkable and insightful book, Back To Nature: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens. Dr. Tallamy lays out the details of this ecological crisis and puts forth a bold proposal for how we can begin the process of reversing this destruction and reestablishing at least some elements of our natural ecosystems by welcoming native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants back into or landscape, our gardens and our lives.

Douglas W. Tallamy is Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He has written more than 65 research articles and courses he has taught include insect taxonomy and behavioral ecology. Dr. Tallamy has kindly consented to a book signing of Back To Nature at the conclusion of his presentation.

**Directions:** Wenonah School is located two blocks north of the Wenonah Community Center (the RR station). From the Community Center, take N. East Ave. two blocks to East Elm St. The school is on your left. The entrance to the school's All Purpose Room is located on East Elm St.



**ANNUAL PLANT SALE!** It's that time again! Spring is here and it's time to be in our gardens, getting them ready for the warm weather season. This means it is also time for the Club's annual plant sale. Hopefully, once again, we'll have a wonderful combination of nursery grown plants and plants from our very own gardens.

Here's where your part of this comes in. As you are in your gardens in the next couple of weeks keep an eye out for plants you can share. Maybe it could be some of those perennials you have been meaning to divide or a volunteer shrub or tree that just has to be moved. Even some extra seeds that you collected in the fall would be great. Just pot them up or pack them up and bring them with you. Please mark them carefully, though, so we keep the mystery plants to a minimum.

The Plant Sale will be held just before the May meeting. It will start at 6:00 PM at the Wenonah Elementary School. It is open to the public so please tell family and friends.

**Field Trip – Birding at Allaire State Park**  
**Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 AM to mid-afternoon**  
**Trip Leader: Jonathan Weir**

Habitats of this 3000-acre state park include open fields, deciduous forest, pine barrens, and flood plains along the Manasquan river. We hope to see a good variety of birds, both migrants and breeding species, including warblers, vireos, alder and Acadian flycatchers, Baltimore and orchard orioles, eastern bluebird, and others. In addition to the birding, there is a historic village which can be visited after the trip; for information see <http://www.allairevillage.org/>.



Bring binoculars, lunch, beverage, and dress to suit the weather. Deer are abundant and ticks are present; so long pants sprayed with a repellent such as Permethrin are suggested. The trails are generally dry, level, and well maintained, but there is a likelihood of visiting one damp area, so wear appropriate footwear.

**Carpool info:** For those who wish to carpool, meet at Timberline Shopping Center in Sewell at **7:30 AM**. If you prefer to drive on your own, directions are below. Travel time to Allaire is roughly 90 minutes.

**Directions:** Take I-295 or the NJ Turnpike north to I-195 eastbound (toward Belmar, Lakewood, and shore points). Get off of I-195 at Exit 31B (Farmingdale – Allaire State Park exit). Upon exiting you will be on County Route 547 North. At the first traffic light, 0.3 miles after exiting I-195, turn right onto County Route 524/Allaire Road. A Chevrolet car dealership will be on your right at the corner of the traffic light. Proceed on County Route 524/Allaire Road for 0.7 miles and the entrance to Allaire State Park, the Historic Village at Allaire and the Pine Creek Railroad will be on the right. Turn in and continue straight to the farthest parking lot. Meet in front of the picnic area and restrooms, on the right. Distance from Woodbury is approximately 70 miles.

## **Field Trip – Babies in Backpacks / Toddlers in Tow**

**Thursday May 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:30 AM at West Deptford Scenic Park**

**Trip Leader: Maria Keefe (856) 627-7010 Email: [walkingwith4boyz@comcast.net](mailto:walkingwith4boyz@comcast.net)**



Get the kids out in the fresh air as we walk West Deptford Scenic Park. 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. Everyone is welcome.

**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.

## **Field Trip – Night in the Pine Barrens**

**Saturday, May 23rd, 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM**

**Trip Leader: Karl Anderson**

This will be a nocturnal visit to Brendan Byrne State Forest. What we will see and hear depends on the weather. If it's warm and rainy, we will listen for, and perhaps see, such amphibians as Fowler's toad, carpenter and southern leopard frogs, and perhaps the rare pine barrens tree frog; if it's cold and clear, we will look at stars. There will be no moon. If the weather is somewhere in between, we'll try to do a bit of each. We should hear whippoorwills. Leave when the mood suits you.

Dress to suit the weather. Take precautions against ticks – we might be wandering through some brushy areas; long pants and repellent or Permethrin are advisable. There will be very little walking, but some of it might be wet. Binoculars will probably not be very useful. Bring a flashlight, but please, no giant searchlights! It will still be light at 8:00 PM, so we'll cruise around for a while as the night falls.



**Directions:** From western Gloucester County, take Route I-295 to Route 70; go east on Route 70 for about 22 miles to the intersection with Route 72 at the "Four Mile" traffic circle. Go about 2/3 of the way around the circle and continue on Route 70 for about one mile. Watch for a Brendan Byrne State Forest sign on the right. Turn in and drive a short distance to the office. Travel distance from Woodbury is about 36 miles.

## **GCNC Birding Big Day on May 9th to Benefit Local Organizations**

For the seventh year in a row, the Nature Club will be fielding a "Big Day" birding effort to benefit local conservation/land trust organizations. This year, the recipients will be Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Old Pine Farm, and the Nature Club's Maple Ridge Preservation Fund. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, the GCNC birding team of Gary Lizzi, Lloyd Shaw, and Gale Cannon will sally forth in the darkness of very early morning, to see how many birds they can find in what usually amounts to an 18-hour day of birding, at sites within Gloucester County. They hope to find about 120 species.

The event raises money through pledges based on the number of bird species identified on that day (for example: if you pledge 25 cents per bird, and the team finds 100 species, you owe \$25.00; which will be

given to the organization of your choice). Flat donations would also be gladly accepted. GCNC members should soon be receiving pledge forms in the mail, but if you do not get one, or if you misplace the one you get, or if you have questions, please contact Gale Cannon at [galecannon@aol.com](mailto:galecannon@aol.com).

## The East Coast Vulture Festival 2009 Flies High

On Saturday, March 7, 2009 the 4th annual East Coast Vulture Festival took flight in celebration of the communal roost of Turkey and Black Vultures that make historic Wenonah their winter home. The weather was mild as a spring day and as the vultures perched on rooftops or sailed the sky, the Vulture Day Children's Fair opened its doors at Wenonah's Community Center. This was the second year for our free afternoon fair, again coordinated splendidly by Kris Mollenhauer, and attendance exceeded last year's success. Young and old alike were greeted outdoors by our festival mascot, Buzzy (performed by Anne Kram). The fairgoers enjoyed games, crafts, temporary tattoos, displays (including the new wingspan display) and the special presentation, "Animal Encounters", by the Academy of Natural Sciences with exotic live animals including an African Grey Parrot, a Boa Constrictor, a tropical skink and a giant hissing cockroach. Judy Scott of Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge also entertained and informed festival goers with a live Screech Owl. The festival store at the fair did a thriving business. The overflowing and enthusiastic crowd spilled out onto the sidewalk and the RR tracks, many heading for a close up view of the vultures with Brian Hayes, who set up an observation station at Wenonah School where the vultures frequent the water tower. For many visitors seeing these birds at close range through binoculars or scope and learning their natural history was the perfect ending to their visit to the Children's Fair.

The Evening Roost at Wenonah School completed the festival events with a program filled with entertainment and education. Nearly 200 paid attendees filled the large All Purpose Room, socializing and being greeted by Buzzy and the master of venues in traditional vulture mask and costume. Our guests enjoyed our fruit salad, cheese and desserts of distinction, viewed the information tables for Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge and the Gloucester County Nature Club and shopped at the festival store. The formal program began with a presentation by Cedar Run with a live Barred Owl and Screech Owl. Next the festival awarded three \$500 VEE Grants to teachers from Glassboro, Mantua and Deptford schools (including our own Gale Canon) to assist with environmental education projects (in each case butterfly gardens this year). The centerpiece of the evening was another program from the Academy of Natural Sciences, Raptors: Predators of The Sky, with live birds of prey and a live Turkey Vulture. The Academy's Outreach Director, Michelle Bassler, was the presenter for this outstanding program. Education was followed by art as Jim Six continued his tradition of performing and bringing his music to every festival since our founding in 2006. The festival concluded with the birth of a new artist, rapper Vulture Vamp (also sometimes known as Sharon Oakes) who wrote and performed the rap, "Vulture's Delite", backed by her posse, the Road Kill Review Dancers.

The East Coast Vulture Festival is held annually on the 1st Saturday in March. Its purpose is to educate the public about the beneficial role of vultures and the importance of a healthy and sustainable environment, and to raise money for environmental education in local schools. The event is sponsored by The Gloucester County Nature Club and The Wenonah Environmental Commission.

- Rich Dilks

## **Kid's Corner – Build a Toad Home\*** by Deb Maka

Many of us think about making a house for birds, but what about toads? Here's how you can make a home for a toad.

What you'll need:

- plastic flowerpot
- permanent marker
- scissors
- fist-sized rock
- damp rag
- saucer

What you do:

1. Use a marker to draw a door on the top edge of the flowerpot. Make the door about 2 inches in diameter.
2. Using scissors, cut along the marked line. (Ask you parents for help with this part)
3. Decorate the pot with colored, waterproof markers or by gluing pebbles to the sides.
4. Find a cool, shady place outside. Place the flowerpot upside down on the ground.
5. Put the rock on top of the pot to keep it from blowing over on a windy day.
6. Place a wet rag inside the house to keep the shelter cool and moist.
7. Fill the saucer with water and place it next to the house. (toads need water, too)
8. Watch and wait. You've made a house that's comfortable for a toad... one may move in any day!

\* adapted from GREEN HOUR® a program of the National Wildlife Federation ([www.greenhour.org](http://www.greenhour.org)); Discovery Journal & Activities (issue #105: Toad Abode)

## **Natural Events for the month of May**

- Jack in the pulpit, pink lady's-slipper, and mayapple bloom by mid-May in the County's remnant woodlands.
- Early spring flowers such as spring beauty fade rapidly, as trees leaf out and shade the forest floor.
- Princess tree, or Paulownia (named after an 18th-Century Russian princess) blooms with large clusters of pale purple flowers. It's an invasive species but still very pretty.
- By late May, monarch butterflies arrive from the south and begin laying their eggs on newly emerged plants of common milkweed.
- Young rabbits, gray squirrels, and other small mammals are leaving their home nests. Drive carefully.
- Horseshoe crabs spawn on Delaware Bayshore beaches from late May to early June.
- Red knots arrive for their stop-over at the Delaware Bay area to double their weight on horseshoe crab eggs in preparation for their nonstop journey to Arctic breeding grounds.

## **The 2009 Gloucester County Bird Quest: Saturday May 2, 2009**

The Gloucester County Nature Club and many area businesses, industries, and local environmental commissions invite people of all ages to participate in the **2009 (Tenth Annual) Gloucester County Bird Quest**. The **2009 Bird Quest** will take place on **Sat., May 2, 2009 from 7 AM to 12 noon in Gloucester County**. **This year we are celebrating our 10 year anniversary. We are going to have a special treat. We will have live birds at the Park and a demonstration from trained wildlife handlers.**

From 7am to 12 noon teams visit parks and natural sites in Gloucester County and 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
- A chance to learn how to identify birds by sight, sound, behavior, and habitat
- A chance to have fun with friends and colleagues
- A light-hearted competition

**The Quest is an educational event: novices are encouraged to participate.** At noon, all participants gather at Atkinson County Park on Delsea Drive to report results and for **(free) lunch, t-shirts, and prizes and a presentation with live birds for our 10th anniversary. We are giving out a tote bag to commemorate the event as well (while supplies last). A \$12 fee per participant covers the cost of lunch, T-shirt, prize, live bird show, and tote (while supplies last), trainings, etc.**

Most people organize their own Quest team with colleagues, friends, and/or family. Last year's Gloucester County Bird Quest attracted several hundred participants made up of teachers, school groups, scout troops, environmental commissions, families, friends... residents of Gloucester and neighboring counties. This year with support from Wheelabrator, LP of Gloucester County, the club will operate two (free) guided buses for teachers and other persons unable to form their own team and who are willing to join a larger group. **New this year for the 10th Anniversary:** there will be three guided walks on the day of the event, 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:

### **Guided Walks**

#### **7:00-8:30: Field of Dreams, West Deptford Township**

Directions: From Interstate 295, Exit 21, take Crown Point Road (Rt 44) West. Drive for approximately .25 miles and take a right onto River Road. Park in the lot.

#### **9:00-10:30: Chestnut Branch Park, Mantua Township**

Directions: From the intersection of Rt 45 (Broad Street) and Cooper Street in Woodbury, go south on Rt 45 for 4.2 miles. Turn left (from right hand lane) onto Rt 553Alt (Main Street) in Mantua. Go south on Rt 553Alt for 1.6 miles. The park entrance will be on the left. There is a large paved parking area. Meet at the wildflower garden.

#### **11:00-12:00: Washington Township Park**

Directions: From the intersection of Rt 47 and Hurffville-Cross Keys Road (Rt. 654) in Hurffville, go southeast on Hurffville-Cross Keys Road for 1.2 miles. The park entrance will be on the right. Follow the main road past several playing fields and parking lots. Park in Lot E, just past the Amphitheater.

Guided Walk Leaders: Gary Lizzi, Marge Lizzi, Lloyd Shaw, Loretta Dunne, Jonathan Stillwell

More information and registration forms for Bird Quest will be posted to the Gloucester County Nature Club's website at [www.gcnatureclub.org](http://www.gcnatureclub.org). To join a team or to ride a bus, contact Brian Hayes at EIRC, 606 Delsea Drive, Sewell NJ 08080. Registration forms can also be requested by phone (856-582-7000 X110) FAX (856-582-4206) or e-mail at [bhayes@eirc.org](mailto:bhayes@eirc.org).

## **Events by other Organizations: May 2009**

- May 2 (Saturday) – Birding at Bombay Hook NWR. 10:00 AM to mid-afternoon. Leader: John Courtney. Sponsored by the Rancocas Nature Center. \$Fee. For info: <http://njaudubon.org/centers/rancocas/>.
- May 12 (Tuesday) – Salem County Nature Club meets at the Old Alloway School (30 Greenwich Street, Alloway) at 7:00 PM. The program will be “How to create a Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden” by Pat Sutton. For info: [www.salemcountynatureclubnews.blogspot.com/](http://www.salemcountynatureclubnews.blogspot.com/).
- May 23 (Saturday) – Birding at the former Department of Defense Property (D.O.D. Ponds WMA). Starts at 8:00 AM. Sponsored by the Salem County Nature Club. For info: [www.salemcountynatureclubnews.blogspot.com/](http://www.salemcountynatureclubnews.blogspot.com/).
- May 24 (Sunday) - Greenwich Township Walking Trail in Gibbstown, Gloucester County. 1:00 PM. Leader: Michael Hogan. For more information, contact Michael Hogan at (609) 476-2086 or [hoganphoto@verizon.net](mailto:hoganphoto@verizon.net).

## **Other Nature Notes**

### **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](mailto:sillybird348@comcast.net).



## **Looking Ahead:**

### **2008-2009 GCNC Programs Remaining**

June 11, 2009 – **Annual Picnic at Red Bank Battlefield and The Art of Karen Paust**

### **2008-2009 GCNC Field Trips Remaining**

Listed below are the field trips we have lined up for the rest of the season. Others may be added as opportunity permits and leaders become available. There will also be a series of Summer Field Trips.

June 6, 2009 (Saturday) - **Birding at Brightview Farm** - Bob Duke

## **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](mailto:blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com) or call 468-6536.
- **Election of Trustees** - The May Nature Club meeting is when we annually hold elections for our Board of Trustees. The Trustees hold the ultimate governing power of the Club. The Trustees elect the members of the Executive Committee (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chairpersons of the standing committees). The Trustees' other primary responsibility is to provide direction to the Executive Committee because our by-laws specify that the Board of Trustees authorizes power to the Executive Committee for the day-to-day operations of the Club.

Trustees meet annually at a joint meeting with the Executive Committee in June. There are a total of 12 members of the Board of Trustees. Elected Trustees agree to serve a 3 year term and one third of the Trustees are elected by the Club's membership at the May meeting. The current Trustees are as follows:

- 2006 – 2009 term: Brian Hayes, Karen Kravchuck, Kris Mollenhauer, Carol Cassel
- 2007 – 2010 term: Barry Bengel, Elaine Dzeima, Paula Hayes, Dave Partridge
- 2008 – 2011 term: Erik Mollenhauer, Robert Cassel, Bonnie Dann, Jackie Partridge

We will be electing Trustees for the term of 2009-2012. If you are interested in running for election, please contact Karen Kravchuck at 856-468-6536 or at [blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com](mailto:blackbirdsinging@hotmail.com).

- 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](mailto:sharkeyes@comcast.net) or GCNC Newsletter, PO Box 563, Sewell, NJ 08080 by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month.
- The May Executive Committee meeting will be held on May 10<sup>th</sup> at the home of Barry Bengel. Please contact Karen Kravchuck for more information.